



BLACK DIAMONDS REPORT

CONTENTS

4	PROJECT OVERVIEW AND METHODS
8	PHASE ONE: BARRIERS, MOTIVATORS, AND SOLUTIONS
8	MOTIVATORS AND CURRENT SUPPORT
16	BARRIERS
26	SOLUTIONS
40	PHASE TWO: RANKING SOLUTIONS
40	ATSI IDENTIFIED ROLES AND GOVERNANCE
41	TRAINING AND SUPPORT
42	PARALLEL PATHWAYS AND SELECTION CRITERIA
43	ACKNOWLEDGE AND CELEBRATE ATSI CULTURE
44	BROAD CATEGORIES
46	 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION



BLACK DIAMONDS REPORT

ARTWORK BY CONTEMPORARY ABORIGINAL ARTIST & DESIGNER,
JILALGA MURRAY OF JILALGA DESIGNS

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Black Diamonds project is a joint initiative of NetballWA (NWA) and Glass Jar Australia (GJA), with assistance from partner organisations Garnduwa Amboorny Wirnan, Geraldton Sporting Aboriginal Corporation, and the Institute of Indigenous Wellbeing and Sports. The Black Diamonds project is an overdue strategic review of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander netball engagement and retention across Western Australia, across all aspects of netball engagement (athlete, umpire, coach, administrator, family support, community member). The first of its kind, the Black Diamonds project will not only review netball service delivery, but through collaboration between Glass Jar Australia and NWA, its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders, and its clubs and Associations, we will ensure that the delivery, policies, and systems of netball in Western Australia are transformed to better facilitate the engagement and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to the sport of netball.

In Australia, the systems, policies, and procedures that netball has in place do not nourish and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander athletes, coaches, umpires, and administrators from the grassroots level through to the elite. The aims of the strategic review and development are to:

1. Listen and gather the stories and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have engaged with netball across Western Australia, whether as athletes, coaches, umpires, administrators, family supports, or community members, to understand both the facilitators and barriers to their participation in, and engagement with, the sport.
2. Collaborate with NWA (including Clubs and Associations) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders to develop a strategic vision that aims to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement and retention across all aspects (athlete, umpire, coach, administrator) of the netball pathway in Western Australia.
3. Implement the policies and procedures as outlined by the new strategy from 2023 onwards (the current NWA strategic plan expires in 2022).

The purpose of the Black Diamonds project is to build a foundation for stronger, healthier relationships between NWA and its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities by bringing inequities around inclusion to light and developing a collaborative strategy to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement and retention across all pathways within the sport. The aims of project implementation then, are to:

4. De-centre the white Australian experience within netball across Western Australia and decolonise netball delivery (beginning with implementation of an Indigenous methodology for the Black Diamonds project).
5. Increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who play, coach, umpire, administer, and support the sport of netball in Western Australia.
6. Increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders engaged with the sport of netball at the elite levels across athlete, coach, and umpire pathways in Western Australia (and for the next Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Diamonds player to come through the NWA pathway— Sharon Finnan-White OAM and Marcia Ella-Duncan OAM are both from NSW).

NWA and GJA's vision statements are that netball is the sport of choice in Western Australia, and that Aboriginal communities are empowered to drive local change, respectively. The Black Diamonds project serves both visions by aiming to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in the sport in Western Australia, while empowering local communities to identify and determine changes to netball service delivery and policy. At the same time, because NWA is uniquely placed to deliver the Black Diamonds project in partnership with GJA, we also hope that the project can serve as a case study or test piece for how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement can be improved across Australia, in netball and other sports, with the aim for:

7. NWA to become a leader in collaboration and engagement between state/national sporting bodies and their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

PROJECT METHODS

GJA evaluates the success of its Shooting Stars program through collation of attendance data from the school Integris system (state-wide school attendance and behavioural management software), through participant case studies (internal, shared only with the National Indigenous Australians Agency under strict confidentiality agreements), and yarning circles. Yarning circles are the main data collection method for the Yarning with the Stars project, where Shooting Stars staff facilitate yarns with participants, localised steering committees, and broader community (Whitau and Ockerby 2019). Through the Yarning with the Stars project, GJA has ensured that the Shooting Stars program is site specific, adapting the program at the local level to meet participant and community needs, and at the state level, where common themes across sites have instigated pan-program initiatives such as the Seven Sisters program which was piloted in Narrogin in term three 2020, and Art with the Stars, which commenced in 2021. In conjunction with these local and state level modifications to service delivery, the Yarning with the Stars project enabled the collaboration between GJA and Narrogin Senior High School in developing policies to tackle the racism experienced by Shooting Stars participants within the institution (Whitau et al. In Press). Because the Yarning with the Stars project methodology creates space for review, collaboration, and implementation, and because Shooting Stars staff, most of whom are Aboriginal (85%), all of whom are women, have the capacity to facilitate or support the facilitation of yarning circles, NWA and GJA decided to adapt the Yarning with the Stars methods to the Black Diamonds project.

The initial plan for the research was to facilitate three phases of data collection and analysis across four stakeholder groups using yarning circles as the key data collection method. However, a lack of funding, limited resources, and postponement of NAIDOC carnivals across the state due to the COVID-19 outbreak stalled the process of data gathering and prevented the implementation of Phase Two and Three yarning circles. The updated methods are described below.

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) granted ethics clearance to the Black Diamonds project on the 3rd February 2021, which is valid through to 31st December 2023. The HREC Reference Number is: EO211-20201103. The amended methods were also formally approved by AIATSIS. The four stakeholder groups who participated in the project are:

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	DESCRIPTION
<i>Group A:</i> Grassroots Participants	ATSI athletes, coaches, umpires, family supports, and community members from across the state of Western Australia
<i>Group B:</i> Potential Elite Pathway Participants	ATSI athletes who attended the 2021 Aboriginal All Stars camp
<i>Group C:</i> Existing Elite Pathway Participants	ATSI athletes and umpires who have experienced the elite netball pathway in Western Australia (e.g., WANL Players, West Coast Fever players and Training Partners)
<i>Group D:</i> Netball WA Associations	Associations affiliated with Netball WA in both metro and regional areas

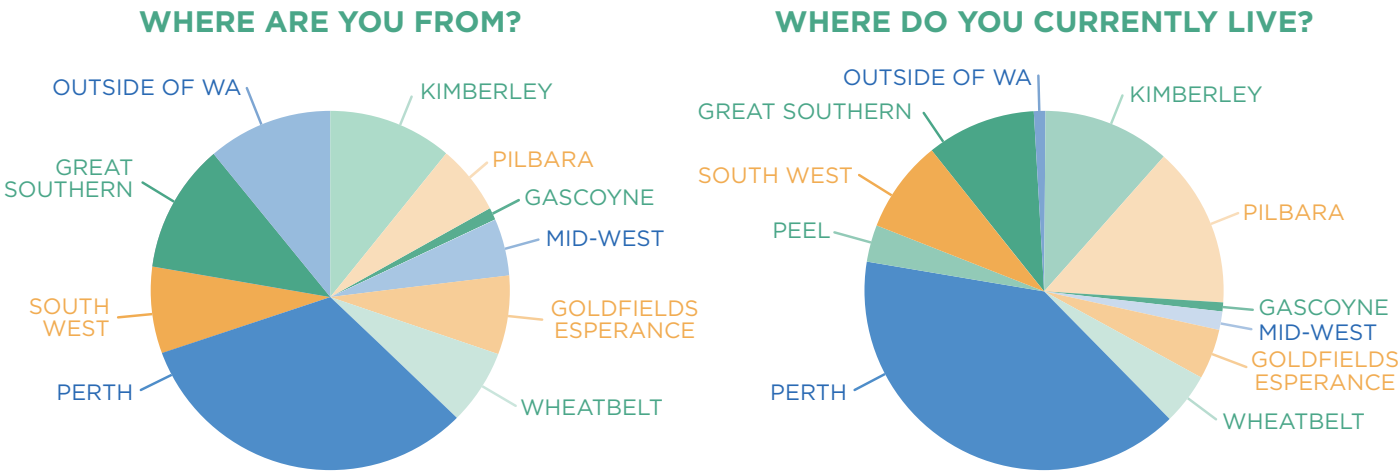
The purpose of the first phase of data collection was to listen and gather the stories and experiences of Stakeholder Groups A, B, and C in order to understand both the facilitators and barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in, and engagement with, netball in Western Australia. Stakeholder Group D were engaged to discuss what they had achieved/are achieving in this space to date and what support they required from Netball WA to create a culturally safe Association. The largest disruption to the first phase of data collection was caused by the cancellation of several NAIDOC netball carnivals due to both the COVID-19 outbreak and low registration numbers. In response to this, a survey was created on the Black Diamonds website page in an attempt to capture feedback from more grassroots level stakeholders across the state. Participation from Stakeholder Groups B and C were not disrupted at all. While there were no logistical disruptions to the collation of Stakeholder Group D, only two Associations elected to participate in yarning circles. A survey was created on surveymonkey specifically for feedback from Associations which was sent out to all Association presidents, but no responses have been received to date.

A total of 97 participants engaged in the first phase of the Black Diamonds project, with Stakeholder Groups A, B, and C represented across each of the NWA regions: Goldfields-Esperance, Great Southern, Kimberley, Mid West Gascoyne, Peel, Perth, Pilbara, South West, and Wheatbelt. The two Associations who participated were Eastern Goldfields Netball Association and Fremantle Netball Association.

GROUP	DATA COLLECTION METHOD	STAKEHOLDER GROUP	PARTICIPANT NUMBERS
Perth NAIDOC Grassroots coaches	Yarning Circle	A	12
Kalgoorlie	Yarning Circle	A	6
Broome	Yarning Circle	A	4
Aboriginal All Stars	Yarning Circle	B	24
EGNA Association	Yarning Circle	D	8
Fremantle Association	Yarning Circle	D	10
One-on-one yarns: Stakeholder Group A	One-on-one via Zoom	A	4
One-on-one yarns: Stakeholder Group C	One-on-one via Zoom	C	10
Phase One: Survey respondents	Black Diamonds website survey	A	19
Total Phase One participants			97
Phase Two participants with Phase One data contributions			30
Total Phase One contributors			127

The purpose of the second phase of data collection was to develop a strategic vision and a list of actions to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement and retention across all aspects (player, umpire, coach, administrator) of the netball pathway in Western Australia collaboratively with all Stakeholder Groups. While the initial plan had been to facilitate yarning circles for Phase Two, given the funding and resource constraints, the Black Diamonds Working Group decided that the best course of action was to create a survey so that more participants from across the state could be included. All the yarns conducted in Phase One were audio-recorded and transcribed. All yarning and survey data were then analysed and the solutions were summarised into a survey which was disseminated via surveymonkey across Social Media and text messages to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander players, coaches, and umpires registered to My Netball within the state of Western Australia.

There were a total of 140 Phase Two respondents, with each of the regions represented from across the state; however, while there were respondents who currently live in the Peel region, there were none who are from there. Nine of the Phase Two respondents identified as non-Aboriginal, these are excluded from the data.



The purpose of the third phase of data collection was to seek final approval from stakeholders prior to policy and procedural action from NWA. While GJA cannot now facilitate this third phase of data collection, we strongly recommend that NWA establish Aboriginal steering committees across each of the regions, including metro, to provide feedback and advice for implementation. This process is detailed in the final recommendations section.

PHASE ONE: BARRIERS, MOTIVATORS, AND SOLUTIONS

MOTIVATORS AND CURRENT SUPPORT

MY FRIENDS, TEAM, CLUB, SUPPORT AND MOTIVATE ME

The most common motivator comprised making friends, having fun with friends, being part of a team or club, feeling a sense of belonging, and feeling supported by a team or club. For example:

“Just being able to run around with your mates and having a pretty good time.”

“After a season or something or after you’ve finished you feel a sense of family I guess. After knowing all the girls and going through losses or wins you get to know the same emotions and everything and feel the same stuff...Because if we’re with each other for so long and we get to know how each other play and how our minds work we just see how similar we all are and just how we can connect on a different level than just socialising so physical and everything.”

“The team I was involved with was like a second family. Everybody made you feel welcome there. Just had a great culture, and you wanted to be a part of the club. Just wanted to be around the people.”

The sense of belonging and support was magnified where other team or club members were Indigenous. For example:

“No, I never felt isolated at all. Because the girls around me were just friends, you know. They’re supportive, and everyone’s away from home as well, kind of thing; so you sort of all become close, and friends. I guess just when I did catch up with some other Indigenous girls, for instance if [Name] came for a camp, or if [Name] was there, or some other girls, it feels like home. You feel like, “Oh, this is nice...Like you guys get me, kind of thing, you know. Yeah, it felt warm. It just... yeah. I didn’t struggle, as such, but I just felt a sense of home or warmth when I had these other Indigenous girls around me...It’s kind of hard to explain. It’s kind of like a warm feeling in your heart, where you kind of feel at home without being at home. It’s not that I’m ever trying to be anybody else when I’m around others; I’m being myself, but when I have those girls around me, I feel like I’m really me. Like they’re bringing out the real me. But I’m not trying to be anybody else, if that makes sense. It’s really hard to explain...It’s kind of like they’re your family without being your family. So you know how you are when you are with your family. That’s how I feel when I’m with those girls.”

Facilitator: So how did the [WANL Club] make you feel welcome then?

Interviewee: They like came up to me straight away. You know, I had [Name] there as well. There was more Indigenous people. I don’t know, they just really took me under their wing kind of, yeah.

“Oh it was the best times because you’re with your sisters [other Indigenous players], like you know what you made in the group, in the team. And we went to play against these Perth girls and it was bloody hard. It was so hard. But it was an amazing experience. I love it. I was nervous but the older girls they’re – [Name 1] she was like the Mum and she was awesome. Like she’s always cared about us girls, younger ones, me and [Name 2] were the youngest ones. So two peas in a pod. And she would always say ‘It’s okay. We’ve got this. You be deadly. You be you. You trained for this.’”

“They came into my life. And oh my gosh it was like the right time and moment for me for them. I’m getting all emotional because it’s like – it was just such a grateful moment that they came...I ended up hanging out with [Indigenous player names]...I was telling [Name] about it [my experience] and she said “We went through that same thing.” And the girls would pick me up actually to go to training. Because we were training with them. And they’d take me to extra training with them as well...it just gave me the confidence because some [of my team’s] behaviour I started questioning myself. Doubting myself.”

COACHES SUPPORT AND MOTIVATE ME

Coaches were the second most common motivator. The coaches that participants talked about in a positive way understood their circumstances, respected them, and provided support in a variety of ways, from transport, information about opportunities, and encouragement to trial for opportunities, to a listening ear and assistance with funding. Favourite coaches were often described as welcoming, caring, inclusive, and firm or tough but fair. For example:

“Definitely the coaches at [WANL Club 2] were really good. They were so inclusive, so happy. You felt really welcomed there. I did have one [good] coach at [WANL Club 1]. She’s still coaching. She was beautiful, really supportive, really welcoming, really felt like she was almost like a second mum to a lot of us. We could go to her with any problems, any issues. So that was really good.”

“She’s [Coach] been really helpful for me. She saw that I had a good coaching mind as well and she pushed me to go into coaching. She pushed me to do my foundations, always came to me if she had questions so I felt really included in the team decisions as well.”

“Mum and Dad split up when I was 12 and Mum moved out so I only had Dad in the picture and he had to work three jobs to keep us in private schools and keep our sport fees paid and all that sort of thing. So [Coach] would come and pick me up to take me to the games and take me to training and if I didn’t have her coming to do that for me I don’t reckon I would have been able to keep going on in netball and I always speak of her and the importance of her role in my netball career. Because for her to do that for me really just, and that’s from the age of 9, 10, 11, 12 you know when I was really young, kept me in the game I think. That’s why it’s so important to have coaches who are prepared to go that extra mile for us, for players, for young girls regardless of what colour they are.”

“Then when I got to the [team], my first coach she was really supportive. She was very hard on everyone, I never felt like she was just hard on me, she was hard on everybody and I really admired her for that. I don’t know, she had a way of just making you feel like you were the only one that she was giving special attention to. She’d send little notes in the mail and say how wonderful you are and this is what I want you to work on.”

“They were just incredible players that we were coached by. And they were so humble, understanding and very kind but very encouraging to us. So they understood what we would go through, like I say if we’re a little bit late they’re like “Yep, we’ll be here.” Like they know that we will come for it. For the training. And put in the hours.”

“And so it was nice and comforting to have when someone that we know and has our back – like if we have questions we can go to her. We don’t have to go away or back off and not say anything and be confused and look like silly, stupid or they don’t know what I was doing.”

“Didn’t know much about the league; I knew it existed, but I didn’t know how to contact the team to get into tryouts, or whatever. I had no idea. I’m glad that he [coach] picked up on that, and he got involved with it, I guess.”

I LIKE COMPETING, I AM TALENTED

The third most common motivator was enjoying competing, particularly with their team and feeling a sense of team and feeling talented. For example:

“...you can be with your friends and all that but then you can also be really competitive at the same time.”

“I like competing so – and the thing with athletics compared to netball athletics was an individual sport so I was just competing against myself and then netball was a group and that was my interaction sport.”

“...that’s when I kind of started to realise that, you know well hey I’m actually good at this sport, I think that I need to keep being involved with.”

“And also recognition. Like I know that probably sounds real like thing but I don't know. Like, I think when you're kind of like – if you're good at something, like it is really nice to have people like wow, like she's really good or like you're doing really well, you know? And have that recognition of the hard work or just that natural talent or whatever. So I found like yeah, that was really kind of – it helped me build that confidence in other parts of my life because I'm like oh, wow, like I'm good at netball, you know? And it just felt really good to be on court and have people like cheering and stuff and just bring that excitement to the game. So I think you know, I love to make people laugh and happy and so I think that was – even if I'm falling over but that's [audio glitch]. But yeah, I just really enjoy seeing like that atmosphere and just creating something exciting with in a game.”

NETBALL IS FUN, I FEEL GOOD WHEN I PLAY, I LOVE THE GAME

The fourth most common motivator was having fun while playing netball, particularly with friends, feeling good during or after the game, and having a general love of the game. Participants who were coaches, umpires or administrators also talked about having a passion for netball, which motivated them to coach, umpire, or support their club and helped them to stay committed. For example:

“I love everything about it. After growing up playing netball, and once I became an actual senior player, I think my passion grew even more. And then I even 'til this day, I quit a while ago, but I do still fill in. But even when I do take the court, I feel like no one can tell me how to play or where I need to be or how I shouldn't play. That's my domain, I'm at home when I play netball. So yeah, I love playing.”

“I'm a single mum, I study, making sure that when it's netball season, being able to balance all of that and making sure that if you do commit, you commit 100%. If you love netball, that's what helps.”

“For me netball is just fun you know and especially when I get to play with everyone that I enjoy playing with as well. And just I don't know it just gives you that thrill that sport gives you, that energy and then afterwards you're buggered, but... You know while you're playing you just feel good; for me anyway.”

“I love the actual sport.”

“I just felt the love for netball.”

I ENJOY COACHING, MENTORING, OR BEING A ROLE MODEL

The fifth most common motivator was coaching, mentoring, and being a role model. Coaches spoke about the joy they feel inspiring and growing others, particularly kids from their Indigenous communities, and how empowering sport can be in terms of helping young people to develop confidence while providing them with opportunities to engage in something positive and healthy that can lead to a pathway. Coaches, umpires, administrators and players, particularly those players who made it to an elite level, talked about the sense of obligation that they feel or felt to their communities to be role models, and how important it is to them to be a positive Indigenous role model.

“...just seeing the development of them coming out of their shells, they were quiet girls, shy girls as well. Once you put them on the court and gave them that bib, then it was just like giving them directions. And then you're like, “Oh my gosh, who is that kid?”. You're so proud and that's such an overwhelming and a blessing experience as well.”

“I feel like during my younger years and coming through and doing all that sport I was kind of a role model in my community for other people. For the younger people coming into primary...Family and then like community would ask me to go to schools and stuff...But just you know go out and do some netball clinics and then in high school like actually run netball clinics and stuff as part of school.”

“I think when my profile started to become bigger and I was promoted as an Indigenous role model and the only Indigenous girl in the [team]. I felt that real sense of obligation to be that role model for my community and for other young girls that wanted to play netball... I'd get asked to do a lot of things at schools and talks and presentations and guest speaking panels... I guess the motivation for me was just because I felt like, you know every time I'd stand out on centre court... I knew that all those Indigenous eyes were watching me. I was the one that they were looking to and I felt like I had to continue with that pathway for them really. I mean it was for me too because I loved what I did but I just felt that real obligation too. I think it's because the media put me there, you know, if the media hadn't put me there, who knows how I would have felt, I might have felt differently, but then I actually started to enjoy being that person.”

“I've always wanted to try and make a difference within the communities and stuff and I've always wanted to help people and support people. Yeah, so for me being able to show them what I could achieve and give them hope that they could do the same as well was really, really important to me. So yeah, I did definitely feel like a role model.”

“Sport is a vehicle, it's a mechanism, and it's to address the social disadvantage that our kids face. I think if it's set up in such a way that it supports and nurtures and encourages those kids to participate, it addresses health – you know, so all those Closing the Gap targets around chronic diseases, disability, you know, all of those sorts of challenges, sport can actually do that for our Aboriginal kids. I think that's why I'm passionate about sport in our kids. And we're not an aging population, so how do we extend the lifespan of our kids? I think sport gives us the ability to do that.”

I AM INSPIRED BY ROLE MODELS IN NETBALL

The sixth most common motivator was feeling inspired by role models. Two participants talked about “watching other people play” or elite level teams in general:

“Just getting that feeling when you're watching Fever or something or Australia. I don't know if anyone else gets that feeling but you get kind of something in your stomach. Well I know I do...it looks like I need to do this or something. That it's just telling you.”

The majority of participants who spoke about role models talked about Indigenous or familial role models, whether that was in reference to growing up on the side of the court watching their mum or aunties play, being exposed to other Indigenous players or coaches, or watching/interacting with elite level Indigenous athletes. Several participants talked about the part that role models play in terms of advocacy, and the importance of representation in terms of achievability or courage (she can do it, so can I), and safety. For example:

“For me I think watching mums and aunties and that playing netball, so as a young kid watching everyone else growing up playing netball, so it was like okay yes I can't wait to be old enough to play in that team next. That's what started me watching my mum and aunties and that playing netball.”

“I think when I went through playing netball there was a lot of black fellas playing at top level, whereas now I hardly watch it, because there isn't any black fellas you know...Because back then I could think of at least six black fellas that were playing at the top level across Australia. And most of them are from WA too.”

“So, for me, an experience... Seeing an Aboriginal person or Torres Strait Islander, or a coloured person, in a situation – anywhere – it gives me the safeness. It gives me the courage and the support, automatically. As long as I see that person, and as long as that person also helps me further on, like have a conversation, and understand what I'm going through, then that's all I need to get through life.”

NETBALL PROVIDES OPPORTUNITIES

The seventh most common motivator was the opportunities which netball provides. In particular, participants discussed opportunities to travel, to learn, and to develop or upskill. Several participants also talked about how they see netball growing in Western Australia and providing good pathways. For example:

“I see netball’s becoming pretty big in WA because a lot of people in WA are playing netball and there’s a lot of state competitions that people come down and play even win or something. So I feel like there’s a lot of potential for netball in WA.”

“But I think that what’s helped me, yes, I guess the understanding of the rules, so doing as much courses as you can and having opportunity and having the commitment I think too... I think definitely the more courses that you get, the more information sessions too on how things work.”

“I played in the WA Indigenous team and I played in Australia under 18s schoolgirls Indigenous team. And we went and played in New Zealand and stuff like that for that. And at that point I had a choice to play for Australia or Indigenous Australia but I chose Indigenous Australia and played for them...I think back then as an Aboriginal person it meant a lot to play for Indigenous Australia than Australia...But I feel like playing in the Indigenous Australia team I got more out of it personally. And I don’t even think I might – I might not have even got on the court in the Australian team. And I don’t know if that was because I’m black but it was kind of a bit picky too and it kind of like who you knew when it came to netball.”

“Fever was good. I enjoyed it, because obviously I was born in Western Australia, and it just felt like going home. It was nice. It was all new, exciting, it’s a new competition; New Zealand was involved, so we get to travel to New Zealand.”

“And then there was also like talent identified squads they used to call it. Like development squads. That could just be based on like throughout the season. Like we would just get a letter to say like you’ve been talented identified and we would just go to certain trainings and stuff and then they would have just like exhibition matches and things like that. And I found that really good. Like it was kind of – it wasn’t like confrontational or anything. Like it was more just how you played throughout the season and they just had scouts and stuff.”

FAMILY SUPPORT AND MOTIVATE ME

The eighth most common motivator was family. Participants talked about how their parents motivated them to keep going, provided support in terms of money, time, and transport, and offered advice and encouragement. Several participants also mentioned supportive aunts, one participant talked about how her sister sparked her love for netball, and one participant talked about how her brother’s athleticism pushed her in her fitness training.

“All my family coming down to watch every single one of my games.”

“Yeah, it was really difficult, financially, for my parents. We come from very humble beginnings. Didn’t really have a lot of money. And fuel prices, and cars, and accommodation, and things like that obviously all come at a cost. My parents did however make it work. Accommodation wise, we just used to stay with my parents’ close friend that we’ve known for a long time. We used to just stay with him at his house, just to make the trips a lot easier, and coming down the night before, or leaving the night of the camp finishing. Yeah, I just remember my mum getting up at... We used to get up at four in the morning to make sure we were down in the city to have breakfast, and then go to training. Things like that. So financially and physically it was quite demanding, yeah...Not so much on us; I think more so on my parents, trying to do everything, and make sure we’re refuelled and we’ve got all our food and water, and fuel in the car. Just a lot of stresses, you know? So I think more so for my parents than for a teenage girl going through the ranks...My parents knew that I was good at netball, and this is something that I wanted to do, and they would support me.”

“Boyfriends coming into your life and their jealous of what you’re doing and they just want you all to themselves. I had to make a decision when I went to the AIS and got that opportunity to go, I felt pressure to stay with my boyfriend or to go. Again the voice of reason with my Dad, the amazing person that he is, he said you need to weigh up, I really think you need to take this opportunity. I think if I hadn’t gone to the AIS I think I would have definitely taken that wrong path and stayed with that boyfriend. Then I found out later he wasn’t really a nice person anyway. Having that support person there like my Dad to be able to talk through things is really important.”

“...I pushed myself in fitness. I really pushed myself. I was like – I was very competitive. I think the purpose I helped – actually helped me to be recognised. That’s due to having siblings. Especially a brother who is being champion boy all over the years in primary school and high school. I just wanted to be him but I could never. I’ll never. I don’t think so. But that’s okay. And [Name]’s the same. She had her brother who was good at basketball. Always champion boy and that there’s so – we both relate to that.”

NETBALL IS MY OUTLET

Several participants spoke about how netball provides a space for mental release, or an escape from the issues and challenges that they’re facing in their lives. For example:

“Yeah it sort of lets out a lot of that natural good like all your endorphins and that. You know if you’re having a bad day or something you go to netball and you play netball, you just let it out, you’re playing with people that you enjoy playing with. Yeah it’s a happy time, like all your troubles are put to the side and you’re just enjoying running around after the ball.”

“I like, it kind of gets me away from everything that I kind of deal with. It kind of just gives me a distraction to whatever I go through. I don’t know, I kind of like the thought of when like, my little sisters or cousins they kind of like watch my games. Or my mates and yeah, my family. I don’t know. Because having like people who kind of do like, alcohol and drugs and stuff, they don’t really yeah, do sports. So, I’m kind of like – I kind of want to be the person that goes further yeah.”

“Just being able to express myself. Like I found it was a good way for me to just – I don’t know, like I said. Like growing up in my own household, there was a lot of stuff happening and that was just my way of like releasing all of that either frustration or whatever. It was a way for me to just kind of – I don’t know. Just exert myself I guess.”

“My daughter is an Indigenous girl who suffers from severe anxiety to the point she was self-harming. Netball was the only thing that was helping her. She had to build herself up as a player to be recognised in her Association with little to no help from the Association. To help my daughter I stepped up to coach and got my accreditation as a development coach. I’m very grateful to our club who has assisted both myself from a coaching perspective and my daughter who has goals of reaching state team. Without them both myself and my daughter wouldn’t be in the place we are currently in.”

NETBALL WA SUPPORT AND MOTIVATE ME

Several participants spoke about the support that Netball WA provided them, particularly in terms of assistance with grants, transport, and communicating with coaches. For example:

“I think with Netball WA, they were all really nice to me, the workers and everyone from there. They were like really nice people...I appreciated all their help. I loved all their help but I think because I was Aboriginal, they would ... it felt like I was isolated in the sense of I think that’s why people probably thought I used to get everything for free, because Netball WA always used to help me with grants so I could pay for my trips for my national games and stuff like that, and that was all they really helped me with was helping me get grants and maybe a couple of rolls of tape.”

“Netball WA did help fund some of it. I was very fortunate so the North West Netball Region, as it was before, it also been incorporated with Netball WA, we always had quite a lot of funding and stuff for development.”

“But so I skipped over [WANL Team]. [WANL Team] were really horrible. They weren’t understanding or trying to get transportation. Netball WA had to pull up. [NWA staff] had to jump in for me and tell that coach because she wasn’t understanding. Like I’ve got other commitments. And so [NWA staff] pulled her up. Which was awesome because then I felt like I – they valued me and I wasn’t – all this work wasn’t for nothing, putting the effort in and you think you’re – you know you’re skilled and talented like people say, and you know you’re great, you know you can do all this stuff. It’s just that people were stopping you or not communicating with you and not putting their effort in when you’re putting a lot in. And you’re a girl – young girl who’s away from family as well. Mind you, like I was homesick for two years. Graduated from high school and lived with families that I’d never met because my parents were separated... I kept missing buses. Like I would just miss it and then people would just go off at me. And I’m like ‘I’m sorry. Like I’m just trying to.’ I’m trying to get there by myself at 17. Get up in the morning. Did all my exercise. Run on the treadmill for 20 minutes or ten minutes at level ten, to get that fitness. I had to be so independent at 17... So [NWA staff] – awesome. She picked me up. We’d meet at a train station or pick me up. She would take me early in the morning to training.”

MY ASSOCIATION SUPPORTS AND MOTIVATES ME

Two participants talked about their Association supporting them. One participant spoke about knowing a particular person within their Association, and the other spoke about the opportunities that arose for travel and development through their Association:

“The positives was when we came to an Association club, it was one person, it took one person who was at that real hierarchy level that knew us to make sure we fit in. You know, because if we didn’t know that person, I don’t think the girls would even would have got to state league. So it was like having that mentor, and even as a coach, that mentor, that support person. And I don’t even think I realised and I don’t even think that person realised and I don’t even think the girls realised that that’s actually what was happening... I reflect back now and if we wouldn’t have known her, we wouldn’t have, I don’t even think we would have – because you’ve got to trial for clubs down here – I don’t think we would have made that club team. And that’s not because of their skills. Their skills matched these kids down here, but it’s who you know down here, not what you know.”

“I’ve been pretty lucky that in [town] the Association, especially our masters, like to do a bit of travel and stuff. So you know, they done the Australian masters a couple of times so I went over to Geelong with them, which was as I was going towards getting my A badge, I hadn’t quite got it yet, so I went with them. And they were in the Australian Masters and was awarded the top final in that. Yeah, which was amazing to do.”

OTHER

Other motivators, supports, or positive elements of netball include: “boys coming and playing”; Indigenous Round providing education about Aboriginal culture to non-Aboriginal people; NAIDOC carnivals; showing good sportsmanship to others (and motivating them); school support (note that this is not in reference to a Shooting Stars program); and the opportunities for leadership and relationship building that one club, who have Aboriginal and CALD players, are providing for Aboriginal participants. For example:

“Then my girl who was on her own in another club all they did was wear shoelaces [for Indigenous round] and then comments were being made around ‘oh, didn’t even know the colour of the Aboriginal flag, or didn’t even know it existed. Didn’t even know that we had an Indigenous round’ you know, those sort of comments. And she came home and said ‘mum, guess what’. She didn’t think that badly of it. It was like this is what the other players were saying. And I just said to her ‘you know well sometimes people, they aren’t educated’. And I said, “and that’s good because now netball has educated those kids’.” “NAIDOC week as well brings everyone together. At least there’s no commitment there, you just go [unclear] one day. But the whole community gets around them, it’s fun to be involved.”

“So, when you’re trialling – so, state school girls, we got her into state school girls, which was awesome, and how we did that was the work of the school. I’m probably the only – with my girls, [Coach 2] and the other ladies, we’re the only school that requires the kids to be attending to play netball, which is what we want. It falls down, come fourth term, it’s always a tough term, but [Name] – so, how she ended up getting to state school girls is that the school supported her. So, the school got her transport there, the principal got her to conditioning sessions, all that sort of stuff, so she got in. So, what we’re doing through our school, what [unclear 0:04:13.2] program, how that started, was that the school supported it. Now, what happens for us, is because the kids, the parents, whatever, don’t have the funds, initially, to get the registration – because registration is so early – that the school supports that, as long as the kids are attending. So, I have to give that – what do they call it? – the roll, to – they have to be seeing that on the roll, to say the kids are attending, you know what I mean? So, they are learning, and this is just part of their life, you know, the netball. They love the netball. The school is really good for us [unclear 0:04:47.7]. The boss will say, right, pay that then, [Coach 1], so I ask permission for that to be paid, because that could be five thousand dollars in fees. Then, I try through the academy to get uniforms and stuff for us. So, [unclear 0:05:03.8] donated a thousand dollars, which only gives us 10.5 uniforms, do you know what I mean?”

“...her mum picks up two of the – one girl from Africa, and one from Korea, you know, other countries. The kids hardly speak English, but you know, if we didn’t have that, the kids can’t get there. Then, they’re playing with other Noongar kids, too, and they’re supporting. So, the leadership is awesome for our girls, teaching these people, especially the language.”

BARRIERS

DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM

The most common barrier that participants face within netball is discrimination and racism. Discrimination was experienced and felt in terms of unfair calls made by umpires; non-selection for teams and selection criteria; not many black girls on teams; exclusive, segregated groups or not feeling welcome/not fitting in; not being heard or not having a safe space for feedback; and a lack of understanding of circumstances. Many participants talked about institutionalized or systemic racism, which prevented Aboriginal people from getting ahead in the pathway. Several participants mentioned racism from individuals that was “casual” or “outright”. For example, one participant spoke about how she was presented with an award for being the “Token Black” (this is literally what it said on the certificate) by her Association. Participants talked about how they would often brush off racist experiences outwardly, but inwardly would feel disrespected and isolated. Many of the experiences that relate to discrimination and racism are also linked with other barriers, in particular Cliques, Purple Circles, and Politics; Lack of support; Communication; Socio-economic Situation and Self Confidence and Shyness.

“It was so unfair, a lot of the girls end up quite upset about netball and started to lose the passion of netball, which was quite upsetting. We were a strong Indigenous side, with heaps of players and it was like we weren't played fairly.”

“If you're going to have an Aboriginal session of trying to recruit more Aboriginal people into sport, then you need to convince them that they're going to do it and be heard. I think half the problem is that we do all this stuff and it dies off because we never get heard. That's the biggest barrier I think. [Name], I don't know if you feel that as an umpire or not, but the majority of people will be like, 'Well no, I'm not going to go on the board. They're not going to listen to me anyway', or, 'They're not going to pick me anyway'. That's really sad.”

“...then you bring an Aboriginal kid and an Aboriginal family into this system with the added complexity around shyness and communication and sometimes language and you know, sometimes financial status of a family and a kid. Well they are three steps removed, rather than one step removed, if you know what I mean. So that's the difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. And this is how it can play out when it comes to then selection. Because judgments are being made based on a selection process within Netball WA that exists already but then there's this, or I'd like to know what the selection process is actually. Because if it's based around communication, that's wrong because we know Aboriginal people aren't great communicators, but it doesn't mean that we don't communicate, doesn't mean we don't listen, doesn't mean we don't have an opinion. If it's based around communication, if it's based around your body size, they are all, they are no advantage for Aboriginal people. But if it's based purely on skills and merit, I tell you what, Aboriginal kids will smash it every time... It would be interesting if you can get hold of how they select in Netball WA because those skills there I imagine would form a part of the selection form, but I can tell you now, there's also other things that rate highly, like communication and these are the things that wouldn't do our kids much favours. Because we are not great communicators, we know that. We are not that assertive, and that's because that's how we grow up. And it's even if you've got a non-Aboriginal who's not like that. But the majority is, our Aboriginal mob are like that, that's the difference. If it's based on, you know, financial status or whatever, I don't think selection would be, but you just never know because I don't know what it looks like.”

“I find that sort of not understanding that half the time our parents have multiple kids, so they're not at every game, every training, they can't get you to every training. That was always my biggest thing, was yeah trying to get the training and being able to have someone to take you to training, someone to pick you up from training. And they're late at night as well. But yeah that's probably for me what it's been and not having that feeling comfortable, so not being able to - like connect with the girls and whatnot, but then coaches and then not really understanding your background and stuff. With a little bit of things that they say and stuff, you know.”

“So like you do a good pass or something, they're like oh yeah we got black magic here and that there, you know I'm like oh why can't you just say pick a black fella and say they're black. You know because once I told them about [0:07:28] oh she did a Kirby Bentley pass, you know I was like well that's better than saying black magic and all this. It's like most of the time I was doing it I was the only black fella in our group you know. And yet I knew so many other girls that were more talented than myself that weren't there, because they didn't have that support of being driven there and that sort of stuff.”

“So I got into under 15s and I went over to Sydney and I didn't know, but everyone's parents flew over with them and so they're having a couple of hours with their parents. And I'm like well my parents don't have that money to fly, so there I am. Just oh you can go with that family there, but luckily I went to school with some of the girls that made it, so we went together, I was with their families. And then when I went for I think it was under 19s I had girls at trials asking me for advice how to play and everything. I felt like I was topping up. They're all telling me I was topping up and then I didn't even make the squad because I had one of the coaches stop the whole trials. You don't do that, at trials everyone plays how they want to play. And I was catching the ball not purposely with one hand, but the ball kept coming out too far this way, so I was able to get there, but I was grabbing it with one hand and then grabbing it with two. She stopped the whole thing, made a fool out of me, she's like you're not here to show off your tricks and this and that there, you grab the ball with two hands, that's why you got two hands, ra, ra, ra and then I didn't even make the squad, let alone after that there. And that just put me off all together, I was like I'm not trialling again, because I'm not getting shown up. And at trials you don't stop nothing, everyone plays their own way and she pulled up to stop three courts just to watch me. And I was like this is bizarre.”

“Sometimes they get one black fella up but I feel like they feel okay we've got our token black person that's it... She was the best shooter you know and I feel like they do just say okay we've got that token person, you just go now and sit on the bench... So I feel that we might the opportunity to be there, but we don't get the opportunity to show what we got. Not only that, half the time you feel like you're players aren't throwing the ball to you as well, so comes down to all that too.”

“My dad tried to give me the Michael Jordan speech, but he's a white man, so I was like you don't know. You don't know you blonde hair blue eyes, you don't know.”

“But also it feels like when you are doing your trials in Perth you're competing against other black people, you're not competing against the rest of the team. That's how I felt... When I'd done trial we made it to the last trial and then the coach came up to me and she said how do you feel today? I injured myself, but I wasn't bad and I said oh I'm still a bit sore, so he said okay and then they picked the other black girl over me.”

Yarning Circle Participant 1: Listening to this is like in my teenage years I never even thought about going past local, doing anything. So weird hey?

Yarning Circle Participant 2: Because you couldn't see that far?

Yarning Circle Participant 1: I couldn't see that far.

Facilitator: What was the barriers for you?

Yarning Circle Participant 1: Black. Straight out black

“So yeah like we would go to trainings and the black kids are over here and all the white kids over here. And like just little things like trialling and then not getting into teams and you'd be like “What the hell? How did they get into the team and we didn't?” And you kind of feel like - and then they just let all the black kids go. But no one's ever said anything to me verbally.”

“You can see it though like just I feel like you have to be there in that presence to be able to feel it and see it. Some people might not even know that they're doing it in some sense. You know non-Indigenous people. Because they're not culturally aware and they haven't dealt with Indigenous people before maybe. I don't know. And just their normal way is okay.”

“I think as I got older in that pathway, it got definitely hard being an Aboriginal player. I think I went to this one camp and I was told by this other lady that ... this was at Canberra that I went to for the camp, and I was told by this one lady – she was telling me in the right intentions – that I would never get picked up by Fever because they would never pick up an Aboriginal player and that stuck in my head and it had annoyed me that it was said. But a part of me knew it was true, but it played with my head and that's why I just stopped going to training and I gave up my WAIS scholarship because I just felt straight away, 'No, I'm just wasting my time,' and also when I did have WAIS, a lot of the girls were part of Western Sting and I had ... I even got upset at some stages because they were younger girls who made it and I was in WAIS still and I never got picked up by Western Sting.”

“There's been casual racism from other players and stuff, that I've experienced, which I just kind of ignore.”

“I don't know if it's done on purpose but I've never really seen more than two Indigenous girls kind of coming through state league teams, Association, rep teams. So I don't know if - I don't want to say that there's racism but I've seen Indigenous girls that can do things that non-Indigenous girls could never be taught but they never make it into those teams. So I don't know if there is that slight tendency to just go oh it's easier to [unclear 0:12:38] than trying to introduce a new player. I think as well now that footy's become a lot bigger in women the girls are going towards that a bit more because they're more accepted in that playing sport because AFL there's so much hype around all the Indigenous players and everyone respects them and they're known for all their skills.”

“For the actual carnival it was very clear as well that the girls weren't welcome. It was actually quite sad seeing that. We'd walk in with all this group of girls and all the other teams were kind of looking at them like who are they, why are they here? It was pretty obvious that the other girls picked up on that as well. So when they were having a break some teams would go and mingle with other teams or kind of sit around and you'd find some of the Indigenous girls had gone off with their families into the carpark to have a bit of a lunchbreak because they didn't want to be in that environment because they didn't feel welcome. So that was really annoying to see and then I told them - they put them in div one and I was like they're not going to be able to play div one. They need to be in div two because they're not at that level. So they were getting flogged every game. So then by the second day we had two girls just not rock up because they were like well what's the point? We're going to lose every game. There was some real judgement from a lot of players and coaches. I had one guy - he was coaching for I think it was Perth or assistant coach and he was sitting further down the bench on the opposite court and he looked over to the court that we were playing on and looked at the score and he just laughed and said “I can't believe they're even here.” I just thought the fact that he was comfortable enough to say that when there were young girls sitting next to him and other officials so then again they're going to pick up on that and be like well, yes, why are they here? If he thinks that then I can think that and say that as well. So I had a lot to say after that carnival because it was very obvious the girls just weren't accepted. They were in the wrong div. They were getting flogged every game and then as soon as the whole round robin thing was over the girls just literally took off their uniform and then went home... I feel like by having an Indigenous team they were able to just tick a box and say, yes, we had an Indigenous team, that's us done for this year and now actually care about the running of it, what we had to say and the outcomes that came from it either I think.”

“Like we would have – if we had a funeral or couldn't come to training like for some reason, there was just that like no, no, no. Like this is training. Like you need to be there or you're not going to get a game and things like that. And it was like oh, hang on a minute, like we're doing sorry time or we've got stuff going on but they were like no, no. Like you've had two weeks leave for funeral or you know, whatever. So just that understanding of kind of what family is and like what was required of us as well.”

“There was a young girl who was 17... This got me mad, because it reminded me of myself. A young girl who was 17, who has been getting put over by white women in the Association club who are older than her. These are women that contacted her, and put it over her in the game. So, what else can a young girl who was in training do? She gives it back. But they didn't like it, so they got really rough, and then she got really aggressive...She screwed up her face, the young girl. She used to hide it... I had to learn to hide it, because I was expressive too... So I hide it. So, yeah, this 17-year-old girl got to a point where these women were pushing her, and pushing her, and pushing her, and then [Name], she put it over them, and they didn't like it, and the umpire just said, 'You need to stop doing that, or you're banned.' And [Name] was saying, 'They're pushing me, they're contacting me' and she's like, 'I don't want to hear about it. I don't want to hear about it.' And I'm like, 'That's being biased. You're favouring the other team. You're not actually hearing out the other player'... Because after that, the umpire, she said to the girl, [Name], 'You need to get off the court. You're banned from netball.'”

“...just things like talking about “the black girl”, just small comments like that, that they think aren't harmful, but those words can stick with you, and hurt... There's just some words that people say, and they don't think they're being racist, but it comes off as racist, if you're Aboriginal.”

“I was on netball camp we had to do team bonding activities and present a dance with your team, well a senior coach pretended to be an Aboriginal person dancing with tap sticks. Being the only Aboriginal person on the team it didn't make me feel welcomed. That senior coach is now part of another netball Association and it makes me wonder how Aboriginal netball players are meant to feel welcomed and respected if people in charge of these Associations have done things in the past that aren't about reconciliation and encouraging Aboriginal people to play netball and feel culturally safe to do so. The further you go up in netball it gets harder to feel comfortable being an Aboriginal player. You see less of your mob around for support and all the team and coaching staff are white.”

“I was present at a fight that happened between two young girls in [town name]. Two high school girls, one white, one Aboriginal...they both fought each other...and the Aboriginal girl got the better of her in the end, where parents intervened and had to separate. But the outcome of it was, that, the non-indigenous was fighting in a netball uniform but the Aboriginal girl gets banned for a year and the other girl doesn't...I don't know them personally, either of them, but if you're going to penalise one, you should penalise the other. And it should have also been the club's responsibility and said, 'you know what? Maybe we will make an example of you because you're wearing our club uniform. And you will be banned for a little while as well. Because we want our other juniors to understand that this isn't acceptable'.”

LACK OF SUPPORT AND UNDERSTANDING

The second most common barrier was a lack of support or understanding. In particular, participants talked about the lack of support that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander players face from home, often within the context of their socio-economic situation. In turn, netball representatives are either not understanding of the player's situation, whether that pertains to their socio-economic situation or other commitments (family, culture, work, travel) and/or do not provide adequate or appropriate support to players in relation to their circumstances.

Facilitator 1: So why do we think that some girls might have a lot of confidence and some girls might have less?

Interviewee: Because their family might be giving them support and giving them that confidence. Other families they might be comparing them to their siblings or to other kids.

“She [coach] thought I made excuses for if I wasn't attending training, but at that time, my parents had split up and I was going from different house to house and trying to go to school and trying to play netball and I was in Year 11 or 12 at that time, so I was trying to balance everything out and it just ... netball was the last thing that was hard for me because I had to get all my own issues out of the way to then go to training and try and make time for that. But then she just didn't understand or didn't care and she'd just think I was being lazy or didn't really care about it and put enough effort into it, which I wanted to. But at the time, I just didn't really have that much concern for it because I was too busy worrying about my own personal life that I had to sort out.”

“...like they didn't sit down with us and talk about the mental health side of it or like anything to do with like dealing with pressure, dealing with expectations. Like there was nothing like that. And so we did like a bit of goal setting and things at the start of like the season but - in terms of like with WANL but other than that, like I think they don't really - there was no support as a player to speak to anyone if you are feeling like it is too much or you know, the commitment is going crazy or like dealing with if you get dropped from the team one week or whatever.”

“So it is hard to just find that safe place as well when it comes to culturally specific issues at home or - as well, like there was a lot of domestic violence when I was living at home with mum and dad and so you know, if I couldn't come to training one time because dad's taken off with the car or something has happened and I'm like oh, what am I meant to say to like my coach?”

“But then, all of a sudden, everything dropped. There was no support systems in place, and if you're the only black girl amongst a whole lot of blondes, it's a very, very difficult road to toe, without family support. So, this is my 51st year coaching, so I've been doing this a long time. So, this is not just new, but this is what's happened. So, unless these kids have got that prop up support - transport, food - you know, because if parents aren't interested, the kids don't know what to do, because they don't have any - they don't have the support, they don't have parental support, you know?”

Many coaches and administrators also talked about the lack of support and understanding that they experience and witness from Associations, for example:

“Or if, like, we don't have a scorer, why can't one of them come and help us, and things like that? But they're quick to fine us if we're not in the box, doing duty, but you know, all our seniors team, who do box duty, are out playing, or umpiring, or...And then, we cop the fine, and then, you know, we're fundraising...So, then, you're trying to find a parent, which is - there's no parent wanting to do it. Then, you've got to find a young kid, you know, whoever is sitting on the sideline, to come and do it. It's hard...Because we've got three teams on Wednesday night, all playing at the same time. We understand it's COVID, but honestly, you know? That sort of stuff, just simple stuff, that - it's just a mark of - you know, there's plenty of courts available...so we've got to come in on a gate at 7:20, or 7:30 - whenever it is that it opens, and then, they shut the gate, and then no one else can come in. So, you know, I'm screaming at kids, their parents - drop them at gate two, drop them at gate two, just so we can fill the court, and not get a 250-dollar fine. Everything is 250 dollars. In 2017, we paid three-and-a-half thousand dollars' worth of fines.”

CLIQUEs, PURPLE CIRCLES, AND POLITICS

The third most common barrier which participants faced were cliques, purple circles, and the politics within netball. Participants talked about how in order to be accepted and get ahead that players, coaches, and umpires needed to fit a certain type, which excluded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (and therefore links with Discrimination and Racism). This barrier was exacerbated for people coming from regional areas to Perth metro. The spaces where cliques and purple circles were most commonly felt were during trials or selection processes for teams and within Associations. Many players also felt isolated within elite level teams, where they were usually the only Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander player. For example:

“No one is involved because there's such a clique-y circle, they make their own rules. It is so infuriating trying to be a part of that...on Association level you've got a lot of people who are in clubs and netball and they make decisions based on their interests and their thoughts. Like, we've got a small town and there's a lot of women who play football as well. And with our Association, we are struggling with the fact that [they] will not work with football so that we can both play. We had to really struggle this year for finals. Their attitude is, “Well, we don't care. They have to choose”, and it's like, wow, that is very selfish and that's not okay...At an Association level, they're not doing surveys, they're not getting everyone's point of view. I know you're not going to make every single person happy, like I get that and respect that, but at least get a majority of ideas. This little clique-y group that's in there right now, they just make their own decisions and they don't care about anyone else's decision. I just think as an Association level for a small community, they're not very thoughtful on what everybody would like. We're going to lose a lot of players because of what's happened this year. A lot of people will pick football over netball because of that.”

“If you're known and you already have gone through those smaller pathways then you're pretty much already guaranteed to be in that team whereas if you're a new girl coming in even though you might be better than someone else if you're not known then you won't get that time. So it is kind of still that reputation of it doesn't matter how good you are, it's more who you know and it's not as welcoming.”

“I've heard some people call netball a rich white girl sport which I think to a degree it's true unfortunately because there's just not that accepting us girls coming through. I think that's because it is predominantly young white girls that are coming through because they have the opportunities because they've been given these things from the start.”

“I found it very clicky...if you're families know the coaches, if they know all the people within that kind of high level netball community, they would tend to get through like a lot quicker and even when we used to be like number identified and stuff like that, we would obviously rotate through the trial kind of system and it is always the same girls that kind of will get on court first. They all know each other. And so it is really intimidating I guess trying it come onto a game where these girls play in their own league together and they're trialling together on a court so they all know how each other play and things like that and then we've like come down, a few of us from like south west, to come up because we got invited to this trial and then we maybe will get chucked on the last five or 10 minutes as like the extras. So yeah, I found that quite - it kind of put me off to go like what's the point of you know, trialling if they've already got girls that they're kind of already looking at.”

“The NAIDOC Netball Carnival can have so many teams from the [region] represent, with tons of talented girls, but at the Association Champs you're lucky if there is even one player per team! Because most feel no good for even trying to trial as it seems teams are set based on who your parent is - if your mum is a coach, member of the Club, go to a private school are big ticks...My niece is so talented, many trophies for netball did TDS once but they were “clicky” mob and she didn't feel ok.”

“...we got told there was a young lady, I think she is actually an adult, who got selected through the [region] pathways, through to the State...I don't know enough about the ‘pathways’ stuff but [she] didn't even play in [region] Champs. She was injured. So, how the hell does that happen? And why was somebody else not...that could have been for a young Aboriginal person or anybody else in our Association? But to have that sort of...to see it with your own eyes and to hear it, is a concern, because you're clearly not picking the best athlete on the day, to represent your region or whatever.”

COMMUNICATION

The fourth most common barrier was communication, which links in with Discrimination and Racism and Lack of Support and Understanding. Participants spoke about the issues that Aboriginal families face with “everything being online”, since “not all Aboriginal families have got access to this online stuff” particularly in the regions, but also to an extent in metro. Participants also spoke about how families and young people might struggle to understand or access messages and training modules which are usually not pitched at their level particularly in regions where English is a second, third, or fourth language, and/or literacy is an issue. Another common communication issue was the timeliness of communications and the lack of feedback channels or follow through from feedback. For example:

“Trying to get this young girl into one of these netball camps, the lack of communication, in the sense of the Association, I felt like they didn't know her well enough to follow it up. So then it was left to me and I really wanted her to get there because she had so much talent that I wanted her to go. And they did too but they didn't know how to get her there. So there was a lack of the father not knowing how to pay money, but we got through that but getting cash off him and things like that. It's just that online stuff where they can't enrol her or do things like that. So as a club or an Association, you need to be able to do that for them to help that step.”

“I mean we’re getting into it, but also barriers is that, and I feel this as an adult, as a committee member, as a working person in the community, I work in sport, live and breathe it, that some of the people that are a part of the Association, they would seem intimidating to Indigenous people. I try to bring my kids up to eliminate all of that stuff. I would tell my kid to, “Walk over there. Can you tell that lady to help you do something”, she would do it. There are even face to face barriers that we do have. We need to work with our kids on that and teach them. At the same token, they can be met halfway. Even talking about people understanding English, then being more culturally appropriate about how you go about things in general anyway. Just putting on another little lens.”

“I’m a single mum, it’s time, money, effort, having the pathways. It’s actually having it planned out properly as well. Having it communicated properly. I actually don’t mind the weekends because I often work full time, but Sunday in about a week’s time, we’re going to do the workshop and it’s like, ‘Well, that’s not enough time for us to get organised with kids and other things we have in our lives.’”

“Even though with the youth gala and the multi-cultural competitions that they have those are good but I feel like we always find out about it last minute and it’s – like say if [Town] wanted to organise to go to that I’d need at least six weeks before.”

“I didn’t know anything about the details – time and place – I had to get it off my friends from the team. And where the Association is – they post it. They say ‘Oh we always post it on the team...’ like the website or something. And Mum would get mad at them and say ‘Well we didn’t get it.’”

“The coach of under 16s this year was a disgrace. She was rude to the girls and Netball WA did nothing to follow up after the state cup. Consequently, my daughter will now never play netball again and it cost us a lot of time and money bringing her to Perth. It was so disappointing.”

OTHER COMMITMENTS, REQUIREMENTS, AND EXPECTATIONS

Raised predominantly by participants on the elite pathway, the fifth most common barrier was other commitments, which included relationships, social life, work, family, and other sports. Other commitments were then linked with requirements, such as diet, and expectations, for example, that netball training needed to be put first with often little consideration for travel time, particularly from areas outside of Perth metro. One participant spoke about how many Aboriginal athletes of her age left netball to join other sports or start families. For example:

“Social groups at school and how you see yourself with everyone that you socialise with.”

“We said giving up social life so maybe your friend group is going out partying at night. You’ve got a netball game and that’s going to stop you from your sport but you’ve got to think about what’s more important. A little party that you can always do again or a one-off netball chance.”

“...along my journey, we’ve been following him [husband] for a long time. I guess purely because... Why I did support him so long is he is at the pinnacle of his sport, and I wasn’t. I was just sort of plodding along. Not that I put my goals or anything aside for him, but I wanted to support him, so I’m obviously... I loved him, so I chose to go down that path, I think, more so than the other way.”

“I was playing under 18s, our games would be like at 6:00pm or 6:30pm or something. So I was just got a job and so I was having to leave my work at like 3:00pm to get to Perth so there was just no kind of that understanding. It was just like no, no, if you want to play netball, like this is the commitment we require and blah, blah, blah but it is kind of like well, there needs to be a bit of you know, understanding when it comes to travelling. Like can you push like for south west games? Can you just push them later or whatever because that was a big thing that kind of put me off was like I’ll either have to work or you know, commit to netball.”

“I found, also, another blockade, especially for the older kids, is peer pressure, as well, amongst the older teenagers. They give each other crap, basically, for going to trials and things like that. So, they’re like, oh, don’t go try out for the Rising Stars, that’s not cool. That’s a big block at the moment, I’m finding, with that age level, so 15, 16, 17s. Younger ones are all keen, and want to get in there and play, but that age group, I’m finding that’s a huge issue.”

SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION

Socio-economic situation was touched on across a broad range of other barriers, including Discrimination and Racism, Lack of Support and Understanding, Communication, Other Commitments, Requirements and Expectations, and Lack of Opportunities. Transport was mentioned as an issue across the board, whether that was in relation to getting to a local training or competition, or to regional centres or Perth for trials or development opportunities. Several participants spoke about how when they attended competitions in other states that their families would be unable to travel with them and provide support and that this often added to their sense of isolation and loneliness within their state team (there were also examples of families and other players supporting the girls in these situations). Many participants raised how expensive netball is in relation to other sports, and that many families need support from clubs and coaches to access KidSport. Several participants spoke about not having the right gear and feeling daggy and judged because of this. For example:

“But even that was always hard for me going and travelling away because the other players, they would have their parents there or a parent there and I never had my parents there because they couldn’t afford to fly over and at the end of the game, they would all ... and there was moments when we had rest days throughout the carnivals and they could go spend time with their parents if they were there, and I had to just hang out with my coach and that. I think that was the hardest thing because being Aboriginal, my parents didn’t have the money to come over and fly over, and that was multiple times when I was going to Melbourne and Canberra and different states for netball. So I think that was probably the hard thing for me but even just trying to get along with the girls. They used to annoy me, so I used to keep to myself.”

“I don’t want to speak for all of them but some people they just don’t have the money to buy the netball shoes, the uniforms, to pay for the fees, to pay for the uniforms, to pay for the trials. Whereas I think you can rock up to footy and just try out when it doesn’t matter whereas netball you have to register, you have to pay a fee and you’ve got to have the right stuff. So I think that’s kind of a barrier as well. They may not feel that they’re able to rock up to these things because they just don’t have access to equipment or resources that they need.”

“Oh, poverty’s massive, poverty is massive, so to play at a local comp, out at [Metro Suburb], you need to pay 170 dollars. You’re not allowed to get on that court until you’ve paid your fees. That’s just for local. Then, you’ve got to be affiliated with a club, and then, you know, to get – then, to get talent identification, then you’ve got to go to a district level, and then you’ve got to go to a regional, and there’s more and more costs that’s packed on it.”

“Transport as well when you live three hours away from the city or when things happen or being a boarder. It’s hard... You’ve got to make sure that you book a bus to get there or to trains early because your parents aren’t going to do it for you. They’re three hours away.”

SELF-CONFIDENCE AND SHYNESS

Many of the younger participants from the Aboriginal All Stars camp talked about lacking confidence or having low self-esteem, for example: “Ours was self-doubts like not having confidence or motivation, looks, low self-esteem and that’s it.” Older participants spoke about how Aboriginal girls and young women tend to be shy, introverted, and less outspoken, particularly within white contexts. The favouring of extraversion was often linked to a lack of understanding, discrimination, and the concept of a purple circle, where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander athletes do not align with the Western Australian netball paradigm.

“So when people say we have to be better at this and do this and do that you find it hard to do that and you think that you’re not doing it right so you put yourself down about it.”

“Some people might feel insecure and think that other people are better than them and bring themselves down a lot and give up on it.”

“Some people just make comments on other girls and it kind of just breaks your confidence down.”

“And the barrier is that you’ve got good athletes, good Indigenous athletes that can be in a development squad, but they’re shy... and they’re not outspoken...and they’re black kids. You know what it’s like to be black, you put a black kid in the middle of a white crowd and just tell them to do public speaking, they’re not going to do it. They’ll be shy. And it’s exactly the same thing here for netballers, they can see the potential in these girls, but it’s just because they’re not outspoken, or they didn’t come to this try-out, and there’s no progression or follow-up to keep these girls involved and committed, and participating in these events, so they could be in an elite side or whatever they want to call it.”

LACK OF OPPORTUNITIES

Many participants spoke about a lack of opportunities, particularly in the regions, across the player, coach, and umpire pathways in terms of upskilling and development (training and certification opportunities) or exposure to games at the right level to develop skills on court as a player or official. A lack of opportunities was often linked to Discrimination and Communication, particularly at an Association level. Several participants also spoke about how the Aboriginal All Stars program was a tick-box activity that did not lead to further opportunities. For example:

“There is no pathway for our kids.”

“...we came to the city and the girls really weren’t as developed as the same age group of kids that they had to compete against. But yet they came in and they competed at that same level. And I don’t think people realised that coming from the country they weren’t, they never really had development opportunity. And so sometimes I feel like when selection is being made, they think that the girls have had the same development opportunities as the city kids because of their skills, what they see on their skills as well. So I feel like my girls haven’t had the opportunity to be developed like the amount of time the city kids have. So I think the judgment comes because of that. They think that the girls have been fully developed. Not realising they are coming from a country town, they don’t have the same development opportunities as our city kids.”

“You don’t play against people who are better, really. And like you’ve got to play against the best to become the best. And you don’t have that choice up in the country areas.”

“Aboriginal All Stars are only just being put into sport development. I feel like we just don’t take it as serious as we take other teams.”

“I think 2016 might have been the last time that any Grassroots teams were able to play at a member Association championships, and they cut that out, and by cutting that out, it left our kids thinking, well, where do we go? Then, trying to trial within a predominantly white, mainstream Association was very hard for our girls, very hard. They didn’t fit. So, what’s happened is that whole opportunity of that long weekend, where we had kids being TID-ed, and being seen, and were playing All Stars and that sort of stuff, no longer exists, and that was at every level, from 10s, right through opens.”

“He’s made it to the top level, and he’s still not getting an opportunity to referee at the very top level.”

LACK OF ROLE MODELS

Participants often referenced the lack of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander role models at the elite level, talking specifically about how there was only one Indigenous player in the Suncorp Super Netball League. The importance of role models and representation was strongly linked to respect and providing inspiration for young athletes as well as coaches and umpires. The lack of Indigenous representation at the elite level of netball was compared with footy, which was described as having a more welcoming culture that respected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander athletes. The lack of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander coaches and umpires was discussed not just at the elite level but across the board. For example:

“If you just look at state league now. And you can count on one hand how many Aboriginal kids are in there.”

“Our kids don’t have that person to look up to, up at that high level... Yeah where they’re like oh look she plays, she’s Aboriginal, she comes from the same background, that sort of stuff. I want to be like her one day, but they don’t have that here. Who can they honestly pick out there and say I can be like her?”

“I think as well now that footy has become a lot bigger in women the girls are going towards that a bit more because they’re more accepted in that playing sport because AFL there’s so much hype around all the Indigenous players and everyone respects them and they’re known for all their skills. Whereas in netball there’s no Indigenous players to look up to to go oh, yes, this is cool, she’s doing this, I can do it as well whereas I think now that footy’s better or becoming bigger the girls are going well I might as well play football because I’ll be more accepted and more respected there.”

“Sometimes a young girl is the only First Nations girl to make Association rep level, WANL development clubs etc. There is no support, no acknowledgement once she achieves this, which is hard because she doesn’t see anyone else like her, at that level, in her team, at her Association – no coaches, other players, or other families. And young girls know it’s a big deal because they are the only one. They want to do well, and for their communities to see and celebrate their achievement, their success, which is an achievement for the whole community. But there is no support. And when young First Nation girls don’t progress from this point, they feel that there is no place for them in this sport. And since there are hardly any First Nations girls at state rep level or pathways to get them there and there is only one professional netballer in the entire league, it’s easy to understand why they become so disenchanted with the sport.”

OTHER

Other barriers or challenges which participants mentioned included how cultural awareness training was not taken seriously, or that people would not show up for it; the challenges of being the only Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person at an elite level and being expected to be an “expert” on culture; and player drop-off during teenage years, with reference to how this happens across the board in non-Indigenous contexts as well.

SOLUTIONS

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES (PLAYER, COACH, OFFICIAL) AND PATHWAYS (PARALLEL AND INTEGRATED)

The most common solution offered was development opportunities for players, coaches, and officials, which often led to discussion around pathways. Many participants spoke about the lack of development opportunities in the regions and discussed various ways in which NWA could offer opportunities, with participants talking mostly about bringing specialist coaches to regions for long durations of time to provide upskilling to players, coaches, and umpires, rather than having more regional participants attend training Perth. Participants talked a lot about how it was important to upskill Aboriginal coaches first, as this would provide a safe environment for players and build the capacity of communities. At the same time, participants of one regional yarning circle talked about how there would need to be alignment between a regional pathway and the metro so that there could be pathways beyond the first division of regional Club netball for players. Selection and talent identification processes were also discussed in relation to development opportunities and pathways, which will be expanded in the relevant section below. Several participants also discussed Netball WA being held accountable for developing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander players, coaches, and umpires by setting targets. For example:

“I think one more solution would be to try and get more Aboriginal people to run more coaching courses and umpiring. Actually getting Aboriginal people to run it and they can explain it at that level for Aboriginal people. I think if you want to get involved, you’ve got to start with Aboriginal people teaching that stuff, which then you’ve got to start getting more Aboriginal people trained up... But even if you don’t have Aboriginal people running it, but you’ve got Aboriginal people helping assist run it, then at least then they can tell if they’re understanding it or not, so you can at least get an Aboriginal person and say, ‘Well, tell me what she’s saying. Does she understand what they’re saying?’ You can actually still make that Aboriginal person feel comfortable because there’s another Aboriginal person. So there’s still ways around it.”

“I just think that the key points are there needs to be better pathways of development. There needs to be, there’s a few things. So there needs to be more development practice occurring in the country. There needs to be better development or transition pathways from country to metro. I think the participation programmes are great...but I think a review needs to happen around talent identification of Aboriginal kids and more support into that development pathway. Because it can’t be just keep being about participation. I mean, that’s very important, but there’s also other layers that need to be reviewed... But it’s like the clubs, the Associations, that’s where it needs to start. Participation and talent ID’ing needs to start at that club and Association level because that’s where the development opportunity begins. You can’t expect kids to be talent identified and then miss that whole club and Association level and then go straight into state league, it doesn’t work like that. Because the thinking around state league is that kids are already developed. Which I think is crap for kids that are under 18 because you never stop learning. So that mentality needs to change because I think there’s always development opportunities. But before you get picked in state league they like to think that the kids are developed. And that’s why, if that’s the thinking and that’s the system, it’s so important then that the development starts at clubs and Associations and clubs needs to get better than that. And in the country more so because if you are a parent in the country, you’re it. And I don’t think there’s enough support and enough programmes that happen in regard to developing the players and developing the coaches.”

“I’m seeing the other mob do for us for the basketball is they give us the development coaches and then they give us free court hire. If we had free court - that’s a barrier in itself, if they said you can have two courts two hours a week, get your girls together, come and train them and then... You know we could do the same thing and we could train them to go and participate at NAIDOC week at Perth or something. But that’s how they support us, anything we need. They provide basketballs, all of it.”

“If we started a development thing like we’ve got our way of playing, so if we were going to teach our kids our way, when they go to the next level, that’s not going to work, because they’ve got a different way of playing... Because we could talk about all of our strategies and stuff we could do here but if that’s what we’re doing here is not going to affect there, then it doesn’t even matter. All we’re doing is improving our kids so that they can play Division one here for [Regional] Netball Association.”

“Start making them [Netball WA] more accountable with setting target, so they’re made accountable to implement stuff to the regions and the developments of the kids. So Netball WA they’ve got more to answer for if things don’t improve.”

“I feel like each region could - like what I was saying before - could have their own development - indigenous development squads. And then their developing over here and getting that support and they feel safe in that environment and then those coaches and whoever’s training them there in that development can support them to move into the other development things that they might have and yeah and moving like from there. And then maybe able to - like you know a couple of those development players if they committed and whatever they can and do development in Perth on holidays and things like that.”

“The more Aboriginal roles and support there are throughout the netball Association and clubs, will encourage the younger generation to be more open with netball and everything associated with it. It will encourage them to work and train harder, once they see they are supported by Aboriginal people in different fields throughout the netball Association and clubs, will absolutely make a huge change.”

“More clinics needed to continue umpires and umpire coaching in regions. We need more help in maintaining our badges - more access to development in metro areas as I feel metro umpires get so much more assistance than [region] umpires!”

Many participants spoke about how parallel pathways would create a safe space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander players to flourish and develop, before joining in with mainstream pathways. For example:

“I just think in general make - some Associations only have little amounts in each team. Maybe make one new club or new clubs everywhere just with Aboriginals and mix them all together and make something bigger instead of just leaving them out and everything.”

“...we had the State Indigenous carnivals where every year each State would take turns in hosting it and it’d be Footy Netball Carnival. Like it was in WA one year. I went to Darwin one year. Adelaide. We even when to Canberra for it. And everyone took turns. That stopped. I don’t know why. I think it may be funding. It might have been funding or support in that thing. And I think they may have even stopped the Indigenous Australian team maybe. I don’t know. I haven’t seen much on it... See where we used to play New Zealand, Cook Islands, each State. Australia would bring teams, there would be other places that would bring teams... And that there also gave Indigenous girls that didn’t get in the Australian team to be able to have that opportunity and playing in that - like we beat - our Indigenous team beat the Australian team.”

“I feel like that could be a starting point just having something as simple as that. Having just a little - have our own indigenous pathway. And then in that pathway have our own competition. That kind of - you know like I was saying with the Australian Indigenous team we were in the mainstream netball system but with just an indigenous team. So you know we could have our indigenous team participating in - and slowly working on that transition into mainstream netball maybe.”

“I feel like just more indigenous girls to play - like you know, we all play better when we’re with people we feel comfortable with. I know a lot of the girls who are hanging with them outside of netball - and they’re so shy during netball. Like they all like to be together, I don’t know. And it’s more comfortable. I feel more comfortable around my people and yeah.”

“I think that to engage our girls or our community we need to look at parallel programs and pathways to start with... what I mean by parallel pathways, [is] to give them that opportunity to do exactly what's done in the non-Indigenous pathway, but it's in an environment where they feel comfortable and then what we're doing is try to prepare them [for mainstream]... Some people look at those kind of programs as segregating people but you know, to be honest if that's what we need to do and it's not really segregating it's just providing a pathway program for these girls. Where they feel comfortable and safe and we build up their confidence, their trust and their belief in themselves. Then we look to integrate them through, we prepare them for what to expect when they get to that higher level and I think all the states need to have those parallel programs to start with because that's the only way you're going to develop the trust between the players, the families and the netball Associations and clubs.”

“Some people look at those kind of programs as segregating people but you know, to be honest if that's what we need to do and it's not really segregating it's just providing a pathway program for these girls. Where they feel comfortable and safe and we build up their confidence, their trust and their belief in themselves. Then we look to integrate them through, we prepare them for what to expect when they get to that higher level and I think all the states need to have those parallel programs to start with because that's the only way you're going to develop the trust between the players, the families and the netball Associations and clubs.”

“It would be amazing to have our own WANL club we are just as committed as the next girl!”

While many participants discussed parallel pathways as a solution, they were also many participants who saw parallel pathways as another mechanism for segregation and advocated for more integrative pathways. For example:

“Even involving other teams, not just Aboriginal teams. We can do versing games and stuff with them and all socialise with each other to see we're all the same.”

“They should definitely include us more in - on the north side of the river there's a lot of white girls playing so it'd be nice if they'd look at us and include us in those things.”

“I had heard just recently one of the suggestions, by a teacher, was to assist with the fighting or to try and stop it, was that, maybe they should have different lunch breaks for black and white kids. And I just completely...I couldn't believe it. That teacher should have been sacked. But if you've got people like that in our community, who think like that, in today's day and age, we have a problem. And unfortunately, that behaviour and that attitude does boil over into our sport code. So, we really, you know, it is about, for me, it's about closing that gap...don't segregate the kids in anything that they do. Bring them together.”

“I think to separate and the Indigenous have their own league isn't a great idea. That just makes things even more racist. You are actually dividing us. Shouldn't it be all inclusive.”

“Would be great to be more inclusive without segregating into separate pathways - we need to work/play together more often.”

“Giving more Indigenous girls a chance so that we feel comfortable with other girls.”

“We've got Sudanese kids in there, we've got white kids coming down there, training. They all get together, you know? If it's comfortable, they're coming no matter - from whatever nationality... They're having sleepovers with each other now, you know, the families are coming along. We're talking about - we know these kids. Every single one of these kids, we can tell you their story, but they come there, and we're saying, we don't want bullying, there's no name-calling. This has to be a safe place for all of you kids, and the collectiveness is incredible, how these kids are all coming together, and that's because it's Aboriginal-driven... So, that's what I find with our Noongar kids. They're so accepting. You know, they want to help all the other kids. So, the kids are on the court, and you know, they're helping those other kids try and understand the language and the calls. It's awesome. That's the positive I see for our kids. They're such good kids, you know? And they lead, so that's why I want them all in that lovely space, you know, for the future, because they're not my kids, you know, but I want them to think, oh gee, you know, help that girl.”

“I think, sometimes, because of the lack of education and understanding by this mob, they think NAIDOC Carnival is only for black kids. And so then, they don't...there's no push. And I think the NAIDOC Carnival should really be a split 50/50 opportunity, or whatever.”

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ROLES AND GOVERNANCE

The second most common solution offered was introducing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Identified roles, increasing the amount of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation across the board, and creating mechanisms for regular consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities or representatives. Participants talked about how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives, who would serve as liaison officers between netball and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander players, coaches, umpires, families, and community, would be able to improve support mechanisms, make Indigenous people feel less out of place, and advocate for Indigenous interests. Some participants also talked about the support mechanisms that need to be in place for these representatives, suggesting that there be two, rather than one Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identified position on Associations, and that Cultural Awareness Training needs to take place so that Indigenous people are not being set up to fail by making them responsible for change within an uneducated environment. Many participants discussed how change needs to come from the top, and that there needs to be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative on the Netball WA Board, as well as a senior Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pathways role within Netball WA who has the power and respect within the organisation to drive for real change. For example:

“I think you need an Aboriginal voice at that higher level. That's a solution that needs to happen and I think WA Netball need to call it. And they need to say that Associations, especially in an Aboriginal town, like this is a lot of Aboriginal people in these towns and yet there's no voice, there is no one there to stick up for Aboriginal people or have an equal say. It's very unequal, you can tell. Not only that, on Association level you've got a lot of people who are in clubs and netball and they make decisions based on their interests and their thoughts.”

“...if there was an Indigenous person on that Association, that Aboriginal person would've absolutely stood up and said, 'Hey, come on. We need to support our committee and support NAIDOC and we actually need to do this for our girls, our Aboriginal girls. If anything, that's what it's for', and they would've then hopefully had some kind of nudge, nudge, we need to do this as an Association, or help.”

“I mean if they want to be open minded and get somebody who can walk in two worlds, because you need somebody like that, to walk in two worlds, to understand the way that bylaws work or whatever, be able to understand that and then being the link to be able to give that to players or the coaches or the teams of the clubs, to being that link to get all that information through, to know that the message is getting across and being able to get feedback and pass it back through that. Being that link, them being open minded to taking on feedback.”

“I think you need two. You need two people to back each other up, because one can be bullied or one can be swayed if they're not strong enough to stand up. But if you have two, it's not a huge job where that one person will burn out.”

“I think that's probably our first step [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander member on Netball WA Board], where we're going wrong. If we don't have...or an Aboriginal Advisory Group, that sits alongside. Or specialist director roles, on the Board of Directors. That can help but I think, in order for changes to happen, at a grassroots level, it has to happen at the top.”

“An Aboriginal liaison, somebody in the club, because I think that would definitely help because I think even when coaches go through the RAP program and everything, I just feel like they don't understand. Even though they can read it and study it as much as they can, I feel like they still don't understand. So I think there's definitely a good idea, just to at least have somebody from different regional state league teams or in any club just to be there to support them and just let coaches know ... not necessarily be the middle person to talk but be there when the player needs somebody to help the coach to understand what they're trying to come across and say... I definitely wish I had that, somebody I could talk to or even just be in the room with me when I was trying to coach or something instead of me just going to Netball WA stuff and they still didn't understand themselves and I had to explain it all myself without any support or feeling like I was in a safe environment...I think that should happen with every club.”

“It makes the girls feel at ease because they did make me feel like I was in an unsafe environment, with people I just didn’t know and trying to explain things to them that they didn’t understand, but then I think that having that, an Aboriginal person with them sitting there will definitely make them feel comfortable or just even help them speak about what’s going on and how they can support one another and go through everything and what changes they can make to better help the player.”

“...having an indigenous person in all those regional areas. Almost having like an AIEO in each area so that when they do come across indigenous players that want to go further in the pathway there is that one indigenous person that they can go to at that Association that will come down to trainings. That will be an assistant and that will help them feel a little bit more welcome. Then as well help the other coaches and help the other players understand the difference in culture and what’s appropriate and what’s not appropriate.”

“I know it’s hard to change, like processes that have been embedded in an organisation for so long but I think I would really hope that the member organisations and Netball Australia and of the people involved in netball actually listen and take time to step back and let our people have the say and let our voices actually be heard. For them to not feel threatened by us...For so long our people have been told how to do things and now is the time for them to step back, listen to us and if it’s not the same process that you’re used to having in your organisation well that’s too bad because this is the way we want it to be run and you need to respect that. Otherwise we’re still going to have the same problems that we’ve had since the dawn of time and that is that white people trying to tell black people how to do things. They really need to respect that process, to listen to what we want and to respect what we want. So systematically that’s what I’d like to see within the member organisations and Netball Australia and SSN, any entity that’s involved within netball.”

“It’s really important that when you’re organising any of these events that you have the committee obviously but you know, as many Indigenous people on that committee as possible so they can feel like it’s part of their program and their carnival too. It’s not just something that the Association is running, it’s important to bring them in to have a say, because they’ve probably got lots of resources that can be used for the events. They might have their family members who are cultural dancers or singers or they cook beautiful food, bring them in. I’m not saying that they should be doing it for nothing either. If the Association has a budget they should be paying those dancers to come in because I think for too long Indigenous people have been expected to just do stuff for free. The netball Associations, the netball organisations need to start actually budgeting and putting money aside to pay Indigenous people for what they bring and the cultural knowledge they bring to any program.”

“...invite, you know if there’s a couple of mums or a couple of coaches that are around, single them out and invite them to be a part of the committee at the Association. Or if they want to start up an Indigenous program, grab three or four Indigenous ladies from around the courts and just have a yarn to them and say look we’re looking to do this we’d really love your input and knowledge on how to go about it. Make them feel like they’re important and their knowledge is going to be taken on board I guess, because there’s so many opportunities to do that... I think sometimes non-Indigenous people feel a bit sensitive of saying the wrong thing. So it’s easier just to not say anything sometimes, they don’t want to offend or they might say something culturally inappropriate. But they just have to admit that upfront and say well listen hey I don’t know everything here this is why we need you, can you help us through this and show us the way and the best way to get this program up and running, we need your advice on this. They need to be comfortable relinquishing their power and their authority and just listen and learn.”

“...if there was something that was kind of like an Aboriginal liaison officer or an Aboriginal person that would actually – sort of like if you were talent identified or if you start to you know, play from regional upwards, there’s an allocated person that actually checks in with you and kind of explains and I guess – just not advocates but just helps you through that journey. I think that would have been really helpful just to have like someone that actually has a say. So like you know how they always have all the coaches that sit at trials and things but actually having an Aboriginal person involved in that process... Or someone that liaises with families and actually says oh, you know. This is what’s happening. This is what’s going to happen. You know, if you have any questions, contact me. So you have that direct relationship with another aboriginal person that can represent and advocate for you.”

“...having a sort of liaison officer or someone that’s Aboriginal that knows kind of the system and how it works but also, they have to have a bit of say. So you can’t just have someone that’s like not going to have impact and they’re not going to listen to at an exec level.”

“Always go back to the local people on where the netball is running for support and knowledge of the girls and area and how things should be done and what’s appropriate or not and get that cultural understanding from the locals.”

EDUCATION FOR NETBALL WA STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS TO IMPROVE CULTURAL AWARENESS, UNDERSTANDING, AND SUPPORT MECHANISMS

The third most common solution was providing Cultural Awareness Training, or some form of education for NWA staff, Associations, and Clubs. Many participants spoke about the importance of a Cultural Awareness Training that included netball or sport specific scenarios so that non-Indigenous people can understand the barriers and challenges that Indigenous athletes, coaches, and umpires face, and that they will be better informed to provide appropriate support. Many participants spoke about how Cultural Awareness Training or education needed to start at the top, within NWA the state sporting body first. For example:

“What are they [Associations] doing to educate themselves so that they can be culturally appropriate or community minded even? It doesn’t even come down to equality or race or anything, it’s about being community minded to benefit everyone, not just certain people or groups.”

“So you need people to understand the elements of the history. Then you need people to understand, I suppose, the difference between country and metro. And then it’s almost a specific cultural awareness on how that plays out in the netball system. So a specific cultural awareness for netball. Rather than it being just around history all the time, but you know that third layer of case scenarios, where you’ve got an Aboriginal kid talent identified in a team and, you know, having a scenario where that kid’s in a team and then you’ve got a non-indigenous coach. And you know playing out how that can go so bad. Or scenarios of how it can be so right...So then it comes around and about the netball system and not just about Aboriginal history, so it’s about behaviours, communications, all that sort of stuff. Because we can bring cultural awareness until the cows come home, but cultural awareness is historical stuff. So we need to be able to translate what that looks like in any system. So whether it’s netball or education or whatever. Because people can understand the history but when they go back to their place of work, which in some case the coaches is the place of work, it’s like well they are blind to how it might be playing out.”

“So there needs to be, that’s why I say cultural awareness training. But it needs to be...it’s not just about understanding indigenous or all cultures, it’s about understanding it around sport. It’s about understanding that as a coach/co-ordinator or a referee/co-ordinator...I think that cultural awareness around sport and understanding the challenges and the barriers that come with our young people. And that, you can’t put in the ‘too hard’ basket. You’ve to work out how...because they’re actually really good athletes. And they’re actually really good kids. You’ve just to go work with them...And you can’t always go and ask an Aboriginal person to do it because, they know more, they’ve got a better relationship. They need to build that relationship with them.”

“You’ve got to start from the top I think. I think you really need to make sure that everyone does cultural awareness training. That they understand the difference in culture...I just think better understanding about the culture, about communities, about barriers. Some people think that people don’t get through pathways because they’re lazy or they’re not capable – many other reasons why girls don’t make it through those pathways that people don’t understand. So I think just making people aware that there are so many barriers that these girls have to overcome that non-indigenous girls don’t have to overcome. It’s not as easy for them.”

“Educate more about cultural awareness; Indigenous players in the [Region] face barriers and challenges through their culture that stop or pause what they do in life such as having to look after family members or attending sorry business. Cultural awareness will also create a safe space for indigenous girls in the [Region] to proudly promote their cultural identity, experiencing opportunities to change the stereotype.”

BUILD ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER GIRLS' CONFIDENCE, RESILIENCE, AND HEALTH AND WELLBEING

On the other side of education was building Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls' confidence, resilience and health and wellbeing. Confidence building, in the form of leadership, goal setting, and acting/theatre sport workshops, was suggested to help participants to walk in both worlds, to be strong in who they are, and to feel empowered to communicate in situations outside of their comfort zone. Many participants spoke about strategies to help participants to develop resilience with non-selection, in particular educating participants and their families about selection and trial processes and helping them to understand the value of learning new skills, rather than being put off when faced with rejection. Several participants also discussed the importance of providing mental health support to participants on the elite pathway to help them to deal with pressures and expectations and that level, and again to support them through non-selection. For example:

“I feel this as an adult, as a committee member, as a working person in the community, I work in sport, live and breathe it, that some of the people that are a part of the Association, they would seem intimidating to Indigenous people. I try to bring my kids up to eliminate all of that stuff. I would tell my kid to, “Walk over there. Can you tell that lady to help you do something”, she would do it. There are even face to face barriers that we do have. We need to work with our kids on that and teach them. At the same token, they can be met halfway. Even talking about people understanding English, then being more culturally appropriate about how you go about things in general anyway.”

“Through understanding those pathways, what it means. It also talks about us getting our kids ready, saying, “Hey, if you want to do this, you’ve got to work hard for six weeks, because you’ve got six weeks at training, then you have to go to the weekend, get invited to the weekend camp, and you have to perform at your best. And then going from there, if you get picked out of that, then you’ve got another four weeks of training”. It’s also getting our kids’ mindsets ready for the challenge, but also to build them up for resilience if they were to be selected. So understanding what a pathway looks like and getting them to ask the questions and getting our girls to go back and say, “What about next year?” Getting them to encourage their friends to come down and have a crack too and through the talent ID process I suppose. This year, we asked if we could put names up as a club because we got a list of names and we were like, “How about this?” Just being able to open it out on different levels as well, not only on talent but as well as kids who are always rocking up or are always willing to learn, being able to give those people opportunity to at least, if you’re training for six weeks you’re going to learn something.”

“I’m not sure if they did it this year, but when the kids don’t get selected after the camp, if they do like a follow up. And it’s a wellbeing check too. No matter what colour you are, black or white or anything, you work so hard to get to something and then you get knocked back right there and they say, “Sorry, you’re not on the team”, then are they providing that feedback to that girl to say, “Hey, you’ve done all of these great things over the last six weeks. Unfortunately you didn’t make it. Maybe try doing this and this over the season to prepare yourself for next year by doing this”. Through that pathway, being able to check in on people to and for their health and wellbeing, how that kid would be affected.”

“I’ve been in pretty much every situation where either I couldn’t pay for something or that I couldn’t get a ride there, or I just didn’t have strapping tape or I didn’t have the right training clothes or I had forgotten my shoes; yeah, all situations where I could help them [other Indigenous athletes coming through the pathway] just to keep going and even just to [say], ‘I know you feel isolated, but just go for your dreams if you really want to play at that level.’”

“The whole mental health side of it. I think that could be something that could potentially – like if it is the same – I don’t know what everyone else is going to say but if it is something that they need that support in terms of that cultural side and their own emotional health and even like being able to deal with rejections and things like that. At trials and stuff because obviously it is going to happen... you’re going to face rejection at some point so I think it would be really cool to like out of this, if there’s something that can be put in place help girls navigate that space, and keep pushing and staying motivated even if they do get – you know, they don’t get in the team the first two years. Like keep pushing.”

“I think because I also did along the way like some leadership – some public speaking workshops in my journey for netball. And it really helped me. It really did help me to step up and make conversation with people... Then I ended up getting along with the girls, in the end. I didn’t want to please people; I was just there to play, and give it my all, all the time, and shout, and encourage other people. I think it’s just me just being myself, and being comfortable with myself. It showed.”

“I want to mainly focus on the young athletes/girls. Giving them a course of leadership, like they can speak up. Give them the confidence. Getting them to know who they are. Like, you know, they need to know who they are, and where they stand. That’s what I’m starting to do with the girls I’m coaching. You know, give them a code of conduct in the athletic world. Because there are going to be some horrible humans who just want to put it over you.”

“Strengthening their confidence and empowering these young Indigenous girls by recognising their achievements.”

“Peer support and confidence building for Aboriginal players in each grade...older Aboriginal players in the Association mentoring younger players.”

“I think if we’re talking solutions, I guess, anything for me has to happen at grass roots level. I think about a young person coming through in terms of developing any skill in a sport that rises through the ranks and becomes an elite netballer. That is about developing their life skills with that. It’s not just about their netball skills or their sport, specifically, it’s about how they become good young people.”

Two of the Aboriginal All Stars participants also talked about how a solution is for they themselves to confidence and not to be affected by others’ opinions:

“Just being proud of it [being Aboriginal] and not really caring about what other people’s opinions are because you know that it’s not true.”

“Just not listening to them in general. Just blocking them out and thinking that you are who you are and everything.”

SELECTION CRITERIA AND TALENT IDENTIFICATION

The solution to the discrimination and “purple circle” experienced and witnessed by many participants were to make selection criteria more transparent; have scouts from Perth visit the regions to identify talent; and providing a code of conduct for selection, particularly to Associations. Some participants also suggested having an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander representative on selection bodies, which is included in the ATSI Roles and Governance section above and is not repeated here. Participants also linked these talent identification processes with development opportunities and pathways. For example:

“Have more of the trials instead of just picking a team before they all come in.”

“So the flowchart is good, but I think what happened this year was that our club girls didn’t get invited to that. It was almost like they didn’t want to get chosen. Someone stepped up and said, ‘No, what about all these girls?’ So to have someone out of the Association coming to look at this and making it like an open minded scope, because you’ve got an Association only picking who they want to go. That’s not fair either. So our girls nearly missed out this year because, again, I didn’t know the process, I didn’t know who chose or when it was chosen and who was choosing. So I think that you’ve got to really know, make it clear and have an option at clubs. Luckily someone spoke up, I don’t know who, and said, ‘No, we’ve actually got a few girls that are quite talented.’”

“It’s more than, you know, the days of raising Aboriginal flags are gone. We need to challenge systems. So that’s what I’m saying. If you’re not asking, not even challenging, it’s around supporting systems and changing them if it needs to be changed. So we’ve got a netball system, you know, there’s processes there, there’s pathways there. But everybody has to fit into that system and to that box. So not a lot of Aboriginal people fit that box or fit that system. So we’ve got to be innovative with what else we can do to help bring people into the system. And yes, putting up an Aboriginal flag will make Aboriginal people feel proud. Yes, having an indigenous round is great, but that’s not the system. The system is based on skills, sports skills and experience and selection processes. Which I don’t think suit the needs of Aboriginal people. Because it gets interpreted, from my point of view,

“it gets interpreted around that purple circle around who you know, around being that confident kid at the front. It's very, it's a system that can be left for people, in any sports really, left for people to make their own personal decision around it. And it does not matter whether a kid's skill level is to the roof, if that kid doesn't fit that circle of their belief systems, that kid doesn't get selected...and I'm not even saying this is a racial thing – but it's a purple circle thing. And netball is very much a purple circle. And if you haven't been in it for years, or if you don't know anybody in it, you've got Buckley's of breaking into it.”

“...a lot of the Perth players, a lot of coaches know them because they're in Perth. When it comes to country teams and other people like that – like remote and they go down there to trial, those coaches haven't seen them or don't know them in some sense. So more or less them getting out to regionals regions and having a look as well.”

“We need to recruit more. The Indigenous carnival that happens every year, there's so much talent there, yet barely anybody gets picked up on a team from there. It's like, we should be out scouting there... ‘You're good enough to be on a state league team; why don't you come along to trials?’ Like, go out and invite them.”

“I want talent. I am so done with people getting in and not having talent, just because they know someone... I want people who are scouts, actually see the talent. Yeah. So, therefore, with that, they need experience as coaches. Not favouritism... I don't know what it is, but they need to have something that... like, a code of conduct or something, guidelines, of a potential good athlete to spot in the scouts, not favouritism. So it's all fairness.”

“Select players for their skills not players whose parents are friends with or are on the committee. Put players in positions that they excel at, not positions that just need to be filled, because the coach is friends with someone on the committee.”

”

IMPROVE COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Participants spoke about how communication could and should improve across various spaces and scenarios, including: improving the advertisement of development opportunities and carnivals so that these opportunities are more inclusive (at the moment Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are missing out and feeling excluded), and so that people, especially those coming from the regions, have more time to prepare to bring teams to regional centres or Perth; printing information on poster format or providing paper “how tos” as families do not always have access to or understanding of software platforms; and providing visual representations of pathways. Linked with Education and Cultural Awareness Training, many participants requested that netball staff and volunteers learn how to communicate appropriately with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander players and to create safe spaces. Several participants also spoke about improving transparency around allocation of funds and the minutes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander committee meetings. For example:

“Since it's a small town we all know about Saturday netball and everything and it's packed down there. But I just think they need to advertise that if there's any programs or anything on because people usually miss out on them even instead of Saturday netball.”

“It is a challenge, getting people to use technology. And again, same thing too, my daughter attended northwest and same thing, if my daughter wasn't invited then I wouldn't know what the process would be or what is required of the parent in order for the kid to attend. Or even timelines and money, through our club we try to minimise all of that stuff and we do that extra consulting to ring up parents or bring them on the line while we're online, trying to register their kids to play, or what that looks like in terms of them being financial, whether we take money from them and then deposit it in the bank. Or help them apply for kid sport, because that again is another process that they go, “Argh”. Obviously technology is what it is, it is what it is, but through I suppose more how tos. I mean, we try and draw how tos, like I drawn them up for the club and we try and send them out to the parent. That's just paper, sort of stepping out stuff, but again I'm sending it all, printing it and trying to eliminate the barriers before we get there. That's just something that we do on a club basis. I mean, even if Netball WA or Associations or whatever, if they do a session, call people in and stuff about getting them in, how to register, what does it look like if you're not too sure. And it's different too because now they are pushing us into a club structure within this Association. I don't want to be rude or anything, but since we've started, we've always taken that on as the committee, as parents, as volunteers, as team manager and coaches and stuff, to back our kids up and keep chasing. Otherwise it just lapses and they can't participate.”

”

“I reckon is understanding the pathway and having it written out. Not writing out a 100 page document, even just a simple little flowchart. For example, our girls from our club made it right up to state cup, so even if you had a flow chart about, ‘You play in your Association, you do this, you do this. This is where you can’. As you know, Indigenous people are visual learners and that's how we learn, by looking at something or seeing somebody do something. So maybe just as a quick one, a chart of pathways, like a flowchart or just pictures, even just writing down Associations in [region] for our kids to understand.”

“I would provide that support but I was very stern with parents as to how many times this was going to occur and what would happen if they don't turn up. Because I think that's very important that, you know, it's about empowering, so we don't get into that thing of babying people. And, you know, being very clear with the message of support and also letting them know that I understand and I'm flexible, and I understand if people can't turn up religiously every week, but when they do get stuck I'm there, but I'm not going to do this every week just because you're sitting around on a lounge or something, if that makes sense.”

“I just want young girls, if they come through, to just be comfortable or be able to talk to somebody, because I think that was probably the hardest thing that because I hardly knew anyone and I didn't have any relationships with anyone in netball, I could never ever talk to them, any of them, and it was so hard to tell my coaches if I was going to be at training or something. So I feel like communication was the biggest key because I know I sometimes used to get in trouble for it, and I just don't want anybody else in that situation.”

“If they want to provide feedback, they're actually going to take note of it. It is not going to be like oh, okay, yeah, sweet. Thanks for that. Like catch you.”

“Transparency of allocation of funds.”

“Netball WA also needs to show transparency of meetings had with ATSI advisory groups.”

“Indigenous kids need more support, our kids are more reserved than others and won't speak up much just do what's told. Non-Indigenous people sometimes take that as ignorance or arrogance but most are shy! They need to learn how to speak to our kids, not down to them, not over them!”

”

FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND TRANSPORT

Many participants spoke about solutions around easing the socio-economic barriers that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander players face by providing transport to training and trials; reducing fee costs; and offering scholarships. For example:

“But we can even do things like if girls – round girls up so we've got training tonight. We've got this bus going around picking up young girls, okay you're on your way to pick up those kids on that side, you pick up those kids that side. Because I find that's the biggest thing too is getting our kids to training and then home from training. That's a barrier.”

“...making it more affordable for people to play. Because like if you played – I know everyone gets the Kids Sport voucher – I don't know if you've heard of that?... So if you get that once a year but you play two sports in one year it kind of doesn't make sense. And you know time you pay for fees. And then so like for me I've got four kids that are playing sport. A thousand bucks nearly for my kids to play sport. Just for the winter sport. That's not summer sport. So I think just the cost also puts it – you know and I was talking to those guys in [town] about the nomination fee for NAIDOC. It's \$210 and one of the girls... So that covers court hire, umpires and a couple of other stuff but [Name], she turned around and said to me “I'm running – I'm helping organise the basketball for NAIDOC and our fee is only \$120 to nominate a team.” So yeah. I don't know. But that's – now they're trying to seek help from mining companies and stuff for them to be able to go – play NAIDOC in two weeks' time because of you know – otherwise the girls won't be able to go. And for the NAIDOC Perth – we only got notified last week. Because it's three – you know not even four weeks before NAIDOC started that we're trying to you know get all the nominations and stuff done.”

”

“I think gathering them, the girls that to do different trials would be a good idea, so even just getting a bus and taking them there to the trial, maybe a whole lot of them; if five of them want to or ten of them want to trial... introduce it to the different young girls and say, “You should go for this,” and maybe assist them with getting there because I think that’s probably the hardest thing with most people – it was definitely for me – was transport, is trying to get there. Definitely supporting them if they do go there, and if that did happen, I would definitely come and support, be there to help them and make them feel comfortable and tell them how it is before they go on trial. That would definitely be something I would love to see, just a whole lot of them going there and at least giving it a try and seeing if they like it, because then maybe if there’s ten of them, at least maybe six of them, they could just go through it and get picked up from different state teams.”

“Probably as well maybe even having more scholarships and things available for the girls so that if they do rock up to state trials they have ankle braces if they need them so that there’s already that sense of I’ve got the stuff. I can go on court with these other girls. Instead of thinking oh well I’m not prepared. I’m not at their level. There’s no point in me being here.”

“Not all players are privileged. In the [region] netball fees are a lot. Maybe local sponsoring for kids whose families can’t afford. Not sure if this is already a thing or not.”

“...there needs to be more leniency with Netball WA fees/Association fees (payments up front and no reduction to payment if player changes their mind or is unable to play within three games), registration systems should include options for payment plans to address barriers for players from low socio-economic backgrounds.”

“Association fees should be the same across the board. The fees are high for participation at community level. That’s not encouraging participation. Associations need to share the list of clubs with their fees so it shows transparency and stamps out greedy clubs upping fees. Netball needs to be affordable for all. Not a money spinner especially [Association]. [This] needs to be on [their] website.”

ACKNOWLEDGE AND CELEBRATE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CULTURES

Many participants spoke about how netball could acknowledge and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures more. In particular, participants discussed having an appropriate Elder deliver Welcome to Country before all grand finals and carnivals; celebrating and showcasing Indigenous talent, in terms of replaying footage of former elite Indigenous players or having Indigenous teams play curtain-raisers; and having elite Indigenous athletes run clinics at mainstream as well as Indigenous events. Many participants referred to AFL and how AFL is much better at celebrating Indigenous cultures and players than netball. For example:

“AFL has a lot of Indigenous things and then they’ve got a lot of rounds and everything. Maybe with netball we could do things like that.”

“More advertising Indigenous things and people because I know one of the larger teams they had Indigenous bibs which was good. So just little things like that every now and then.”

“I think there should be more of those events. If I’m thinking of, after looking at that survey, I thought there was some really good ideas there. You know, things like Grand Finals where they never do an Acknowledgement of Country or Welcome to Country or anything like that. The bare minimum, again, it’s whether they don’t know or they just choose not to, they don’t see the importance of it. Again, I think it comes back to cultural awareness and understanding. I think it’s really good, I like the idea of that Indigenous Round. I think that would be awesome. These positive things are just ways that we can start building locally, nationally and internationally to recognise our culture and our Aboriginal athletes.”

“I didn’t have any of that, and I kind of wish I did. When I look back... When I watch these games now, and I see these girls wearing these beautiful Indigenous dresses, I’m like, ‘Damn it, where’s my dress? I want one!’ Because they’re absolutely beautiful, and how they embrace it, and welcome to country, and all of that is just so beautiful, and I’m so disappointed that I didn’t get to experience that when I was playing... I think they’re doing a wonderful job. But I mean, I guess they only have really one round, though, don’t they? This Indigenous round... So it would be kind of good to celebrate it most weeks, and do a welcome to country every week, acknowledging the traditional owners, and things like that. It shouldn’t just be celebrated as a one-off; it should just become part of every week, you know.”

“I think making it a bit more of a bigger deal around NAIDOC and having - showcasing indigenous talent a bit more. They really do make a fuss about it in the AFL. They always talk about how amazing indigenous players are, what they’ve done to the game, what they bring to the game and it’s not highlighted in netball at all. They show old footage of old indigenous players in the AFL all the time nearly every - showcasing what they’ve done, what they’ve done. But there’s nothing like that in netball. There’s no old footage of Bianca Franklin or other Indigenous players coming through and what they’ve done, what they did, how they played. So I think, yes, just needs to be highlighted a bit more and showcased a bit more that there are Indigenous players in netball and this is what they’re able to do instead of just saving it for that one day in NAIDOC and then again it’s almost like a tick in the box. Yes, we’ve done that, let’s move on.”

“Welcome to Country must be remunerated and due diligence needs to occur to ensure the most appropriate person is asked. Sometimes an Acknowledgement of Country is appropriate, but it is not necessary for it to occur at every single meeting run by an Association or NWA - it becomes tokenistic and meaningless.”

“I believe it is important to include the Indigenous round during the season for all Associations to help identify Indigenous talent if not known already. It will also provide an opportunity outside of the NAIDOC carnival to acknowledge our Indigenous players within their club/ Association. It would be a special moment.”

“Please stop inviting Aboriginal Men to do welcome to country. Each year a Grassroots team should be offered the chance to do Welcome to country performance at the opening.”

“Having some Netball WA workers and Indigenous players come to the courts, to promote Indigenous players would be an awesome thing down here!!”

“I mean we get a lot of the footballers and stuff come up and they run the clinics and everything like that. But we don’t really see it in the netball field. So to be able to try and get people up there or up here or you know in Broome, or Port Hedland or wherever, just to come up and to discuss, you know, what they’ve done and stuff like that. Maybe if they’ve done like a training session or whatever, or a little luncheon or something where they can sit down and have a Q&A and a bit, you know, of something like that, I think would really benefit. Yeah, yeah, so just giving people the understanding and a bit more, I guess, of that personal touch.”

ASSOCIATION CHANGE

A lot of the solutions suggested above, e.g., Development Opportunities, Talent Identification Processes, and Cultural Awareness Training, were directed at the Association level. Some participants also spoke about how change within Associations was also a solution, as they believe that by getting new people in with fresh perspectives the system would be more likely to change for the betterment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. For example:

“Even WA Netball could make an Association thing where people are in there for two years and then they’re out, because they get so stagnant in their ways that if you don’t have fresh eyes, fresh people in there, nothing changes. You could at least handle it for two years and knowing that, hang on, someone else is going to come in. Because if they’re not going to change and we can’t show them to change or they don’t think there’s a problem with the way that they see things, we’re never going to be able to change that. So if WA Netball can look at that and say, “People are in there for too long and it gets too stagnant. Let’s chuck some new fresh people in”, and make it a rule that someone fresh has to go in every couple of years. It gives people a chance to get in there, because when those clique-y groups are in there, no one can have a chance of getting in and no one wants to get in when they’re clique-y like that.”

“I think having an opportunity to get in and trying different things and hopefully, as an Association, seeing what works for a community, not just for netball. That’s how I think you’re going to get change, is by trialling different things and trying things that work instead of just having a group that think that they know when they don’t.”

“So it’s the old mob. I realise it’s the old mob, old generation...When are you going to give it to the young generation? When are you going to allow them to step up and take the lead, you know? Because it may be the old ways; their way of things, in how to run things. Whereas now it’s 2021. People are moving forward, people are opening, people are speaking up. Yeah, and they want to see support, in the end, for Indigenous/Torres Strait Islanders, and other coloured players, nationalities, diversity.”

“...remove the board members who are totally against Indigenous players moving forward towards an elite pathway. For example [region] WA currently have these members on board. Our girls are losing or lacking interest in netball because they are always being held back and they are clearly only helping the same non-Indigenous girls year after year. There are so many highly talented netballers in [region] who are now only playing social or mixed fun netball, because of the stress of the girls being treated unfairly.”

“This Association needs to do more for Indigenous kids, they don’t even do an Indigenous [round] here, nothing in the last four years! They don’t do acknowledgement of country at any events or finals, nothing to make Indigenous kids feel at ease and ok!”

OTHER

Other solutions which participants raised were increasing participation amongst children in order to increase the number of parents (potential coaches) to clubs; being inclusive to boys and men; trialling a regional development pathway in partnership with Garnduwa in the Kimberley region; Netball WA to recognise the work that grassroots volunteers do to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander players; and get feedback from communities and children about why people are disengaged with netball.

“Well you’ve got to bring the kids in to keep the parents entertained and get the parents. So, you know, it’s the same thing, like if you start introducing more kids into the association level, you might start attracting some good parents to then identify who the potential coaches are within the clubs.”

“...being inclusive to our boys. Like, you know, I don’t know if it’s a Netball WA or a Netball Australia rule or whatever, but there’s just not really...like we’ve got young boys who want to play netball, and there’s no...you can one boy, I think, on the court at one time, on a team...it’s a stupid rule... There needs to be a separate pathway that allows for these young women and men, boys whatever...if we’ve got a bloody National Men’s Netball, there need to be a pathway that allows them to be considered. I don’t know what that pathway looks like or how you build it into the netball pathway.”

“So, there’s never any harm in having a conversation with Garnduwa when an idea is put forward. We are...one of our strategic...in our strategic plan, one of our KPIs is about female participation. And I mentioned here that we had that Women in Sport program years ago, that was about that. So, a couple of years ago, when they reviewed our strategic plan, that was one of the things they said, ‘we need to do more around female participation’...Netball is a sport that, you know, covers off on that area and that is already played across the region... I mean, the fact that we’ve done something similar before, and there was lots of talk, back then, about how we...as I said, we’ve had this conversation for many years, about how we get around the issue of affiliation and things like that, for our girls that are in remote and regional, that don’t play in a regular comp or aren’t members, or insured with the affiliation process. So, I think that’s a big factor for Indigenous participation. And I think that that’s something that really needs to be high on the agenda. That if you want participation, that’s the starting point. We’ve got young girls participating and playing netball, in order for them to develop and so that we can start seeing and going, ‘hey, here’s a good netballer, we need to get through the pathway... And I think that’s something, that as an organisation, we’ve talked about a lot, because we tend to always want to help and be the one on the ground, to support our mob. But we have to be realistic, if we’re going to do it, we’ve got to do it properly and it has to be resourced properly.”

“Netball WA should recognise the efforts grassroots level volunteers are putting in to retain ATSI athletes and support players through the current pathways.”

“Get into the communities get feedback from children and parents and see why kids are disengaged and work on the reasons for the disengagement to try and get our kids back into Netball.”

NEW FROM PHASE TWO

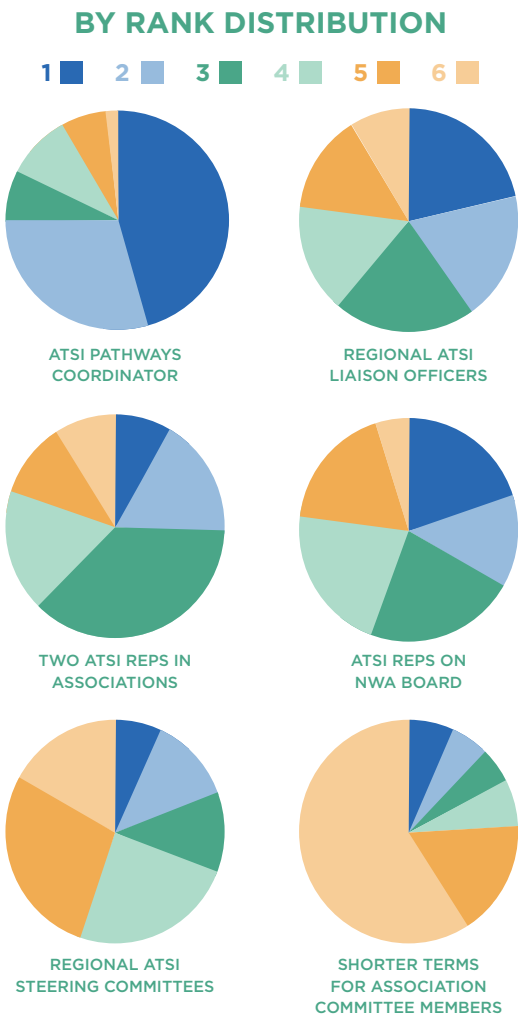
Three new solutions that were raised within the Phase Two open-ended survey questions were to “create a youth leadership committee for the youths’ voices to be heard”; “traineeships for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait women which lead to permanent employment within Netball Australia”, and “introduce procedures across all levels of netball to address systemic racism.” This last suggestion is worth noting, because while discrimination and racism were the predominant barrier, cultural awareness training rather than anti-racism training was suggested as the main form of education for Netball WA staff and volunteers.

PHASE TWO: RANKING SOLUTIONS

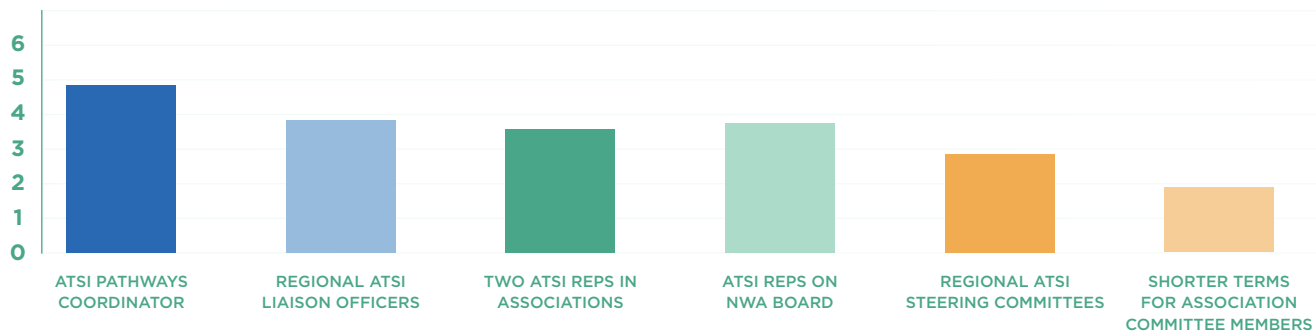
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER IDENTIFIED ROLES AND GOVERNANCE

Phase Two participants were asked to rank each solution from the following options which related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Identified Roles and Governance:

- Employ an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pathways Coordinator (ATSI Identified Position) who develops and oversees ATSI pathways in netball from participation through to elite
- Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander liaison officers in each region
- Mandate two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identified positions within each Association
- Mandate an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative on the Netball WA Board
- Engage an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander steering committee for developing events such as NAIDOC carnivals (based within their region)
- Introduce policies to Associations which require presidents and other leaders to step down or be allocated new roles every two years to bring in fresh people and perspectives to Association leadership



BY WEIGHTED AVERAGE

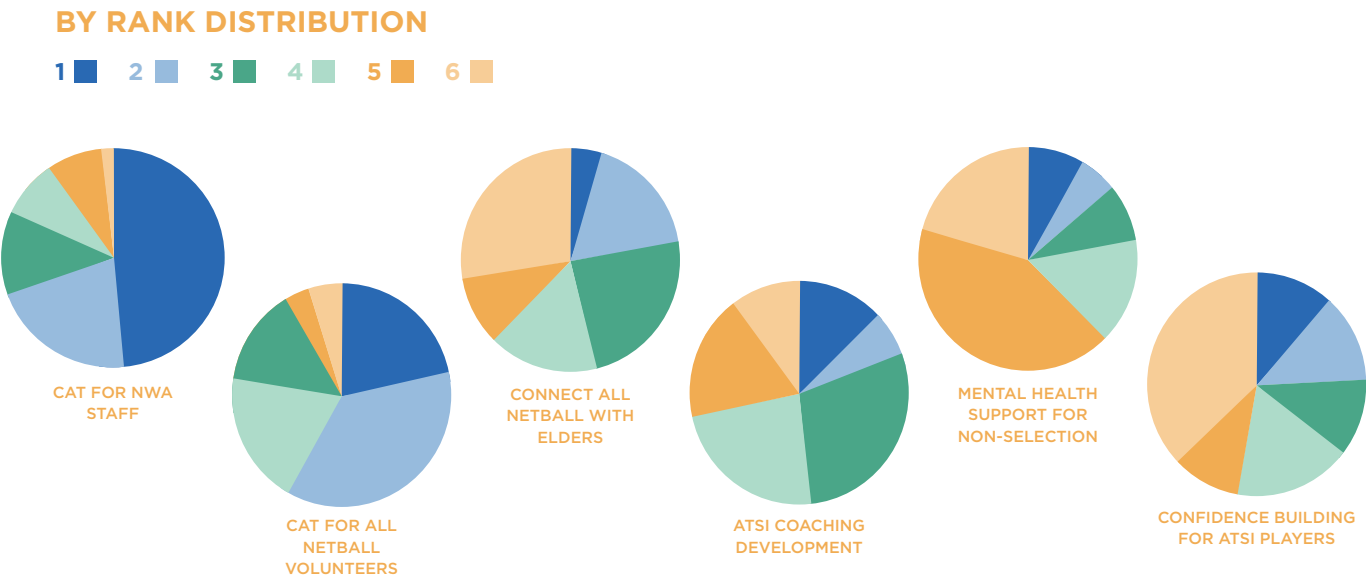


The top three most popular solutions in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Identified Roles and Governance were to employ an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pathways Coordinator (ATSI Identified Position) who develops and oversees ATSI pathways in netball from participation through to elite, to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander liaison officers in each region, and to mandate an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative on the Netball WA Board.

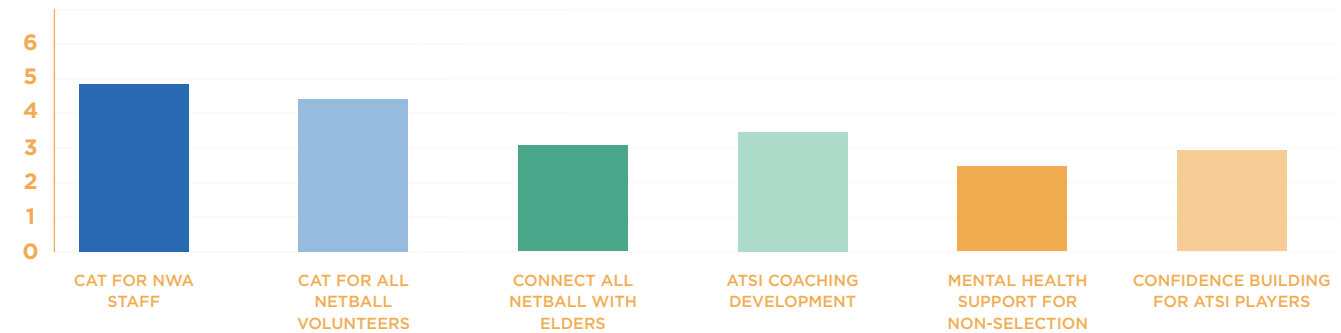
TRAINING AND SUPPORT

Phase Two participants were asked to rank each solution from the following options which related to Training and Support:

- Provide cultural awareness training for Netball WA staff, with specific scenarios within the netball context (including how to provide appropriate support)
- Provide cultural awareness training for all volunteers within netball (Association leaders, Club leaders, coaches, umpires, and players), with specific examples within the netball context (including how to provide appropriate support)
- Provide opportunities for Netball WA staff and volunteers to connect with Aboriginal Elders
- Increase coaching development and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander coaches, particularly in regional areas
- Provide mental health support and goal setting advice/feedback for all players not selected for state teams
- Provide confidence, communication, and/or leadership training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander players



BY WEIGHTED AVERAGE



The top three most popular solutions in relation to Training and Support were to provide cultural awareness training for Netball WA staff, with specific scenarios within the netball context (including how to provide appropriate support), then to provide cultural awareness training for volunteers within netball, and to increase coaching development and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander coaches, particularly in regional areas.

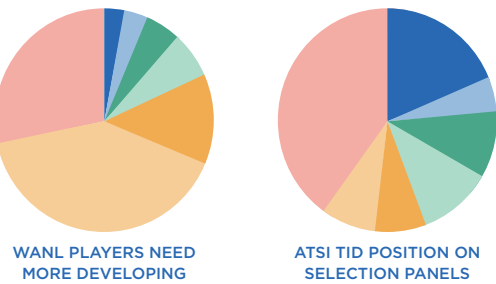
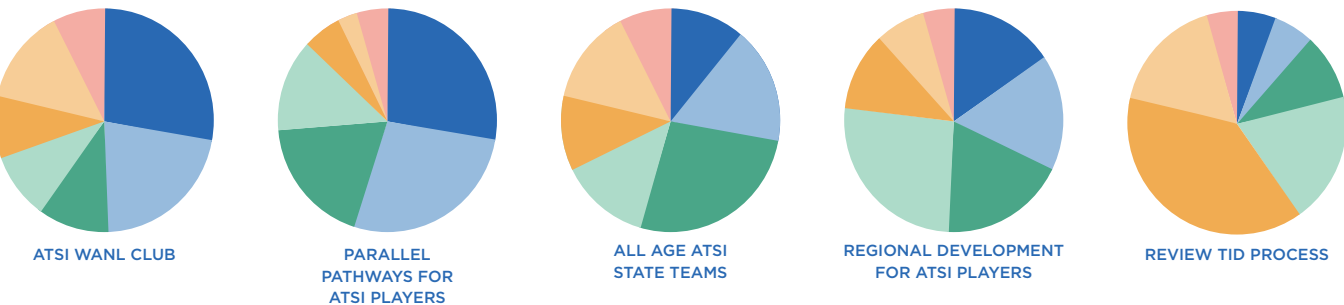
PARALLEL PATHWAYS AND SELECTION CRITERIA

Phase Two participants were asked to rank each solution from the following options which related to Parallel Pathways and Selection Criteria:

- Support an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander WANL Club
- Develop parallel pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander players which link into mainstream opportunities, including Aboriginal All Stars camps
- Develop Aboriginal state teams across all age levels
- Provide more development opportunities for Aboriginal players within regions, with training provided by specialist coaches in Perth who travel more frequently to regions and stay for a longer duration

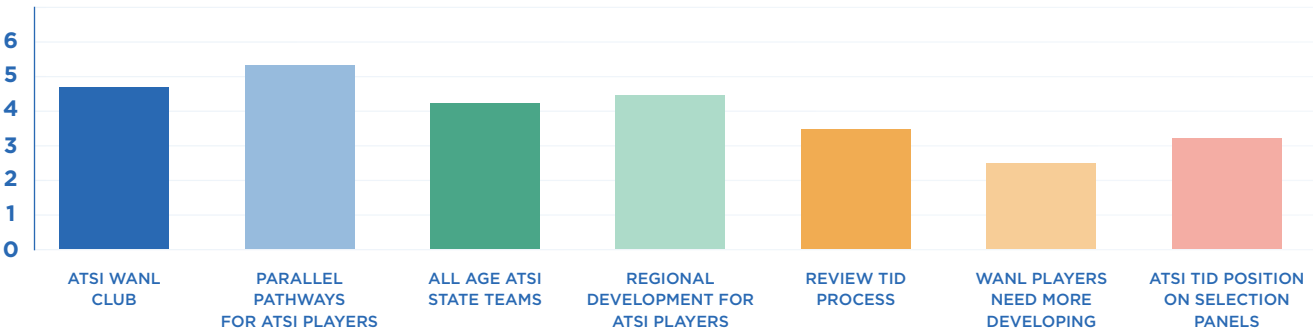
BY RANK DISTRIBUTION

1 2 3 4 5 6 7



The top three most popular solutions in relation to Parallel Pathways and Selection Criteria were to develop parallel pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander players which link into mainstream opportunities, including Aboriginal All Stars camps; to support an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander WANL Club; and, to provide more development opportunities for Aboriginal players within regions, with training provided by specialist coaches in Perth who travel more frequently to regions and stay for a longer duration.

BY WEIGHTED AVERAGE



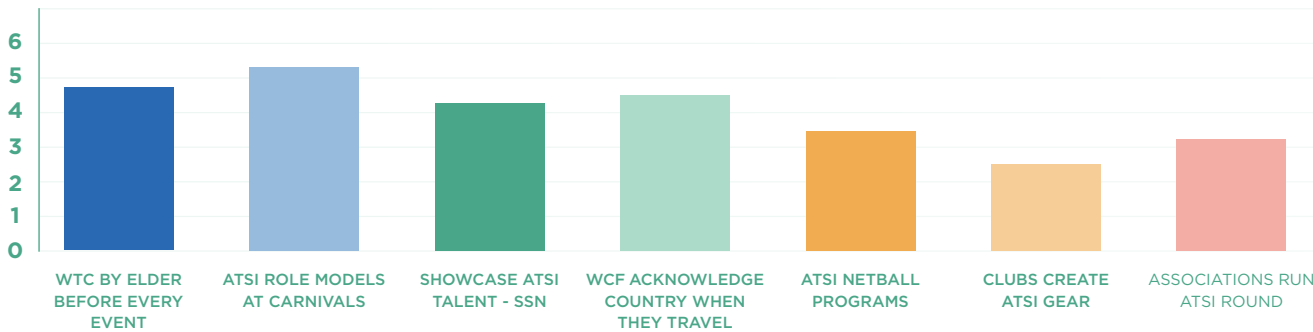
ACKNOWLEDGE AND CELEBRATE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CULTURE

Phase Two participants were asked to rank each solution from the following options which related to Acknowledge and Celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Culture:

- Ensure that a Welcome to Country is delivered by an appropriate Elder before every event
- Bring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elite level players and coaches to role model/run development sessions during carnivals (not just NAIDOC but for mainstream carnivals)
- Showcasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander talent from the past and present during Suncorp Super Netball Series e.g., showing old footage of Bianca Franklin, have junior Aboriginal teams play curtain raisers
- West Coast Fever to acknowledge the country they are on when they travel (media and social media)
- Develop netball programs/resources that are grounded in Aboriginal ways of knowing, being, and doing
- Encourage and support clubs to create Indigenous dresses, shirts, and bibs
- Encourage and support Associations to run Indigenous round each season with Welcome to Country and Indigenous ball designs

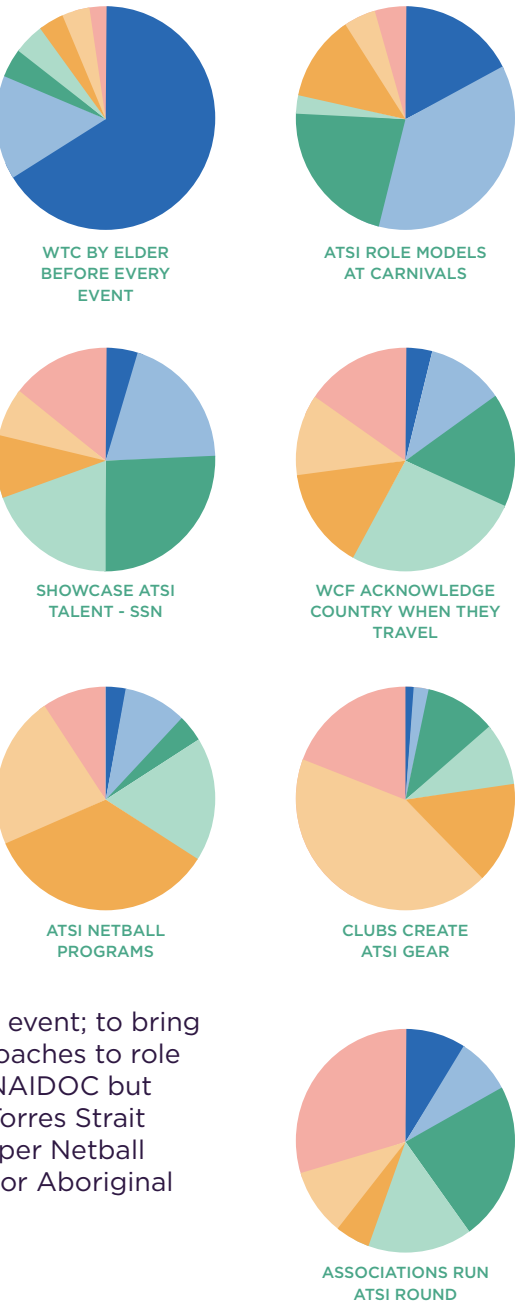
The top three most popular solutions in relation to Acknowledge and Celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Culture were to ensure that a Welcome to Country is delivered by an appropriate Elder before every event; to bring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elite level players and coaches to role model/run development sessions during carnivals (not just NAIDOC but for mainstream carnivals); and to showcase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander talent from the past and present during Suncorp Super Netball Series e.g., showing old footage of Bianca Franklin, have junior Aboriginal teams play curtain raisers.

BY WEIGHTED AVERAGE



BY RANK DISTRIBUTION

1 2 3 4 5 6 7



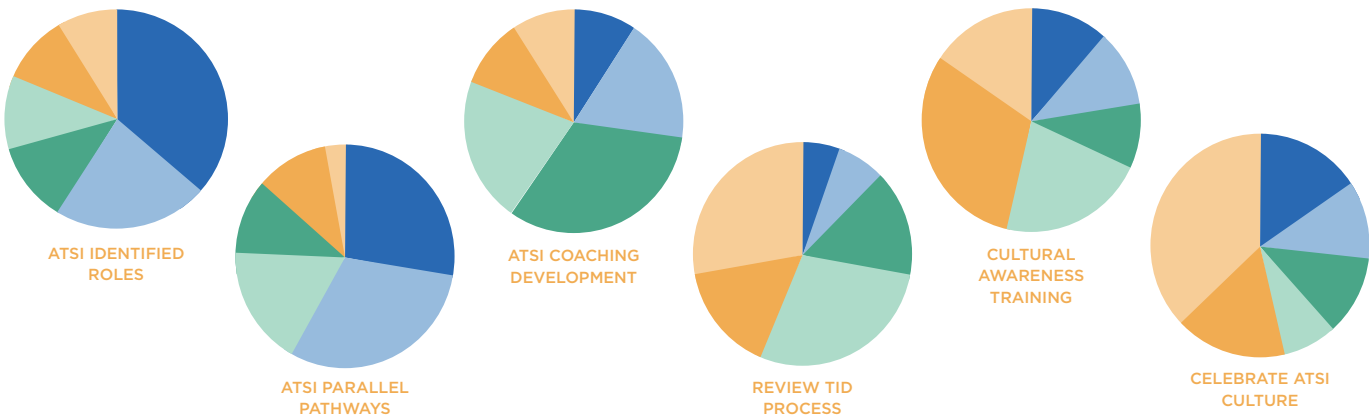
BROAD CATEGORIES

Phase Two participants were then asked to rank each of the broad categories:

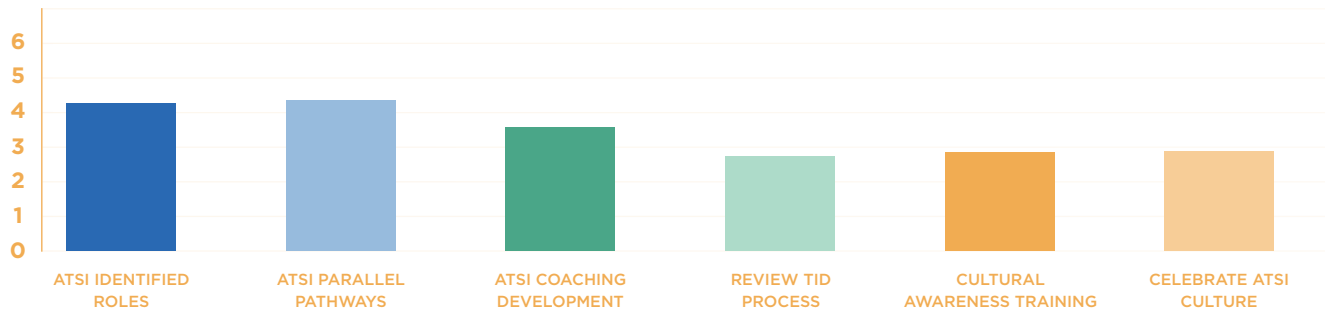
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identified roles
- Develop parallel pathways for Aboriginal players
- Increase development opportunities for Aboriginal coaches and umpires
- Review the talent identification process and provide more transparency around selection criteria
- Cultural Awareness training for Netball WA staff and volunteers with netball specific scenarios
- Acknowledge and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and talent more

BY RANK DISTRIBUTION

1 2 3 4 5 6



BY WEIGHTED AVERAGE



The top three most popular solutions in relation to the Broad Categories were Parallel pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander players; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identified roles; and increase development opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander coaches and umpires.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Netball WA share this report and accompanying resources (summary report, video presentation) across all networks

Netball WA lead the way in governance by engaging an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Netball WA Board Member

Netball WA bring Associations on the journey - interview/survey Associations to find out what supports they need to build culturally responsive Associations

Netball WA ensure that there is an appropriate person to lead the implementation phase (and beyond) by employing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pathways Coordinator (ATSI Identified Role, Senior Position), who has the authority to challenge systems and a supportive environment to succeed.

The Elite Steering Committee to assist the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pathways Coordinator with creating elite player, coach, and umpire pathways which are then embedded within and owned by West Coast Fever and Netball WA

Steering committees to assist Netball WA with NAIDOC carnivals and Indigenous round - lock in dates as soon as possible; use appropriate communication and invite appropriate Elders to conduct Welcome to Country (all major events) via steering committees

Netball WA establish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander steering committees for Grassroots (regional) and Elite (Perth based)

Netball WA engage two Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander representatives for each Association which link in with steering committees who will serve as liaison officers

Netball WA review selection criteria and talent identification processes. Note that the issue might not be the current selection criteria but how these are being used (equally across the board?) and how they are communicated to players and families. Create a code of conduct and/or policies and procedures around selection criteria as needed. Ensure that all selectors are educated in line with this policy and put mechanisms in place to safeguard procedural compliance. Provide transparency around selection criteria and education for all players and families about the selection criteria and talent identification process

Roll-out CAT across Netball WA, Associations, and Clubs

Netball WA develop a Cultural Awareness Training (CAT) with specific netball scenarios with each of the steering committees that is regionally specific

Netball WA develop and trial a regional netball pathway with Garnduwa in the Kimberley. Build on learnings from this trial for subsequent regional pathway roll-out across other regions



BLACK DIAMONDS REPORT

ARTWORK BY CONTEMPORARY ABORIGINAL ARTIST & DESIGNER,
JILALGA MURRAY OF JILALGA DESIGNS