



BLACK DIAMONDS REPORT: THE SHORT VERSION

ARTWORK BY JILALGA MURRAY

BLACK DIAMONDS REPORT

In the history of Australian netball, there have been two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) players at the highest level of the game. The systems, policies, and procedures of netball in Australia do not nourish and support Aboriginal athletes from grassroots through to the elite.

The Black Diamonds Project is an overdue strategic review of netball engagement and retention across Western Australia, across all aspects of netball engagement (athlete, umpire, coach, administrator, family support, community member) to provide insight on how best to achieve stronger, healthier relationships between Netball WA and its ATSI communities.

RESEARCH

The dominant method of data collection was Yarning Circles, a uniquely Aboriginal methodology, with four stakeholder groups, across two phases.

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

PHASE ONE

The first phase of data collection saw a total of 127 participants engage, across all stakeholder groups, to understand both the facilitators and barriers to ATSI participation in, and engagement with, netball in Western Australia. Associations were also asked what they have achieved or are achieving in this space and what support they require from Netball WA to create a culturally safe Association.

PHASE TWO

The purpose of the second phase of data collection was to develop a strategic vision and a list of actions to support ATSI engagement and retention across all aspects of the WA netball pathway with all stakeholder groups. All the data were analysed, and the solutions were summarised into a survey where all WA-based ATSI players, coaches, and umpires registered to MyNetball were invited to rank the suggested solutions based on what they thought would be most effective. The second phase of data collection saw a total of 140 participants engage.

KEY MOTIVATORS

The top four motivators to ATSI participation in, and engagement with netball in WA were as follows:

“For me netball is just fun, especially when I get to play with everyone that I enjoy playing with. It just gives you that thrill that sport gives you, that energy.”

1 My friends, team, or 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.

2 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 various forms of support which ranged from transport and information about opportunities, to encouragement to trial and a listening ear.

3 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.

4 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.

+ Additional motivators

- + I enjoy coaching, mentoring, or being a role model
- + I am inspired by role models in netball
- + Netball provides opportunities
- + Family support and motivate me
- + Netball is my outlet
- + Netball WA support and motivate me
- + My Association supports and motivates me
- + Other, e.g., “boys coming and playing” and NAIDOC carnivals

“Mum and Dad split up when I was 12... 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. 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, 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.”

BARRIERS

The top four barriers to ATSI participation in, and engagement with netball in WA were as follows:

1 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/fitting in; not being heard or not having a safe space for feedback.

"For the actual carnival it was very clear 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."

2 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 ATSI 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.

"So it is hard to just find that safe place as well when it comes to culturally specific issues at home, 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 my coach?"

3 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 ATSI peoples. This barrier was exacerbated for people coming from regional areas to Perth metro.

"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 the 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 still that reputation of it doesn't matter how good you are, it's more who you know and it's not as welcoming."

4 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.

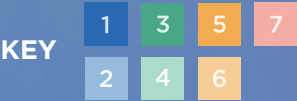


ADDITIONAL BARRIERS:

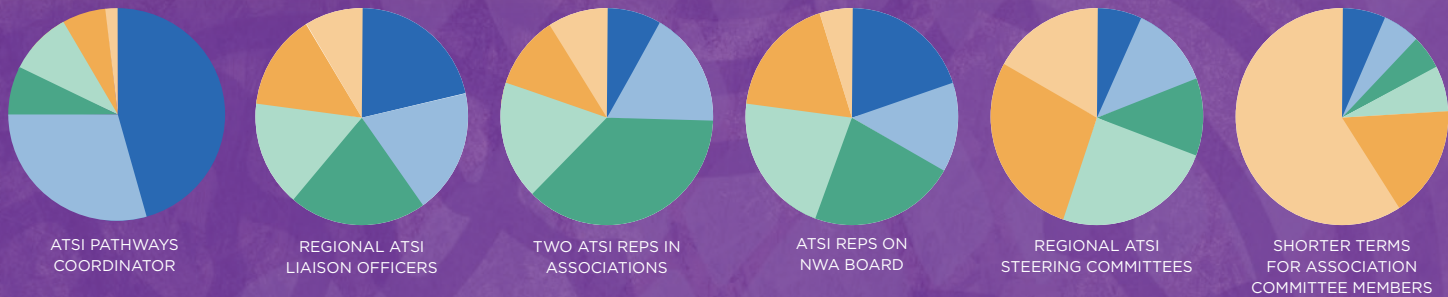
- + Other commitments, requirements, and expectations
- + Socio-economic situation
- + Self-confidence and shyness
- + Lack of opportunities
- + Lack of role models
- + Other, e.g. cultural awareness training not taken seriously/people not showing up, being only ATSI person at elite level which came with the expectation to be an expert on culture.

SOLUTIONS

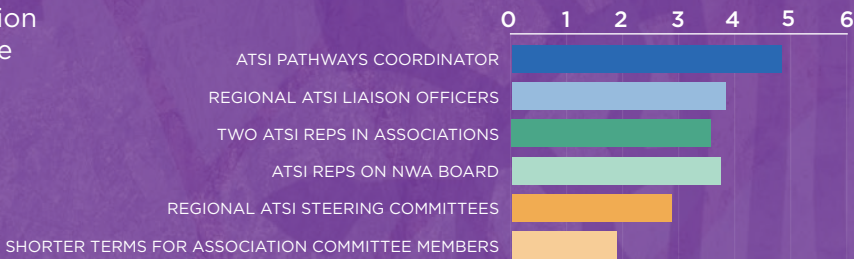
Pie charts by rank distribution,
Bar chart by weighted average



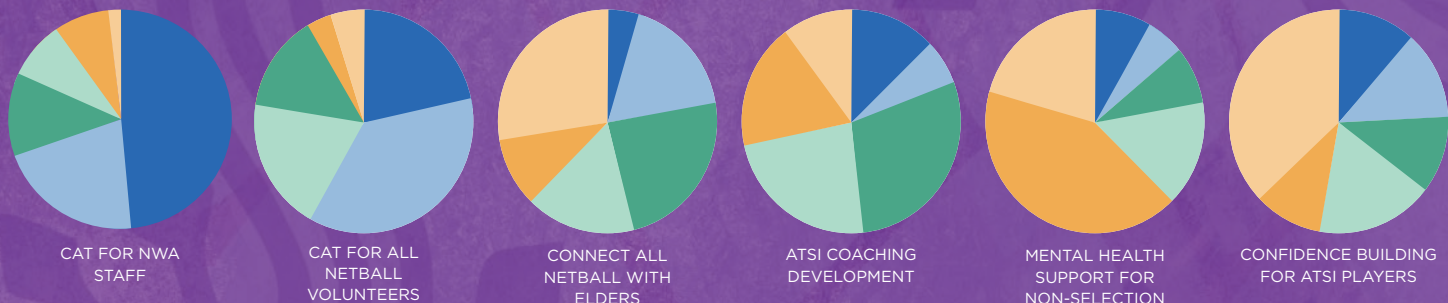
ATSI IDENTIFIED ROLES AND GOVERNANCE



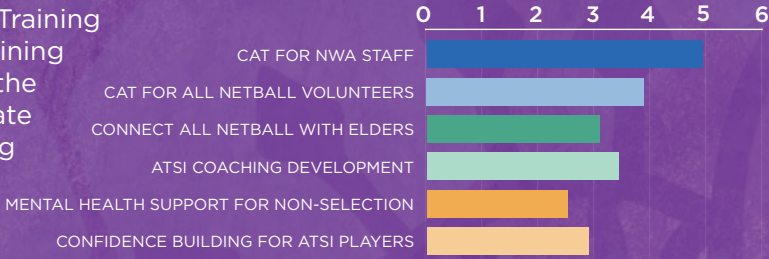
The top three most popular solutions in relation to ATSI Identified Roles and Governance were to employ an ATSI Pathways Coordinator who develops and oversees ATSI pathways in netball from participation through to elite, to support ATSI Liaison Officers in each region, and to mandate an ATSI representative on the Netball WA Board.



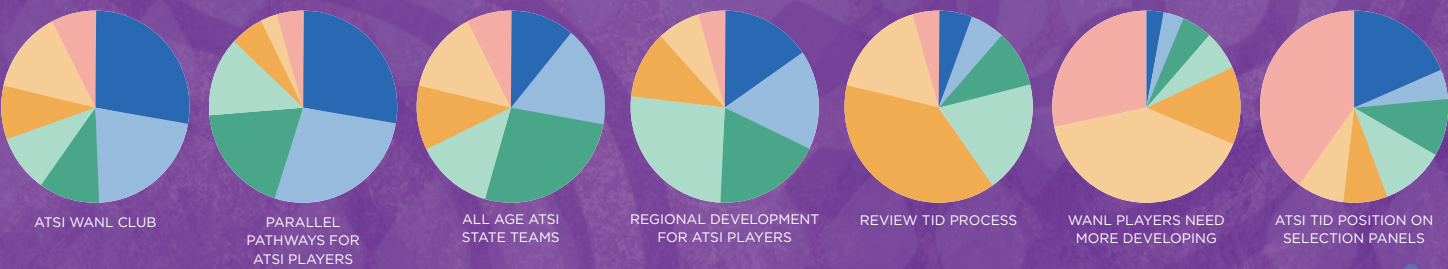
TRAINING AND SUPPORT



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 ATSI coaches, particularly in regional areas



PARALLEL PATHWAYS AND SELECTION CRITERIA

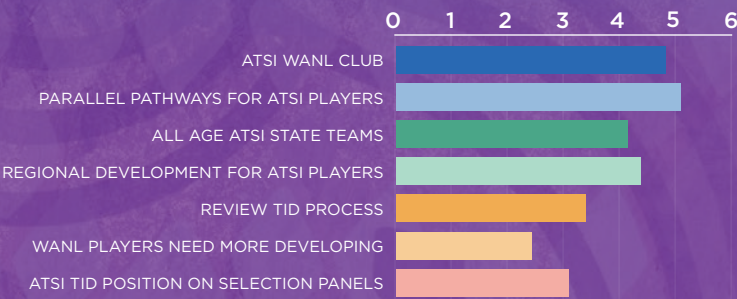


Pie charts by rank distribution, Bar chart by weighted average

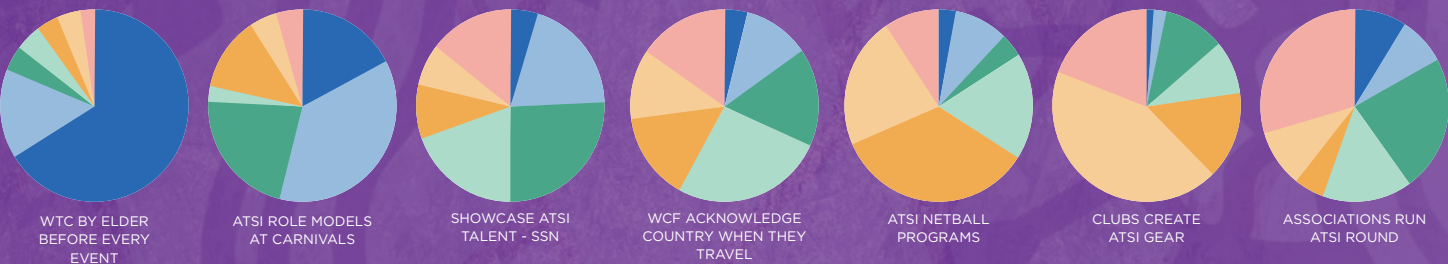


PARALLEL PATHWAYS AND SELECTION CRITERIA CONT.

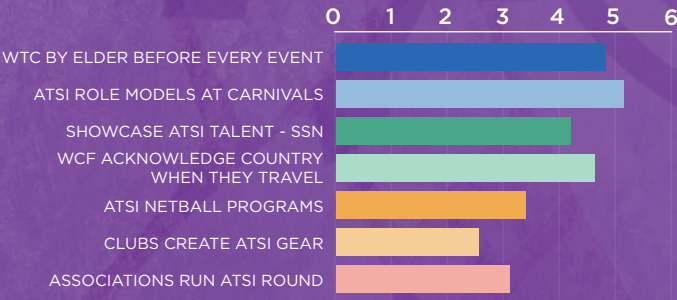
The top three most popular solutions in relation to Parallel Pathways and Selection Criteria were to develop parallel pathways for ATSI players which link to mainstream opportunities, including Aboriginal All Stars Camps; to support an ATSI WANL Club; and to provide more development opportunities for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



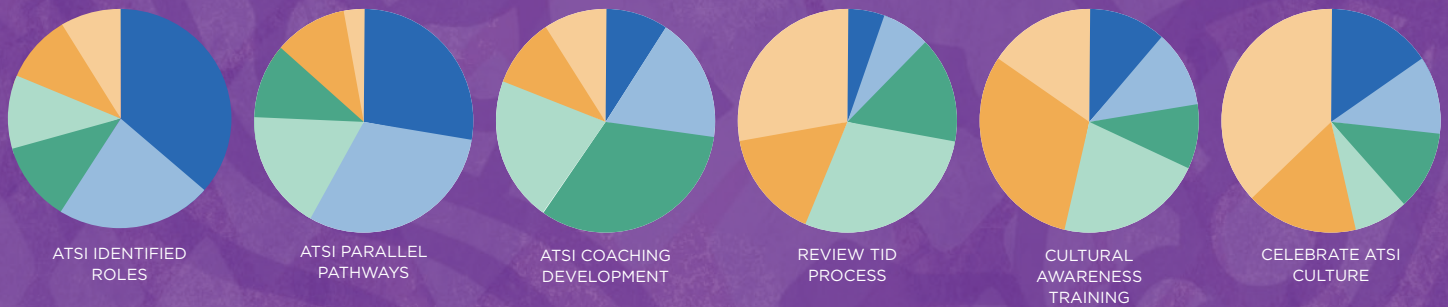
ACKNOWLEDGE AND CELEBRATE ATSI CULTURE



The top three most popular solutions in relation to Acknowledge and Celebrate ATSI Culture were to ensure that a Welcome to Country is delivered by an appropriate Elder before every event; to bring ATSI elite level players and coaches to role model/run development sessions during carnivals (not just NAIDOC but for mainstream carnivals); and to showcase ATSI 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.



BROAD CATEGORIES



The top three most popular solutions in relation to the Broad Categories were Parallel Pathways for ATSI players; ATSI identified roles and increased development opportunities for ATSI 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



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