



Communities  
& Justice

# Modified Sport evaluation



## Final Report

JULY 2019



This report prepared by

## Acknowledgement

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# Contents

Contents ..... i

Executive Summary .....iii

1. Ageing and the NSW Ageing Strategy ..... 1

2. About the program ..... 1

3. Method for the evaluation ..... 2

4. Development and roll-out of the program ..... 4

5. Results..... 7

6. Key findings..... 12

7. Lessons learned from the pilot ..... 15

Appendix 1. Summary of approaches by code ..... 16

Appendix 2. Survey of participants ..... 22



# Executive Summary

## The modified sport program

The program was developed as one initiative under the NSW Ageing Strategy 2016 -2020 to add to the suite of programs promoting physical activity for older people under the 'Health and Wellbeing' priority area. FACS developed a concept in which it would provide a small amount of seed funding to existing sporting codes to pilot a modified sports program. FACS engaged IPSOS to undertake social research, which confirmed the potential of the concept.

On the basis of a desktop review and consultation with stakeholders, FACS approached Football NSW and Netball NSW as sports where there were modified versions (or that could be modified) and the state office was likely to be interested. Both organisations were positive and submitted proposals to develop and roll out a program. FACS was also approached directly by Gymnastics NSW.

FACS initiated a second round of funding and engaged Softball, Basketball and Table Tennis to develop and implement modified sports programs for their codes.

In total, FACS provided \$227,310 to the six sports codes over two years.

## Key findings

### The program is appropriate and effective

The pilot program has established that the overall concept of modified sports is appropriate and effective for older people.

### Working with existing sports organisations is an effective leverage point

Using a small amount of seed funding to stimulate the development and roll-out of activities using existing sports organisations and structures has been effective in stimulating what seems likely to be ongoing activity.

### The more successful codes developed both an appropriate modification and a program

The success of the program resulted from designing a 'modified' version of the sport and a 'program' for rolling out the promotion of the modified sport to clubs and associations. Just offering the modified format was not sufficient; the state office needed to support the roll-out.

### There are five key success factors

1. A clear and appropriate model
2. Regular sessions—same day and time of the week
3. Flexibility—it needs to be okay to not turn up occasionally
4. Good coordination—a coach or facilitator to manage the group activity
5. Social connection—making the activity social was a major attractor

### Absence of fee is effective for the recruitment of new participants

Not charging fees is effective in helping people try something new; they would be willing to pay once they become regulars.

### The codes found that set up took longer than estimated

The process of developing the package, engaging with the associations or clubs, training coaches and setting up sessions took longer than estimated.

**Promotion is critical yet associations and clubs have limited capacity**

Codes and participants highlighted the need for more promotion, and that the associations and clubs have little capacity to do this.

The project delivered on its objectives within the constraints of a pilot program.

**Encourages older people to make exercise a normal part of their routine**

**Evidence of some achievement.** Participants identified the attraction of modified sports as delivered in the pilot as a way of increasing their participation.

**Achieves the health, wellbeing and social benefits of regular sport and exercise activities for older people**

**Not tested.** There is considerable research to demonstrate the health, wellbeing and social benefits of regular sport and exercise activities for older people. The program did not aim to test the impact of exercise on participants, but rather set up the circumstances supporting participation in exercise.

**Provides a model for other sporting codes to develop modified programs for older people and encourage ongoing participation.**

**Achieved.** The pilot tested the process of modification, program development and rollout. The evaluation identified learnings from the pilot that could form a model for other sporting codes.

Refer section 6 for additional detail.

## The evaluation

FACS commissioned this evaluation of the modified sport program as both summative to reflect the outcomes of the program to date and formative to help guide any potential future extension of the program to other sports codes.

We used mixed methods of social research to collect data at each of the following levels:

<b>Interviews with the codes</b>	Face-to-face interviews with the representatives of each sports code (typically the Development Officer or Development Manager)
<b>Participation data</b>	Compiled data provided by each of the codes on numbers of participants by location
<b>Survey of participants</b>	Online survey using an instrument developed by SPRINTER (Sydney University) during the program development phase (n = 53)
<b>Interviews with participants and stakeholders</b>	Face-to-face or phone interviews with a sample of participants and stakeholders in walking netball, walking football and table tennis (n = 8)
<b>FACS staff</b>	Interview with key program management staff in FACS from the Ageing team.
<b>Documentation</b>	Review of program documentation including IPSOS social research, program files, emails and correspondence.
<b>Promotional material</b>	Desktop review of promotional material and websites for each of the sports codes to promote the modified sport

## Roll out of the program

Each code was responsible for developing and rolling out its activities. The codes achieved different degrees of maturity in their rollout, with the initial three organisations now being more mature in their program.

Code	Roll out status as at February 2019
Netball	Mature; 21 programs across 19 clubs; website established
Football	Relatively mature; good relationship with 4 associations and developing relationship with 5 more
Gymnastics	Relatively mature; program rolled out in 6 clubs; training for coaches in progress
Basketball	Developing; program rolled out in 2 clubs; 3 more in train
Table tennis	Emerging. 2 new clubs; 5 in development
Softball	Emerging. Establishing trial sessions at 5 sites

## Overall reach

Across the six codes, there were an estimated 806 people who tried a modified sport and 529 people who were regular participants at 36 programs or clubs (some clubs ran more than one program e.g. a social competition as well as an exercise class). Across all the codes, around 65% of participants became regulars.

Code	Total participants who tried the sport (individuals)	Regular participants	Clubs/programs
Netball	414	313 (76%)	21
Gymnastics	133	48 (36%)	5
Football	120	120 (100%)	4
Table tennis	85	37 (44%)	2
Softball	40	0 (-)	2
Basketball	14	11 (79%)	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>806</b>	<b>529 (65%)</b>	<b>36</b>

Feedback from participants in the survey and interviews was limited but very positive. Overall, 78% of survey respondents (netball and football) indicated they intended to continue with the program and that their fitness had improved; 30% also indicated their mobility had improved.

## Lessons learned from the program

We used the learnings from this pilot project to prepare a 'tool kit' with simple guidance notes for sports codes to help them establish modified sports programs. If FACS considers providing further funding to other codes to develop modified sports programs, these guidance notes could be used to help the new codes develop and roll out additional programs.

# 1. Ageing and the NSW Ageing Strategy

The NSW population overall is ageing—the median age is forecast to increase from 37 in 2016 to 41 in 2056, with a significantly higher proportion of the population in older age groups. The NSW Government also recognises that the needs of older people will change in the future and the overall response to those changing needs is evolving.

One of the priorities of the NSW Government is to promote opportunities for older people to lead active and rewarding lives and ensure that NSW responds effectively to the challenges and opportunities of an ageing population. The NSW Ageing Strategy sets out the Government's commitment to give effect to that aspiration.

The NSW Ageing Strategy focuses on five priorities:

1. Health and wellbeing
2. Working and retiring
3. Housing choices
4. Getting around
5. Inclusive communities

The modified sports program contributes to Ageing Strategy priority 1, Health and wellbeing.

## 2. About the program

### Project background

The Modified Sport program was identified as Project 1.6 in the Year One Implementation Plan of the current Ageing Strategy (2016-2020) as part of the priority around health and wellbeing. The specific commitment was:

*Project 1.6 – Getting active plan (Modified sports)*

*In partnership with the private sector and sporting organisations, and with other government agencies, we will develop a program to encourage older people to make exercise a normal part of their routine. The program will highlight the health, wellbeing and social benefits of regular sport and exercise activities for older people.*

The genesis of the project was evidence that physical activity improves the health and wellbeing of older people. Being physically active reduces the likelihood of developing chronic diseases, some cancers and some forms of dementia, or delays their progression. Taking part in regular physical activity improves mental health, maintains muscle strength and flexibility, reduces the risk or impact of falls, and retains independence.

Physical activity, particularly through sport, recreation and fitness, also provides an essential opportunity for social connection, fun and laughter. Despite these benefits, people in later life struggle to access appropriate levels of sport or recreation programs while providers often feel uncertain about how to support older people.

The initial scope of the project was to work with two sporting codes with the aim of modifying certain aspects to better meet the needs of older people.

## Project objective

The project aimed to develop and contribute to the funding of a pilot modified sporting program that:

- encourages older people to make exercise a normal part of their routine
- achieves the health, wellbeing and social benefits of regular sport and exercise activities for older people
- provides a model for other sporting codes to develop modified programs for older people and encourage ongoing participation.

## 3. Method for the evaluation

FACS commissioned this evaluation of the modified sport program as both summative to reflect the outcomes of the pilot program and formative to help guide any potential future extension of the program to other sports codes.

We used mixed methods of social research to collect data at each of the following levels:

<b>Interviews with the codes</b>	Face to face interviews with the representatives of each sports code (typically the Development Officer or Development Manager)
<b>Participation data</b>	Compiled data provided by each of the codes on numbers of participants by location
<b>Survey of participants</b>	Online survey using an instrument developed by SPRINTER (University of Sydney) during the program development phase (n = 53)
<b>Interviews with participants and stakeholders</b>	Face to face or phone interviews with a sample of participants and stakeholders in walking netball, walking football and table tennis (n = 8)
<b>FACS staff</b>	Interview with key program management staff in FACS from the Ageing team.
<b>Documentation</b>	Review of program documentation including IPSOS social research, program files, emails and correspondence.
<b>Promotional material</b>	Desktop review of promotional material and websites for each of the sports codes to promote the modified sport

The data from the survey and interviews with participants is dominated by people who took part in walking netball (primarily) and walking football. The scale of the evaluation precluded assessment of multiple sources of data.

The survey of participants was designed by a team from Sydney University during the development phase, and administered by the participating codes progressively in mid to late 2018. The proposed approach was to administer a survey to all participants when they first joined the program and another survey when they completed the program ('pre and post' survey). The instrument itself was designed

to capture comprehensive data, including: the participant's perception of their health status; their degree of functionality; time spent sitting, walking and in other physical activity, life satisfaction and overall happiness; as well as the participant's perceptions of the program. The survey also asked participants whether they were already involved in any organised sport (not necessarily the sport that they played as part of this program). The 'post' version of the survey is attached (Appendix 2).

The resultant data would have supported a detailed analysis of the cohort participating in the pilot; however, the comprehensive approach may have posed some difficulties for participants to complete: it is relatively long, with over 40 items; the questions require reflection and a clear memory (if not diary notes) to respond; and it asks questions that may have felt personally challenging.

Of around 760 participants there were responses from just 53 participants, most of whom were involved in netball. We hypothesise that both the length and the extent to which the questionnaire was promoted were factors in reducing the response rate. There were not sufficient responses from participants who completed both the pre-and post-survey to use data on activity before and after the program (<10).

## 4. Development and roll-out of the program

### Rationale for the program

FACS commissioned IPSOS in 2017 to conduct social research which indicated that there was likely to be a high degree of interest in modified sport (focus groups and surveys):

- Almost **one third of older people (29%) were interested** in participating in modified sport
- Older people thought that the features that were most likely to **encourage participation** were: **shorter games/matches (56%), reducing the speed of the game (46%) and limiting physical contact (44%)**
- The respondents also indicated that **promotion to everybody** was a good idea (62% of respondents) and that participation should be **free of charge (67%)**, although respondents also expected to pay something towards participating in the sports.
- Respondents indicated some concerns about modified sports, either that the sports might **not be challenging enough**, or that there was a **risk of injury**.

The research indicated that there was sufficient interest in the community to move to a test of the concept.

### Identifying potential sports

In the first round, FACS undertook an initial desktop analysis to identify potential sports that were already modified or were potentially interested in providing a modified sport program. FACS then approached football and netball on the basis that there were modified versions of these available elsewhere and there were existing structures to support the program to test their interest. FACS was also approached directly by Gymnastics NSW to participate in the program.

For the second round of funding, FACS met with the NSW Office of Sport to advise on which sports may be appropriate or would have an interest in the program. Data from AusPlay 2016 and market segmentation data was used as guidance. The Office of Sport suggested approaching Basketball NSW and Softball NSW, who were then invited to submit proposals. Table Tennis NSW were also approached following their representations to the Minister for Ageing.

### Proposals from the codes

FACS requested proposals from the first three sports in the first round of the trial, seeking proposals for up to \$30,000 each. The codes were asked to outline:

- How their sport would be modified
- How the program would be developed and rolled out
- An estimated budget
- Estimated outcomes (number of participants, other activities).

FACS then ran a second round of funding for the further three sports. The second-round codes were asked to provide a proposal on the same basis as the first round.

## Program funding

In total, FACS has provided \$227,310 in funding to the six sports codes over two years.

Each code has been responsible for developing and rolling out its activities. FACS has provided some ongoing support, particularly in terms of some promotion of the activities through linking codes to the Seniors Card to advertise activities and facilitating a joint stand for ‘Modified sport’ at the NSW Seniors Expo in 2018 and 2019. Additionally, FACS developed a one-page flyer in conjunction with the sporting codes and have promoted through the newsletters of Local Government NSW, Office of Sport, and various Ageing peak organisations.

The codes have been required to report on progress, provide some basic data about participation and to provide input into this evaluation.

In each case, FACS has been working with the state body for the sport (e.g. Netball NSW). Each code has a different regional structure, although a similar basic model, where individual clubs run sports at the local level and the clubs form regional ‘associations’. The state bodies generally deal directly with the associations or equivalent and have less direct contact with the local clubs.

## Approaches to modifying sports

Each code has made modifications to the sport to suit the needs of older people, which typically relate to changing the pace of the game or removing higher risk elements (Appendix 1 provides more detail about the approach taken by each code).

Sport	Modifications
Netball	<p>Structured class of 1 hour</p> <p>Full-sized court. Modified game play—no jumping, walking/no running, extra step</p> <p>Session delivered by a coach</p>
Football (soccer)	<p>Small field. Small team.</p> <p>Modified game play—walking/no running, no ball above shoulder height</p> <p>Game only, supervised by a referee</p>
Gymnastics	<p>Structured 1-hour exercise class. Programmed to include term-long lesson packs at three levels, depending on skill</p> <p>Modified approach—eg balance beams are on the floor rather than elevated.</p> <p>Delivered by qualified coaches; able to be delivered by private operators</p>
Basketball	<p>Full court. Modified game play—walking/no running, lower height hoops</p>
Softball	<p>Full-sized field. Modified game play—T-ball, larger base zones, walking/no running.</p>
Table tennis	<p>Extra sessions at existing clubs for older people, or</p> <p>New clubs/sessions—equipment for new venues to establish a new club</p>

## Roll out of the activities-by code

The six codes have achieved different levels of maturity in the roll-out of their respective programs:

Code	Roll out status
Netball	Mature; 21 programs across 19 clubs; website established
Football	Relatively mature; good relationship with 4 associations and developing relationship with 5 more
Gymnastics	Relatively mature; program rolled out in 6 clubs; training for coaches in progress
Basketball	Developing; program rolled out in 2 clubs; 3 more in train
Table tennis	Emerging. 2 new clubs; 5 in development
Softball	Emerging. Establishing trial sessions at 5 sites

## 5. Results

### Overall reach

Across the six codes, there were an estimated 806 people who tried a modified sport and 529 people who were regular participants at 36 programs or clubs (some clubs ran more than one program e.g. a social competition as well as an exercise class). Across all the codes, around 70% of participants became regulars. Football reported a 100% retention rate (estimate only); for basketball and netball, around 80% of participants became regulars and for gymnastics and table tennis around 40% of participants became regulars.

Code	Total participants who tried the sport (individuals)	Regular participants	Clubs/programs
Netball	414	313 (76%)	21
Gymnastics	133	48 (36%)	5
Football	120	120 (100%)	4
Table tennis	85	37 (44%)	2
Softball	40	0 (-)	2
Basketball	14	11 (79%)	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>806</b>	<b>529 (65%)</b>	<b>36</b>

These figures are incomplete as the program is still being rolled out; basketball and softball both indicated that they were slower to set up than had been anticipated. As of January 2019, there were plans to continue rolling out the program to at least another 15 clubs.

### Success by code

The codes have had different degrees of success in rolling out the program. The three codes that were part of the first round (netball, football and gymnastics) have been more successful in establishing a program and running regular activities, noting that they have had more time to set up. Each code has noted that it has 'taken longer than expected' to establish and roll out a program. The codes indicated that conflicting priorities and constrained resources, particularly when working with volunteers (especially local clubs and regions) impacted on their ability to develop and roll out the program—many indicated that it simply takes time to get attention and buy-in at the local level to build a new program and more time than they anticipated.

Code	Status	Key factors
Netball	Successfully rolled out, multiple clubs, wide reach	Strong drive from Netball NSW Aimed to make more sustainable Learnt from previous attempt (approximately 2007)
Football	Successfully rolled out, multiple associations, good reach	Strong drive from Football NSW See this as a major opportunity Existing model in UK that could be implemented here

Code	Status	Key factors
Gymnastics	Successfully rolled out, multiple associations, good reach	Strong drive from Gymnastics NSW Resources/facilities that could be easily utilised See this as a major opportunity
Basketball	Started roll out; limited reach initially	Clubs have limited capacity to promote Good interest but limited capacity to turn into a live program Longer set up time than expected
Table tennis	Started roll out; some but limited reach to date	Limited concept of a program—whilst the activity requires very little modification, limited focus on a 'program' specifically for older people. Largely devolved to individual clubs to facilitate; limited input from Table Tennis NSW.
Softball	Started roll out; limited reach to date	Restructure in Softball NSW office; has not received a lot of focus so far Longer set up time than expected

## Survey results

We received 53 respondents to a survey of participants after they had completed the program. Survey respondents had almost all played walking netball and were independent and relatively active individuals, including:

- 98% had no problems with self-care
- 96% had no problems performing their usual activities
- 90% had no problems with walking about

At the same time, 23% indicated they had some form of disability or long-standing illness, primarily various forms of arthritis.

## Overall satisfaction

There was a high degree of satisfaction from survey respondents. 78% of respondents indicated that they intended to continue with the program (in most cases, walking netball).

## Improved fitness

78% of survey respondents indicated that their fitness had improved as a result of participating in the program, and over 30% indicated that their mobility had improved and they could 'do more than before' (Figure 1, mostly walking netball participants).

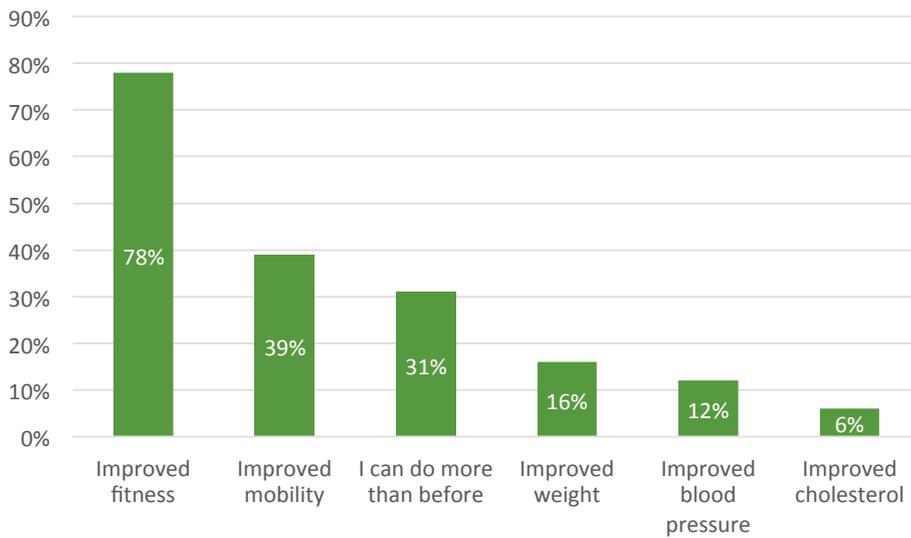


Figure 1. Improvements from participating in modified sport (n=53)

Survey respondents were asked about how the program could be improved. Of the 46 responses to this question, 14 indicated no change was required. Of the others, the highest responses were to promote the program more (11 responses) and extend the program (9 responses). Some also indicated that playing indoors or not playing at midday would be a good improvement.

Comment	Number
More promotion	11
Extend the program	9
Indoor playing	4
Expand the program (more sites, more times)	3
Other times of the day (not midday)	2
Separate players by skill level	2
Build an online community	1
Separate by age	1
More skill development	1
Better weather (noting not possible)	1

### Participant feedback

We conducted interviews with eight participants and stakeholders. We asked each active code to provide two contacts, and were able to make contact with eight of the ten. We did not interview any participants of softball, as there had been no sessions run at the time of the evaluation

Participants and stakeholders were very positive about the program noting that it achieved its overall aim of providing a fun and easy way for people to be more active. The comments made by participants were consistent with the findings from the survey:

- **Awareness**—participants were aware of the modified sports program via multiple channels, including advertisements in targeted publications (seniors newspaper), the local council website and a workplace website. Participants in walking netball made use of the purpose-specific website to register, identify a group near them and to make initial contact. These participants also mentioned receiving information about the session by email, including directions, maps and instructions for parking.
- **Design of the session**—participants were most satisfied with sessions that were structured and facilitated, particularly for walking netball which involved a stretch class, a skills session, a short game and a cool down. Participants were unsatisfied with sessions that were just about playing games without a warm-up session. A provider of walking football indicated that the games are adapted to suit the needs of the group (e.g. game played in four shorter quarters rather than two longer halves).
- **Coaching/facilitation**—participants were very satisfied with the presence of a coach or facilitator to run the session and tailor each session to the needs of the group each week. One participant had attended sessions at two venues—one that was well-managed and one that was less coordinated where the participants were mostly self-organising and they found the less-organised session much less satisfying. Participants indicated that the coach/facilitator played a key role in not just running the session but also making all the attendees feel welcome each week. One participant noted that '[Manly] was very welcoming—they introduced everyone, took some time to warm up and stretch and the person running it was very good and inclusive'.
- **Social connections**—all participants indicated that the social aspect of the activity was a key factor in its success, which arose partly just from the activity although this was more effective if the conversation was facilitated to ensure that all participants were welcomed to the group. Some groups had coffee together or some other social activity following the session, although they noted this was ad hoc and varied from week to week. One participant indicated she had found a 'walking buddy' through playing walking netball and they were walking regularly so extending their fitness related activities beyond the organised sessions.
- **Flexibility**—all participants commented on the benefit of the program being flexible so they could turn up from week to week and not worry about committing to a weekly team. This was within the context of a regular time each week so that they could organise it in their schedules—they wanted a regular time, but also that it be okay if they couldn't make it on the day.
- **Timing**—there were mixed views about timing, as highlighted by the survey. Participants expressed three views: one group was very clear that the activity needed to be during the day, on weekdays, at periods outside of peak hour to avoid traffic (weekends were too busy and often involved family activities); one group were people who were working part time or had the flexibility to manage their hours so were happy to organise their time around the sessions; and one group of participants were still working and indicated that the activity interfered with their work day too much and would have liked the sessions to be after hours or weekends. Several participants noted that for walking netball in particular, it was often very hot and they were concerned about being outside at a time of high UV exposure and would have preferred to play indoors. Overall, this indicates that a range of times and venues may be more appropriate for each code, depending on the location.

- **Age groups**—some participants mentioned that they had participated in games where younger people had participated (in their 20s), which created difficulties. One participant noted that ‘if you have someone with strength and youth who throws the ball to someone with all their force—many of the old people felt that it hurt and were scared of injury’. Several participants indicated that they thought it was better not to play ‘intergenerational’ games, partly because of the differences in skill and strength and partly because they enjoyed having the time to themselves without their families.
- **Payment**—participants appreciated that the sessions were free and many also indicated that they would be prepared to pay similar amounts to the cost of other activities (around \$10-\$12, which is what many pay for other activities). Table tennis charges \$5 per session for those who can afford to pay although they are flexible about enforcing this.
- **Potential improvements**—most participants indicated that the program could be better promoted. Other potential improvements are outlined above and relate to providing more choice in the program (different times of day or the week, different locations).

## 6. Key findings

### The concept is appropriate and effective

The pilot program has established that the overall concept of modified sports is appropriate and effective for older people. The program established modified sports activities in six sports codes which developed and rolled out activities for older people. Participants reported being very satisfied with the activities in some codes (there is no data on satisfaction in the other codes). At least three of the sports codes have plans to continue to expand their activities and see modified sports as a significant growth opportunity.

The program achieved impressive levels of retention, with around 70 per cent of participants saying that they would continue to participate in the future.

### Working with existing sports organisations is an effective leverage point

The program used a small amount of funding to stimulate the development and roll-out of activities by existing sports organisations. FACS worked with the state office of each sports code, which in turn worked through existing organisational structures, primarily regional associations and local clubs in different forms. Using the existing structures was an effective means of ensuring that the program was developed and rolled out, particularly as the state office of five of the six codes have at least a Development Officer (in some cases plus a Development Manager) to focus on opportunities to grow the sport.

The funding from FACS was used as seed funding in different ways, often to subsidise memberships for participants or to subsidise regional associations to support the program (e.g. equipment, small payment for referees). Netball NSW used part of their funding to set up a new website as a portal for new players, with a view to making the program more sustainable in the long term. The flexibility in the approach allowed each code to focus on relevant activities for the code.

### The more successful codes developed both an appropriate modification of the sport and a 'program' to roll out the activity more broadly

The success of the program resulted from designing a 'modified' version of the sport and a 'program' for rolling out the promotion of the modified sport to clubs and associations. Just offering the modified format was not sufficient; the state office needed to support the roll-out. That support took different forms, including developing lesson plans, designing a 60 minute format for activities, providing coaches, delivering training courses for clubs and associations (e.g. workshops at annual conference), promoting the activity and in one case (Netball NSW) developing a purpose-specific website for promotion and registration.

### There are five key success factors that make the modification effective

The more successful approaches to modifying the sport for older people involved:

1. A clear and appropriate model—e.g. a 60 minute session that involved 20 mins of stretching, 20 minutes of skills and 20 minutes for a game, plus a short cooling down period (this was very successful for netball); gymnastics developed a package of lesson plans for instructors to use

2. Regular sessions—participants want to be able to schedule the activity into their week on a regular basis
3. Flexibility—it was important for the participants that they didn't need to sign up for a whole term, and could miss a week if they had an appointment or needed to look after their grandchildren (for example)
4. Good coordination—a coach, or at least a facilitator, to organise each week and run the session
5. Social connection—the social element was critical for all the sports and needed some form of facilitation or support (even if only a light touch). This needed to be an intentional element of the activity as it did not always occur spontaneously.

### **Not charging fees is effective in reducing initial barriers to participation, although once participants have started attending, they would be willing to pay a small amount per week**

Participants appreciated that the activities were free and indicated that they were more willing to try a new activity if there was no cost, as that was one less barrier to overcome. Participants also indicated that they would be willing to pay a small amount if they needed to, equivalent to an exercise class or similar activity, so around \$10-\$12 per session.

### **All the codes in the pilot found that it took longer to set up than they initially estimated**

All the state offices indicated that the program took longer to establish, particularly in terms of finalising a 'package' of lesson plans or game formats, then promoting to associations, recruiting associations to participate and working with the associations to establish activities. In some cases, limited resources in the state office were an issue and in one case an organisational restructure in the state office delayed the development and implementation of the program.

The primary constraints were reported as conflicting priorities and constrained resources, particularly when working with volunteers who are responsible for managing activity at the local and regional level. Codes reported that it takes time to engage volunteers in developing and rolling out a new activity and that they had underestimated how long this would take in their initial planning.

Netball NSW implemented lessons learnt from an earlier trial in 2007 where they received seed funding to establish a program but found that the program declined once the seed funding ended. The state office designed the program to build the foundation for a broader roll-out, including investing in a website for player registration, with the aim of attracting 10,000 players in the future.

### **Marketing and promotion are critical to the success of the programs and yet the codes have limited capability currently, which in turn limits the reach of the programs**

Each state office indicated that marketing and promotion is very important to the success of the program and participants indicated that promotion was a key area for potential improvement. The state offices indicated that their associations and clubs have limited capacity to do this in that, they have limited resources which are already fully allocated and this is a new line of work for them.

## The program delivered on its objectives within the constraints of a pilot program

The stated objectives for the program were bigger than could reasonably be achieved in a pilot program. As a consequence, the program clearly achieved its objective to provide a model for other sporting codes, and there was evidence that modified sports encouraged older people to participate, through its focus on accessibility and social connection. However, the pilot was not designed to deliver longer term health, wellbeing and social benefits of regular sport.

**Encourages older people to make exercise a normal part of their routine**

**Evidence of some achievement.** Participants identified the attraction of modified sports as delivered in the pilot as a way of increasing their participation.

**Achieves the health, wellbeing and social benefits of regular sport and exercise activities for older people**

**Not tested.** There is considerable research to demonstrate the health, wellbeing and social benefits of regular sport and exercise activities for older people. The program did not aim to test the impact of exercise on participants, but rather set up the circumstances supporting participation in exercise. Given that it was successful in encouraging participation, there appears to be a basis for achievement of this objective in the longer term.

**Provides a model for other sporting codes to develop modified programs for older people and encourage ongoing participation.**

**Achieved.** The pilot tested the process of modification, program development and rollout. The evaluation identified learnings from the pilot that could form a model for other sporting codes.

## Consider survey design for future evaluations

FACS had foreshadowed the need for hearing from participants in its commissioning the University of Sydney to design a participant survey. The evaluation results have been informed by the results of this survey. However, the success of the survey was limited as a low proportion of surveys were returned.

We hypothesise that there were two factors influencing this low response:

- The first is the extent to which the survey was promoted by codes. Most respondents participated in modified netball; this suggests that the code promoted the survey actively, while other codes were less active in their promotion.
- The second is the demands involved in completing the survey itself, both in its length and requests for personal and detailed information. It would be understandable if participants chose to not complete the survey for these reasons.

FACS's early design of baseline and post participant surveys is to be applauded. Future surveys should be tested by users, so they ask for the least information to understand the relevant impacts. FACS could also review provisions for participation by funded bodies in evaluations, requiring their active promotion of evaluative activities where necessary.

## 7. Lessons learned from the pilot

We are not aware of whether FACS has funding to continue or expand the program. However, the pilot phase of the modified sport program has highlighted a range of lessons learned that could support other sports codes if they wanted to develop and implement their own modified sport.

The key lessons from the pilot for other sports codes, at a summary level, are:

- The modification of the sport needs to be appropriate to the needs of potential players
- Older people are interested in activities that are appropriate to their capacity, are well-organised, regular, are flexible to allow them to miss occasional sessions and are social
- The sports codes need to develop a 'program' to promote and support the roll out of the modified sport, which includes identifying how best to work within the existing organisational structures—this includes processes to recruit and then support regions/associations and local clubs
- The needs of local clubs vary and so the program needs to be adaptable to meet those needs
- The program needs to include some emphasis on promotion in ways that are likely to catch the attention of the potential participants.

We have developed a tool kit of 'Guidance Notes' based on the outcomes of the pilot (attached separately), covering key issues and considerations for sports codes on seven topics:

- Modifying your sport
- Designing a program
- Recruiting delivery partners—aimed at state organisations working with regions or associations
- Recruiting and support clubs—aimed at regions or associations working with local clubs
- Making sports work for participants—factors that are important for participants
- Promote to participants—things to consider in promoting activities
- Showing your success—collecting information about the activities.

# Appendix 1. Summary of approaches by code

## Football

Element	Approach	Comment
Modification	Based on a model developed in the UK Small sided games; smaller field; walking; shorter periods; no physical contact Initially in summer (not traditional time of year) Formal game with referee	Used an existing model Changes the game play— forces the players to be more proactive, find space, rewards good technique
Implementation	Through existing associations (groups of clubs)—Football NSW promoted to associations; clubs required to sign up	
Time of day	Mostly evenings, midweek – alongside 'summer football'	
Location	Outdoor	
Registration of players	Via FNSW website	
Promotion	Associations Website Multiple media events Email direct to former players Seniors Expo 2018	
Training for clubs	Workshop for associations – ½ day. Good practice in delivering the program. Workshop on refereeing.	FNSW could use a 'facilitator' to work with the associations and with engaging local communities (e.g. aged care centres)
Use of the funding	Program development Graphic design Grants to regional associations (program design; referees; equipment)	
Contribution from FNSW	Staff time – around 25% of a staff member in summer	Created new full-time position covering summer football, community football, walking football
Ongoing work	Intend to continue to expand; significant potential and interest Now being rolled out in other states – Vic, Qld, WA, ACT	Targeting 35 associations in 2019/20. Effective way of maintaining a community club and promoting volunteering

**Netball**

Element	Approach	Comment
Modification	Each session comprises: warm-up/ stretch exercises; skills training; short game; cool down Game: walking only, no jumping; allowed an extra step (reduce risk of strain/injury) Designed as an exercise class as well as the game	Netball NSW developed a tool-kit for providers with rules and approach
Implementation	Mostly rolled out directly by Netball NSW (coaches/facilitators)	Scope for associations/clubs or private providers to run sessions
Time of day	Varied according to local need: mornings, evenings, weekends	
Location	Mix of indoor and outdoor	
Registration of players	Via new website	Paid for from FACS funding Registration then provides insurance cover for players
Promotion	Emails to associations Social media, including paid social media advertising Specific website with ‘finder’ function Flyers (libraries, noticeboards, councils) Word of mouth Some media (talkback radio) Seniors Expo 2018 and 2019	Website separate from existing websites – ‘playwalkingnetball.com.au’
Training for clubs	Resources available Some training sessions	
Use of the funding	Game model and lesson plan for 10 weeks of exercise sessions Website Marketing Coaches/facilitators Some venue hire	
Contribution from FNSW	Participation team (1 x 20%, 1 x 70%) 2 coaches (~10%) Marketing time and resources	
Ongoing work	Make the model sustainable Increase capacity of the associations to run the games Involve private providers (e.g. PCYCs, leisure centres) Roll out nationally (funding available in other	

Element	Approach	Comment
	states from the Commonwealth) Target of 10,000 people in 10 years	

**Gymnastics**

Element	Approach	Comment
Modification	‘Fitter for life’, specialist gymnastics program for older people—functional movements, balance, strength and conditioning Using gymnastics equipment but lower impact e.g. balance beams on mats (not raised up) Program first developed by former gymnastics coach for herself and friends	Program guide – 3 sets of lesson plans, each set has 10 lessons; high mobility to low mobility Delivered by gymnastics coaches
Implementation	Trained coaches to deliver within existing clubs	
Time of day	Generally weekdays during term times; often at the same time as children’s classes (grandparents can do their own class while the children are training)	Trying to make use of facilities in ‘down time’ (middle of the day). Keep to school terms.
Location	Indoor – existing clubs	
Registration of participants	Via local clubs	
Promotion	Direct emails Social media Promoted to regional development officers through national conference Direct contact with clubs and regions Seniors Expo 2018 and 2019	Clubs not skilled in promotion
Training for clubs	Workshop at national conference Provide lesson plans	
Use of the funding	Seed funding for clubs for set up costs Purchase small equipment Membership fees for participants Costs for conference workshops (presenters)	
Contribution from FNSW	In kind support—development staff (20-25% of Development Officer; 5-10% of Development Manager)	
Ongoing work	National program (funding from Sport Australia) Partnership with PCYC – roll out to 30 clubs	

Element	Approach	Comment
	Joint media campaigns with other states	

**Basketball**

Element	Approach	Comment
Modification	Model developed by Basketball Victoria – no running; no jumping; same fundamental rules Can be played in any space – sometimes use waist high rings Clubs have flexibility in how they run each session	
Implementation	Associations run sessions through existing clubs	
Time of day	Weekdays or weekends during school term	Trying to make use of facilities in ‘down time’ (middle of the day).
Location	Indoor – existing clubs	
Registration of players	Via Basketball NSW	
Promotion	Basketball NSW website Social media Local networks Councils Flyers, especially to local service providers (e.g. physiotherapists) Seniors Expo 2019	Associations/clubs not resourced/lack capacity for promotion
Training for clubs	Workshop at State Conference Support for marketing	
Use of the funding	Seed funding for associations – 3 rounds (\$500 per association). Used for venue hire, coaches, some equipment (smaller balls); membership fees for participants	
Contribution from Basketball NSW	In kind: 30-40% x Development Officer’s time	
Ongoing work	Build up a statewide program, continue to expand	

## Softball

Element	Approach	Comment
Modification	T-ball—existing modified version using a T (rather than a thrown ball); distances between bases adjusted according to the age/ability of players A ‘circle’ around each base (essentially a larger base)	Can be adjusted for each group or individual according to age and ability
Implementation	Established as ‘come and try’ sessions: Wagga (5 March 2019), Lismore, Illawarra, Newcastle Run alongside existing competitions (e.g. grandparents playing alongside representative games) Still setting up—aiming to have regular competition in multiple locations	
Registration of players	Casual; turn up to play	No arrangements in place for insurance at this stage
Promotion	Community radio; work with local councils (Blacktown very interested) Board members promote directly Interest in mid North Coast Club activities	
Training for clubs	None	
Use of the funding	Equipment, advertising Proposing to use some of the funds to support a Development Officer, particularly focus on mid North Coast	
Contribution from Softball NSW	Staff time (limited to date)	
Ongoing work	Working with Softball Australia; using NSW as a pilot for a broader roll-out nationally	

**Table tennis**

Element	Approach	Comment
Modification	No need to modify the game itself Sometimes play with a larger ball Developed a device to pick up balls (so players don't have to bend over)	
Implementation	Establishing new clubs or sessions as part of existing clubs Provide equipment (table, bats) Sometimes cover venue hire; cost of a coach/facilitator for 4-6 weeks; aim for each club to be self-sustaining in that time	
Registration of players	Casual; turn up and play	
Promotion	Website; Facebook; word of mouth; partners (e.g. Council, PCYC); flyers Some within existing facilities e.g. RSL club, so promote to members Different for each location Seniors Expo 2018 and 2019	
Training for clubs	Advice on how to run a club, set up a draw	
Use of the funding	Equipment; fees for coaches/facilitators	
Contribution from FNSW	Staff time—President, TTNSW (part); volunteer time	
Ongoing work	Aim to establish 10 'new' clubs (either completely new or 'a club within a club')	

## Appendix 2. Survey of participants



## Post Participation Survey – Modified Sports

Thank you for taking part in a modified sport. The NSW Government recognises the importance of staying active and healthy. As a result we would like to ask you some questions regarding your physical activity now and over the next year.

This information will help us understand any changes to your physical and mental wellbeing, and aid the development of future programs.

Thank you for helping us to support an active and healthy future for the people of New South Wales.

**Project question:** The extent to which team sports can maintain or improve the health, wellbeing and quality of life of older people in New South Wales.

### OFFICIAL USE ONLY

1. Instructor	
Date	/ / Signature

*Please initial box*

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time.	
3. I hereby confirm that I give consent for my questionnaire and attendance data to be used in the project.	
4. If requested, I will take part in an interview about my experiences taking part in the program.	

Please provide the relevant contact information:

5. Email	
6. Telephone	

7. Name of participant

8. Date of survey

/ /

Signature

9. What is your home postcode?

10. What is your gender?

Female

Male

Other (or prefer not to say)

11. What is your date of birth?

DAY

MONTH

YEAR

12. What team sport (if any) do you play?

13. Do you have a disability or a longstanding illness or infirmity that limits your activity in any way?

By longstanding, we mean anything that has troubled you over a long period of time or is likely to affect you over a long period of time?

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

*If you selected 'Yes', please state your illness:*

14. Which of the following best describes your employment status? *Please tick the most appropriate answer*

Employed full time

Disabled, not able to work

Employed part time

Retired

Not employed

By selecting one answer in each group below, please indicate which statements best describe your own health state today.

**Mobility** *(Please tick one option only)*

15.  I have no problems with walking about  
 I have some problems walking about  
 I am confined to bed

**Self Care** *(Please tick one option only)*

16.  I have no problems with self-care  
 I have some problems with washing and dressing myself  
 I am unable to wash or dress myself

**Usual Activities** *(Please tick one option only)*

17.  I have no problems with performing my usual activities  
 I have some problems with performing my usual activities  
 I am unable to perform my usual activities

**Pain/discomfort** *(Please tick one option only)*

18.  I have no pain/discomfort  
 I have moderate pain/discomfort  
 I have extreme pain/discomfort

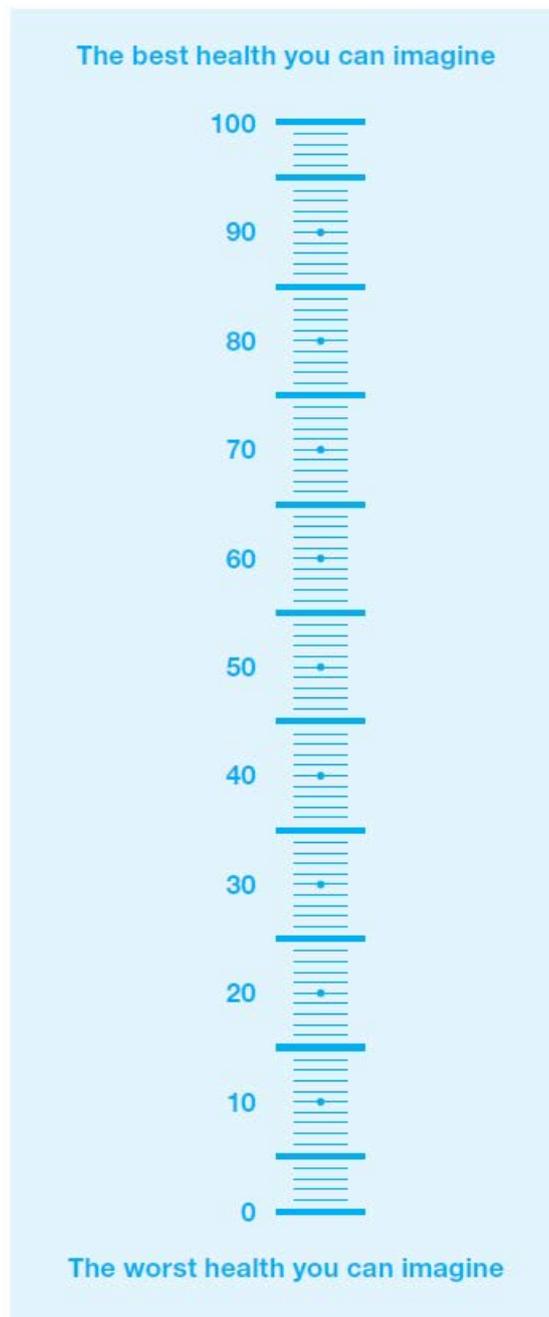
**Anxiety/depression** *(Please tick one option only)*

19.  I am not anxious or depressed  
 I am moderately anxious/depressed  
 I am extremely anxious/depressed

20. To help people say how good or bad a health state is, we have drawn a scale (rather like a thermometer) on which the best state you can imagine is marked 100 and the worst state you can imagine is marked 0.

We would like you to indicate on this scale **how good or bad your own health is today, in your own opinion**. Please do this by drawing a line on the scale below that indicates how good or bad your health state is.

**Your health status today is:**



We are interested in finding out about the kinds of physical activities that people do as part of their everyday lives. These questions will ask you about the time you spent being physically active in the last 7 days.

Please answer each question even if you do not consider yourself to be an active person.

To describe the intensity of the physical activity, two terms (Moderate and Vigorous) are used:

**Moderate** activities refer to activities that take moderate physical effort and make you breathe somewhat harder than normal.

**Vigorous** physical activities refer to activities that take hard physical effort and make you breathe much harder than normal.

**21.** The first question is about the **time you spent sitting during the last 7 days**. Include time spent at work, at home, while doing course work and during leisure time. This may include time spent sitting at a desk, visiting friends, reading, or sitting or lying down to watch television.

During the last 7 days, on average how much time did you spend sitting during a day? \_\_\_\_\_ hours \_\_\_\_\_ minutes

**22.** Think about the **time you spent walking in the last 7 days**. This includes at work and at home, walking to travel from place to place, and any other walking that you might do solely for recreation, sport, exercise, or leisure.

During the last 7 days, on how many days did you walk for at least 10 minutes at a time? \_\_\_\_\_ days or  No day

How much time did you usually spend walking on one of those days? \_\_\_\_\_ hours \_\_\_\_\_ minutes

**23.** During the last 7 days, on how many **days did you do moderate physical activities** like gardening, cleaning, bicycling at a regular pace, swimming, or other fitness activities?

Think *only* about those physical activities that you did for at least 10 minutes at a time. Do not include walking. \_\_\_\_\_ days or  No day

How much time did you usually spend doing moderate physical activities on one of those days? \_\_\_\_\_ hours \_\_\_\_\_ minutes

24. During the last 7 days, on how many **days did you do vigorous physical activities** like heavy lifting, heavier garden or construction work, chopping woods, aerobics, jogging/running, or fast bicycling?

Think *only* about those physical activities that you did for at least 10 minutes at a time.

\_\_\_\_\_ days or  No day

How much time did you usually spend doing vigorous physical activities on one of those days?

\_\_\_\_\_ hours \_\_\_\_\_ minutes

25. Are you involved with any other sporting organisations?

Yes                       No                       Prefer not to say

*If you selected 'Yes', please detail which organisation:*

26. In the last 7 days, how many days did you take part in a sport?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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Don't know     Prefer not to say

27. How much time did you usually spend doing sport on one of those days?

\_\_\_\_\_ hours \_\_\_\_\_ minutes

28. On a scale of 0–10, where 0 is not at all satisfied and 10 is completely satisfied, overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?

<i>not at all satisfied</i>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<i>completely satisfied</i>
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Don't know     Prefer not to say

29. On a scale of 0–10, where 0 is not at all happy and 10 is completely happy, overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?

<i>not at all happy</i>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<i>completely happy</i>
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Don't know

Prefer not to say

30. On a scale of 0–10, where 0 is not at all anxious and 10 is completely anxious, overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?

<i>not at all anxious</i>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<i>completely anxious</i>
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Don't know

Prefer not to say

31. On a scale of 0–10, where 0 is not at all worthwhile and 10 is completely worthwhile, overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?

<i>not at all worthwhile</i>	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<i>completely worthwhile</i>
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Don't know

Prefer not to say

32. To what extent do you agree with the statement 'I can achieve most of the goals I set myself'?

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

Disagree

Don't know

Neither agree or disagree

Prefer not to say

Agree

33. We are interested in your experiences taking part in a modified sport. Which modified sport did you try?

- Walking football
- Walking netball
- Move for Life

34. What did you like about the program?

35. What didn't you like?

36. Do you/did you socialise with people you met through the program?

37. Are you going to continue in the program?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Why?

38. How can we improve the program?

39. Would you recommend the program to family and friends?

Very unlikely

Unlikely

Neither likely  
nor unlikely

Likely

Very likely

40. If you are continuing with the program, how is it benefiting you (select all that apply)?

- My fitness has improved
- My mobility has improved
- My blood pressure has improved
- My weight has improved
- My cholesterol levels have improved
- I can do more than before
- Other (please specify)

41. What other sporting or fitness activities are you interested in?

**42.** Do you have any other comments?

**This is the end of the questionnaire.**  
**Thank you for taking your time to complete this form. Please ensure that you give this to your physical activity instructor when you have finished.**



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