



**National Junior and Youth
Participation Overview**

2014

Mission

To facilitate and support the participation of deaf and hard of hearing Australian children into sport

Vision

Building and Strengthening Opportunities for deaf and hard of hearing children to participate in sport

Values

Integrity
Excellence
Passion
Perseverance
Nurturing

Our Personality

Courageous
Admired
Determined
Progressive

INTRODUCTION

Deaf Sports Australia (DSA) was established in 1954 as the peak body for deaf sports in Australia. DSA assists Australians who are deaf or hard of hearing to participate in sport at all levels and compete in designated National and International events including Australian Deaf Games, Asia Pacific Deaf Games and Deaflympic Games through partnerships with governments, business, sporting bodies and the community.

DSA has a rolling Strategic Plan (SP) that is reviewed and updated on a yearly basis. This SP outlines a number of pillars and key outcomes that drive the core of the business. A key plank of the plan is the need to increase participation numbers in young people so as they can enjoy the many benefits that sport participation provides. One of the key programs that DSA oversees is the DSA Active Deaf Kids (ADK) Program which runs come and try days throughout Australia in conjunction with schools, education departments, National Sporting Organisations, Australian Sports Commission Programs State based deaf organisations and State based sporting organisations.

The aim of this overview is to ensure there is an engagement structure and network for young deaf and hard of hearing Australians that allows for their participation in sports. This overview aims at developing and emphasising the social dividends for the community by improving connections and development for young people that will lead to an encompassing plan.

Junior participation in sport provides the foundation for a healthy lifestyle and is associated with a range of benefits throughout life including social interaction, increased attentiveness, confidence, health and overall wellbeing. Conversely inactivity is a cause of many health problems such as obesity – there is significant Australian and international research that confirms this.

In a society with more sedentary people and an increasing disability and ageing population, being physically active to maintain health and well being is more important than ever.⁶ This is particularly important in the deaf and hard of hearing community where statistics highlight above averages of obesity and sedentary behaviour.

Physical activity behaviour patterns are determined early in life and therefore active children are likely to become active adults or if they are not active when they are young the direct negative consequence is on the long-term health of the person.

The following key points have been developed and highlighted to provide an overall view of the need for a properly defined and planned National Junior and Youth Plan. In developing the plan these points have been to drive and direct Deaf Sports Australia in developing and evolving the Active Deaf Kids Strategic Plan – a document that encourages sustainable participation growth via an effective program(s) that is supported by a network of partners for the benefit of young deaf and hard of hearing Australians.

A. Positive Youth Development (PYD)

The following outline and summary quote highlights the need for long term solutions that provide structured pathways that invariably will be choice based.

“The underpinning principle of a positive youth development (PYD) approach to sport programs is to provide space, playing and training opportunities and equipment for a large number of children across various sports. This creates a large pool of motivated adolescents by keeping a large number of participants within the “participation “pyramid, which enables performance coaches to eventually choose and select the best athletes for the elite pathway. “ (ASC: Positive Youth Development through Sport – Jean Cote and Clifford Mallett - UniQuest September 2012. ³

B. Inclusion

Being inclusive means adapting and modifying sports practices and activities to ensure every participant, regardless of age, gender, ability level, disability and ethnic background has the opportunity to participate if they choose to. National Sporting Organisations (NSO’s), their affiliates and sporting clubs together with their officials, volunteers and coaches need to adapt and modify processes and to create an environment that caters for individual needs.²

Sports inclusion philosophies and policies should be created and formulated on the basis of a seamless and “normal” structured connection and network when supporting disabled Australians. The focus must be on the person’s ability and not on their limitations. Inclusion will only work if all stakeholders under the sport umbrella embrace the idea of including people of all ages and abilities.²

Young deaf and hard of hearing Australians need to participate in sport as it provides a wide range of benefits that go beyond physical fitness alone. When they play sport, children are engaged with others and learn teamwork and negotiation skills; they develop self- discipline; they learn to work within rules; they develop decision – making skills; and they acquire motor skills, giving them a sense of movement.⁵ In addition sport provides an outlet to be active and to acquire, cognitive and social-emotional skills and benefits.⁵

C. Develop effective and workable relationships with a number of key stakeholders.

These include:

1. Australian Sports Commission (ASC)

A key partner of DSA, the ASC provides advice and support that enables DSA to run programs and services that aim to increase the levels of participation for junior and youth deaf and hard of hearing Australians. The ASC believes participation can be

influenced by improving accessibility, capabilities and governance and therefore have implemented the School Sports Program, which will be administered by the ASC with funding provided to National Sporting Organisations (NSO). Such funding is then available to Schools to apply for and have the NSO's run programs prior to, during or after school. The focus of the program is to encourage more children and youth to participate more often through traditional and new sport products. It will highlight the need to develop skills and good habits that will underpin lifelong physical fitness.

Whilst developing physical literacy and affection of sport the program aims at increasing the capabilities of NSO's to create connections between the school community and traditional sporting clubs.

In addition a clear direction of the program is to include and acknowledge the emerging trends in sport participation and to work with and adapt the product and service provision.

2. Identified Sports

DSA will concentrate on the following sports in implementing the Active Deaf Kids Program:

- Athletics
- Basketball
- Cricket
- Cycling
- Football including Futsal
- Golf
- Netball
- Swimming
- Tennis
- Volleyball
- Other sports as identified from time to time

When working with each sport a concise Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be developed that will highlight the parties' obligations, which will be supported by an outcomes driven operational plan.

The working relationships will concentrate on a number of service deliverables together with a clear understanding of providing the young person choices between deaf competitions and mainstream competitions. Deaf competitions can include playing with a deaf team in a mainstream sport, playing in a State or National sport specific Championship that can then lead to International World Championships, Asia Pacific Deaf Games or the Deaflympics. Deaf or hard of hearing individuals can play in hearing teams or clubs but they can also play in deaf competitions – the choice is theirs.

Whilst the NSO / DSA relationship will be the cornerstone of the ADK program in many cases the NSO's state affiliates will be the program delivers together with DSA State Members

3. School Sports Australia (SSA)

A key partner that will via a MOU between DSA and SSA outline procedures and inclusive practice that will ensure consistency in the service provided at State and National School Competitions

4. Deaf Specific Organisations

DSA will endeavour to have working partnerships or MOU's with the following:

- State / Territory Deaf Service Organisations
- Deaf Children Australia (support service for parents of young deaf and hard of hearing children)
- Deafness Forum of Australia

5. DSA State Members

In many cases the program services will need to be provided at the coalface by DSA affiliates. These are:

- Deaf Sport Recreation Queensland
- DeafACT
- Deaf Sport Recreation Victoria
- Deaf Sports NT Committee
- Deaf NSW Sports Committee
- WA Deaf Recreation Association
- Deaf Community Sport SA

6. DSA National Deaf Sport Organisations (NDSO)

The relationship with the NSOs will be supported and developed by the DSA NDSOs that have been created based on the identified sports. The NDSO's will develop National operational plans with the NSOs and will also develop sport specific programs that aim at increasing participation in their sport. In addition they will run and oversee sport specific National Deaf Championships.

7. State Education Departments

DSA will work with State Government Education Departments with the aim to connect with deaf specific schools together with mainstream schools.

D. Resources

- Develop inclusion awareness training within all levels of the sport;
- Develop communication tips for coaches and officials for all sports;
- Develop mobile links and access to DSA website information libraries
- Develop weblinks relevant to young deaf and hard of hearing people and their parents such as AussieDeaf Kids and Deaf Children Australia;

- Develop clear pathways and opportunities that are available to all participants;
- Develop resources that will make it easier for deaf and hard of hearing participants to compete.

E. Ages of the Young People

The ages that this overview covers and focuses on are children 5 – 12 and youth 13 – 17.

F. Advantages of Sport Participation ⁴

- Increased energy level
- Improved health and/ or reduction in the risk of disease
- Improved self – esteem
- A sense of belonging
- Self identity
- Freedom of Choice
- Meeting people with similar disability

G. Constraints to Participating in Sport ⁴

- Lack of funding
- Lack of awareness of the benefits of sport for deaf and hard of hearing people
- Lack of trained staff to support participation
- Lack of understanding and awareness of deaf and hard of hearing people
- Lack of communication skills between the coach and officials with deaf and hard of hearing person
- Lack of provision of interpreters

H. Quotes from deaf or hard of hearing individuals ⁴

- “Even though I am deaf, I do not think my disability has affected my ability to compete. Sometimes I have to work harder, but it has not stopped me competing at a level I want to compete at.”
- “ Sport plays a huge role in my life”
- “ My ability to compete at a high level through mainstream sport has improved my confidence and through coaching I can prove to others that having a disability doesn’t have to affect what you can do”
- “ I used to think that everybody would always judge me because of my hearing, but that ‘s not the case. I have figured that out. I have finally accepted the person I am”

- “Sport provides me with an avenue to feel that I am good at something, it provides meaningful social interaction and I feel fit”
- “ As my child participates in “mainstream” sporting activities he has the opportunity to realise that his disability is not a disability to him”

CONCLUSION

It is imperative that the plans and programs that are developed, outline pathways and progressive milestones that can be measured and reviewed. It is also important to ensure all parties are aware of their obligations and responsibilities.

This overview has outlined the reasons and the rationale that underpins the development of the DSA Active Deaf Kids (ADK) Strategic Plan. This document provides a clear direction that will enable the strategies to effectively work in ensuring the detailed outcomes can be achieved. It is proposed the ADK Plan will be reviewed and updated on a yearly basis.

References

- ¹.Department of Sport and Recreation WA – “ Junior Participation”
- ².Australian Sports Commission – “Inclusive Coaching”
- ³.ASC: Positive Youth Development through Sport – Jean Cote and Clifford Mallett - UniQuest September 2012
- ⁴.Darcy, S., & Faulkner, S. (2014). *Summary results for sport and active recreation - Deaf and hearing impaired participants*. University of Technology Sydney: UTS Business School.
- ⁵.Active Healthy Kids Australia – report card on Physical Activity for Children and Young People – June 2014
- ⁶. Latrobe University – Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation promotional flyer – June 2014