

School trial leads to cycling tour de force

Increasing participation in physical activity through community sport and active recreation

This project is part of a VicHealth funding program known as PICSAR, which aims to increase participation levels in community sport and active recreation among people with disabilities and those from low socio-economic, Indigenous and new-arrival communities.

The organisation

CycleSport Victoria (CSV) is the peak governing body for both organised competitive and recreational cycling within Victoria. It is an affiliate of Cycling Australia and the International Cycling Union, and currently has 55 affiliated clubs and over 6000 members state-wide.

The organisation coordinates the competitive disciplines of road and track cycling at a club and state level. It also provides options for recreational cyclists and coordinates Coaching & Officials Courses, junior development camps, school clinics, and Come 'n Try road and track cycling days.

The project

CSV aims to address the inequality in participation in cycling experienced by people with a disability and people from disadvantaged or low socio-economic backgrounds. It does this through supporting and enhancing club and coach awareness to provide inclusive and accessible opportunities for groups that are currently not participating in cycling.

Workshops and educational programs are run to build awareness around cultural, disability, and social justice issues. CSV's Development Officers support clubs and link them with Access for All Abilities providers, welfare and support agencies, Regional Sports Assemblies and other partners.



Nathan Broeren (centre) getting ready to compete in the inaugural Special Schools State Final. *Image courtesy of CycleSport Victoria.*

Innovative training gets more children and young people on track

The story

An initial project between CycleSport Victoria and the Frankston Special Development School has developed into a state-wide championship event, demonstrating that great things can happen when a commitment to 'participation for all' is put into practice.

A chance meeting between CSV and a teacher from the Frankston school at a conference, led to CSV conducting

a number of cycling skills clinics with students from the school. For some children, this was their first experience on a bike.

The school supports children and young people between 5 and 18 years with moderate to severe intellectual disabilities. Accordingly, CSV modified the program to suit the children's levels of ability and confidence. Exercises such as cycling around specially designed circuits

More information about Participation in Community Sport and Active Recreation (PICSAR) is available on the VicHealth website at: www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/picsar

with strategically placed witches hats, were coupled with sessions on a virtual reality simulator.

The virtual reality simulator was an enormous hit with the children, generating great enthusiasm for the sport. A bike was placed on a wind trainer and hooked to a computer. Visuals on the computer simulated a road race, much like an arcade game, with riders able to race each other in a virtual world.

CSV's work with the school resulted in CSV's development team being invited to the annual Blackwood Super Ride in 2008. This event, an initiative of special and developmental schools, sees a number of students from these schools riding for two or three days through Blackwood, Trentham and Daylesford on a cycling challenge.

Inspired by the positivity and inclusiveness displayed during the Blackwood Super Ride, CSV realised a program they were already running could be applied to the special and developmental schools.

Each year, CSV conducts the Victorian Schools Cycling Championships (VSCC) which attracts approximately 1,500 riders from across the state. CSV proposed the idea of a Special Schools Cycling Championships using the same successful format as that employed for the VSCC. The concept was warmly received by the sports coordinators and physical education teachers from the special schools.

To attract participants and promote the idea of this special schools event, CSV ran school clinics and forums across Victoria with the Southern Special Schools Sports Association.

The hard work paid off with the inaugural event – Special Schools Cycling Championships State Final – taking place in October 2008 at the Casey Field Criterion Circuit. Approximately 60 children and young people from 10 special schools across Victoria participated on the day.

One of the participants, Nathan Broeren, a 19-year-old from Emerson School in Dandenong, was identified by CSV and his teacher as a potential athlete eligible to compete at an international level.

With support from his school, Nathan participated in the 2009 Global Games. These Games, organised by the International Sports Federation for Persons with an Intellectual Disability, see 1,500 individuals participating from 40 countries in various sports.

At the games, Nathan received medals in individual and team events and was presented with a Southern Cross Award for his outstanding performance. He is now a regular member of his local club, Carnegie Caulfield Cycling Club, and participates enthusiastically in the majority of club events.

CSV believes that nearly a third of all participants from the Special Schools Cycling Championships State Final are now active members of their local cycling clubs. This demonstrates the rewards that can be enjoyed on an individual, community and club level when inclusive participation practices are put in place.

Working with communities that had previously had limited opportunities to try cycling has been a significant organisational change for CSV. Development Officer Luke Mason says modifying its traditional programs to accommodate the needs of special groups has been an invaluable experience.

"This project has shown us that once a structure is in place, it can be used in many ways. We now have opportunities to increase participation in the sport of cycling with many different groups and communities that we previously didn't have relationships with".

For more information on CycleSport Victoria go to: www.vic.cycling.org.au
Telephone: (03) 8480 3000

PICSAR

Sport and active recreation organisations are well placed to assist VicHealth in addressing the health inequalities that result in poorer health outcomes for many groups in the community.

They have a tradition of providing opportunities for individuals and groups to:

- participate in physical activity,
- connect with other members of the community,
- feel part of their local community, and
- develop knowledge and skills that can be used in a range of contexts.

The Participation in Community Sport and Active Recreation (PICSAR) Program comprises three funding programs:

- State and Regional Grants
- Active Participation Grants
- Active Club Grants

The first two programs are long-term investments that work with State Sporting Associations, Regional Sports Assemblies, statewide peak agencies and regional organisations to increase participation in physical activity in specific target populations.

A learning snapshot from the independent evaluation being conducted by Monash University/ARTD Consultants shows that:

1. partnerships are perceived as beneficial to program delivery
2. it is important that staff (paid or voluntary) have the required skills to implement activities
3. sports at all levels should consider adapting policies and activities to provide greater flexibility to promote inclusion.