



YOUTH ISSUE – BRIEFING

TO: CHIEF MINISTER

DATE: 1 DECEMBER 2014

FROM: NED HALL

TOPIC: LACK OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN SPORT

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Northern Territory (NT) Government:

1. explore how young Territorians can have greater flexibility with the Sport Voucher Scheme such as, removing restrictions of having to participate through schools and creating greater flexibility in where they can be spent;
2. support inclusive 'come and try' sports days where clubs can participate together and encourage young Territorians to try and sign up for sports; and
3. develop an initiative to encourage parents to support their children to participate in sports.

BACKGROUND

This community-based project focuses on young Territorians not participating in sports. This study was chosen because I would class that as a big issue in our community. This was also identified as an issue at the first Chief Minister's Round Table of Young Territorians (Round Table) meeting in 2014, where members analysed the results of the Youth Issues Survey. The survey received over 280 responses from young Territorians who identified that *'lack of things to do/not enough sporting facilities'* was their third greatest concern.

Australia is becoming one of the most obese countries in the world and it is related to young people not doing enough physical activity to stay fit (AIHW, 2013). If young Territorians were to start participating in more sports it would not only reduce their obesity rates, but also get more money into sporting teams and facilities. Another reason this issue was chosen was because sports and physical activity can have a positive effect on people's mental health and it can help people to enhance social interaction (Black Dog Institute 2013).

For this study a broad range of young people between the ages of 12 and 25 were surveyed. This age group was chosen as this issue is for young Territorians and they are relevant to the issue I have chosen. The main respondent group for this survey was young Territorians between the ages of 15 to 19 as they seemed to be the most likely to get themselves to the sport and do not need much parental support. Darwin offers plenty of sporting opportunities and I wanted to find out why it is that more people are not participating.

This study aims to find out why young Territorians are not participating in sport and investigates whether improving the facilities available to young Territorians would encourage them to become more active. The aim was to see what it was that the young Territorians wanted so they would participate in sports more, and ask if the government would be willing to provide it. Offering more facilities, or updating existing facilities could have a positive



result of more young people participating, and therefore getting more money circulating through the small clubs and businesses. Currently the NT Government offers the \$100 sports voucher to encourage young people to get involved, but that voucher can only be used in certain places. It is hoped that this study will find a small, simple and effective solution to young people not participating, and therefore increasing the participation rate amongst young Territorians.

It is thought that perhaps the reason some young people do not participate in sport is because their parents do not or are unable to support them. It was hoped that the survey conducted could perhaps uncover some underlying problems similar to the lack of support. If there were to become a constant support system for young people to participate it would be more likely that they would become more actively involved. The continuing benefit of young people being happy to participate in sport is not only their improved health status, but as they grow up they would keep that positive attitude towards sport and get their kids involved. This would be a positive outcome.

DISCUSSION

During this project, time was spent trying to figure out a relevant issue that young people face in the NT. The initial study was youth obesity, but it was then realised that there would have to be an underlying cause to the obesity, and it was identified that a big contributor to childhood obesity is a lack of participation in sport. Time was wisely spent to create a survey to ask young Territorians about their background and mainly about what sporting facilities they know about and use, and if they do not, why. The aim was to get this survey out to as many young Territorians between the ages of 12 and 25 so there could be a broad range of replies from all age groups. In total, 31 surveys were completed and are analysed below.

Survey Results

From the survey results, it was found that 77% of the young people surveyed said they do participate in a sport, as seen in graph 1. Some of the sports include: AFL, soccer, cricket and basketball. The other 23% of the participants surveyed replied saying they did not participate in sport had reasons mainly relating to them having too little time due to part-time work, and that they just did not find it fun or enjoyable, this is shown in graphs 5 and 6.

Although the survey did receive responses from most age groups, the main ages to respond were 15 and 16, which made up 87% of all responses. Graph 7 shows that while a decent 55% know of facilities around them, 45% were unable to name any facilities near them. Graph 8 displays that of those who knew of facilities around them, 53% of them named schools, ovals and courts, 35% named Marrara, 6% named pools around them and 6% named gyms and rock climbing places. Of those who named facilities, as graph 9 shows, only 56% use the facilities they named. The majority of 55% of those who use the facilities said that there were improvements that could be made, including; more seats for spectators at Marrara, more parking space at Marrara, a grandstand for local clubs, better ramps and facilities at local skate parks and improvements made to existing goal posts and ovals at schools. Of all the people surveyed, no one named facilities such as the squash center, the indoor beach volleyball centre or the Darwin tennis centre. This shows that these facilities are not as well known by young people in NT as they should be.

Graph 6 shows that of the people participating and those not participating, there are many issues of concern. It shows that 38% of people face difficulties with paying the fees for the



sport including registration and equipment. 33% said they have trouble getting to the facilities easily. 29% of those surveyed said that they are too lazy to take part in a lot of sporting activities, even though a lot of them already participate. 29% of those surveyed said that they faced a lack of time to participate in the sports events, 32% said that they had lack of motivation to get them to go out and play the sports, 48% said that they had too much school/work commitments to be able to go out and play, 26% said that sports just did not interest them at all, 16% said that their parents did not support them going out and playing the sports, which makes it very hard for them. 3% said that starting by themselves was scary and that they did not want to be new in a team that knows each other. Graph 5 shows that of the 23% of young people who do not participate in any sporting activities, 14% are too lazy to participate, 43% said that sports are too boring, 29% said that they did not have time to play between school and work commitments, 14% said that they just do not like sports.

Graph 10 shows that only 65% of the young people surveyed actually used their \$100 sports voucher. Of those who did not use the vouchers, 50% said it was because they had no use for it, as they do not play a sport, 10% said that they forgot that they had one, 20% said that they are not in school and could not access a sports voucher, 10% said that they couldn't use the sports voucher for their particular sport and 10% said that the sports voucher was not useful enough for them.

From the survey results it is clear that it is not only the lack of support resulting in youths not participating, but more the unawareness of facilities and inability to get there, as well as financial burdens and time commitments. Finding information like this helps to come up with possible solutions, such as making the sports less expensive or making the facilities more accessible. To find more information on making sports more appealing to young people further study would need to be conducted.

Some possible solutions to the issue of NT youths not participating in sport include having fun days to introduce them to the sports, having some sort of benefit introduced to encourage them to participate or having sports available at more times so there is time to do school assignments and go to work and still be able to get out and get involved in sports. Having fun days would encourage young people to get involved, if they knew they were not going to be the only new person there they would be more confident. At the fun day they could practice the sport and see if it is something they enjoy and feel happy doing. Adding some sort of benefit to the sport could also interest some young people. Some young people may think that they will get nothing out of participating in the sport so if there was some sort of benefit involved it could make them more likely to give sports a try. Also, if the sporting clubs were able to make their opening times more lenient it could give those young people that have to work a chance to use their facilities.

The stakeholders in this project were the young Territorians surveyed, the people who want to get young people involved in sports and government officials that look for better mental and physical health in young Territorians. If the young people become more interested in sport it will have benefits for all stakeholders. Clubs struggling to make a team will be able to do so if more young people come out to play. If this happens it will make it a lot more fun for everyone involved.

The new Increased Funding for Sporting Groups allows sporting clubs and organisations to apply for up to \$5000, rather than the \$3000 they could before. This grant will help to increase the participation of youths in the NT in sporting and recreation activities. This is a



great step forward for the development of sporting and recreational groups, which can now make much needed renovations. It has also made the program all year round, allowing clubs and groups more time to research their projects (Conlan, M. 2014). The grant has already had several successful applicants, such as the MacKillop Sharks Rugby League Football Club, who were granted \$3000 for a grandstand for spectators and players and the Darwin Baseball League, who were granted \$3000 for portable baseball mounds to improve safety. The grant is a perfect example of how youth participation in sporting and recreation activities can be raised.

Studies such as 'The Connection Between Psychological and Physical Health' by Kathleen Bulbrook (Psychology department, Central Queensland University, 2014) supports the statement that people with poor mental health can be helped greatly by being healthy physically. Other studies that have the same conclusion include 'Depression and exercise' (Victorian Government, 2014), which shows that depression can be helped by regular physical exercise. Studies like these show that there is a strong link between a person's physical health and mental health.

If improvements are made to the facilities the majority of the people surveyed said that they would use them more regularly and encourage others to join them. If this happens it will have a very positive effect on the people using the facilities physical health and the people who run the facilities.

The results of the global study into obesity rates, published in the medical journal *The Lancet*, show almost a quarter of the country's children and 63 per cent of the adult population is overweight.

The NT will benefit greatly if young Territorians are more physically active. They will be happier, healthier mentally, and more inclined to help the community. They will encourage friends to join them and they will have the opportunities to make new friends. This may also provide young Territorians with the opportunity to make a career out of a sport.

Consultations were undertaken with various stakeholders, including teachers, coaches and young people. The teachers that were consulted said that they thought that the young people would benefit greatly if they were more active. They said that it would help them with slight depression and anxiety and maybe help them socially. The coaches that were consulted said that teams would be much better off if they could gather players. People not participating can stop other people from participating, for example when a team is short only a few players and is disbanded a lot of people miss out on playing. The young people who were consulted said that they thought it would be great if more people joined them being active. Although some young people said that sports and physical activity are not worth their time. These young people need to be shown the long term positive effects and benefits to their overall health and wellbeing resulting from physical activity.

Due to the data collection being through a survey there are chances of systematic and random errors occurring. The only kinds of systematic error would be if a question was misworded or if the questions did not give the correct options for answers. It also means that there are many factors contributing to random error. The random error is all to do with the respondent's backgrounds and experiences. The results depended on the people's age, gender, beliefs, ethnicity, upbringing, personal experiences and personal goals. People with different backgrounds will interpret questions differently. If someone found a question offensive or something that could make them stick out from the group they may have



deliberately given wrong answers to prevent standing out. The results can also be affected by the random error of people not caring about completing the survey, along with deliberately putting incorrect answers because they find it amusing.

Some improvements to the collection of data include making sure the questions and answers were correctly worded and not offensive, and getting more surveys completed. More questions could have asked about their background to see if their personal background affected their opinion towards participating in sport. If there were more surveys completed the data would not be as skewed towards males and 15-16 year olds opinions. Further collection of data from the other age groups would have made the data more broad and end with better results.

NT GOVERNMENT POLICIES

This project links strongly with the strong community aspect of *Framing the Future*, in particular objectives two and three. If more young Territorians participated in sports they will become stronger and healthier. If young Territorians are encouraged to join in and participate, it will increase community connections. People will be more comfortable to volunteer and will be eager to encourage their friends around them.

This project also aligns with the two of the goals under *NT Youth Participation Framework 2014-17*. The celebrating goal, where young Territorians embrace their culture, have fun and live in harmony; and the wellbeing goal, young Territorians lead safe, healthy and happy lives by making positive lifestyle choices.

CONCLUSION/SUMMARY

This study was conducted on the issue of young Territorians not participating in sports and aimed to investigate why there is such a lack of participation and to understand what contributes to young people not participating. A survey was conducted amongst as many people as possible in the age range of 12-25 but the majority of responses were from 15 and 16 year olds. The results mainly coming from that age group skews the data, along with the most responses being from males. It was found that most of the respondents do participate in sports, but those that do not, have reasons to not participate including too much homework and work commitments. Some people also lack motivation to get involved as well as not having enough parental and financial support.

Through this study it was identified that the main reason some people do not get involved because they do not know that the available facilities around them exist. Also from my study I have found that lack of motivation and laziness is a real problem with our young people and there should be more motivation in the community. I learned that school and work commitments are too much for a lot of young people so they do not have the time to be active. During this study I have learned that the government has done quite a bit to encourage young people to participate, but could do just a bit more to engage with those who are too lazy or just do not find it interesting. I also learned that a lot of youth do not want to use the facilities around them, even if they know they exist because they think that there are necessary improvements that are needed. It was found that although 77% participate in sporting activities, only 55% know of facilities around them.

I really hope that through this report more young Territorians will become engaged with sporting activities and can to improve their mental and physical condition. I wanted to improve the lives of a vast majority of youths that feel unhappy with themselves, being unable to run or being unable to socialise well with others. I wanted to be able to connect



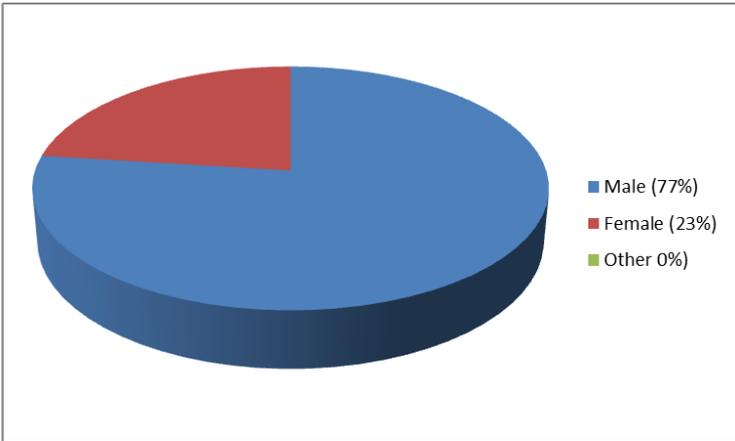
with the young Territorians and find out why they do not want to participate and what they thought of the current state of the facilities around them.

Based on this, it is recommended that NT Government:

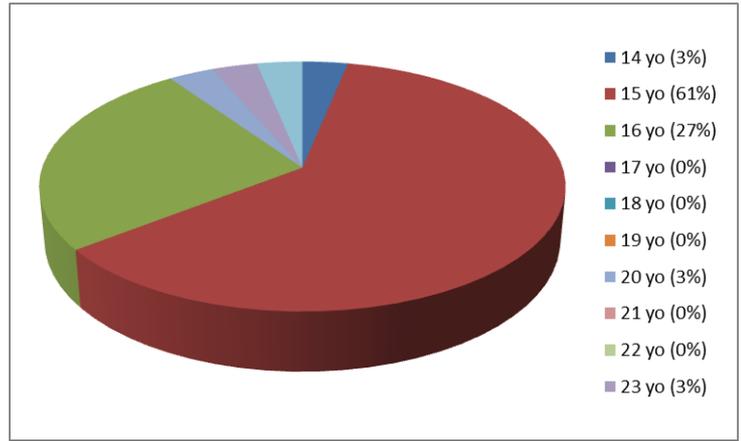
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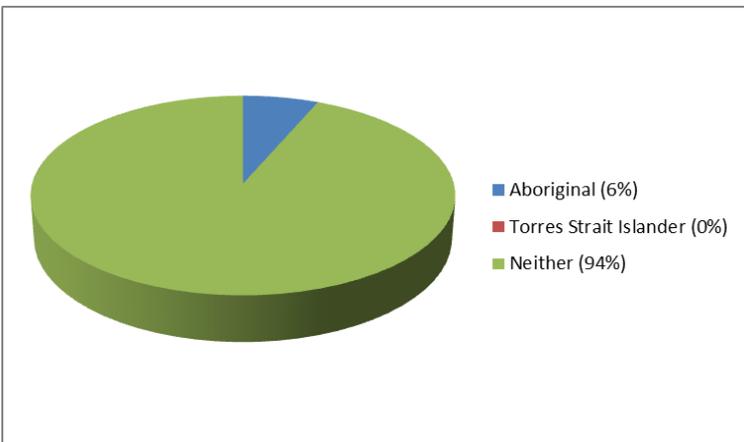
GRAPH 1
(Gender of those surveyed)



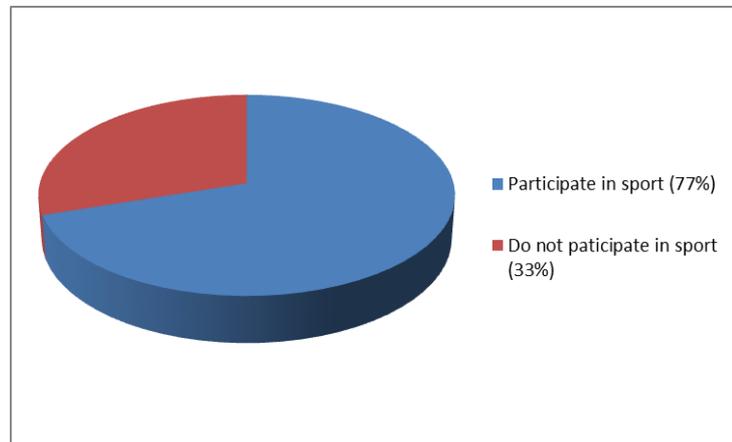
GRAPH 2
(Age of those surveyed)



GRAPH 3
(Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or neither)

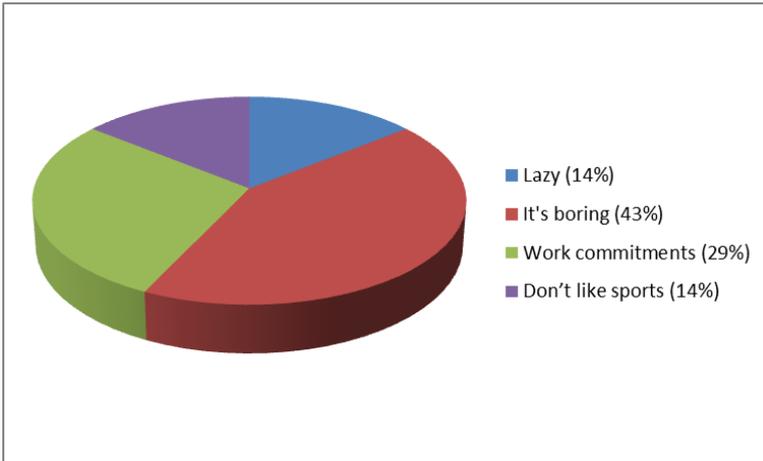


GRAPH 4
(Whether those surveyed participate in sport or not)

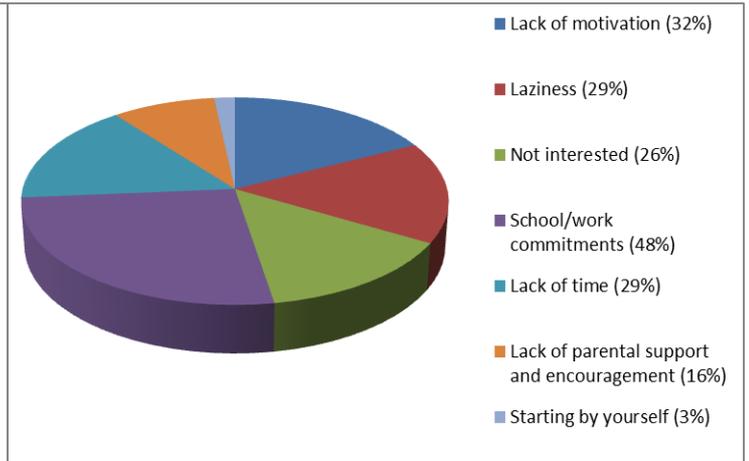




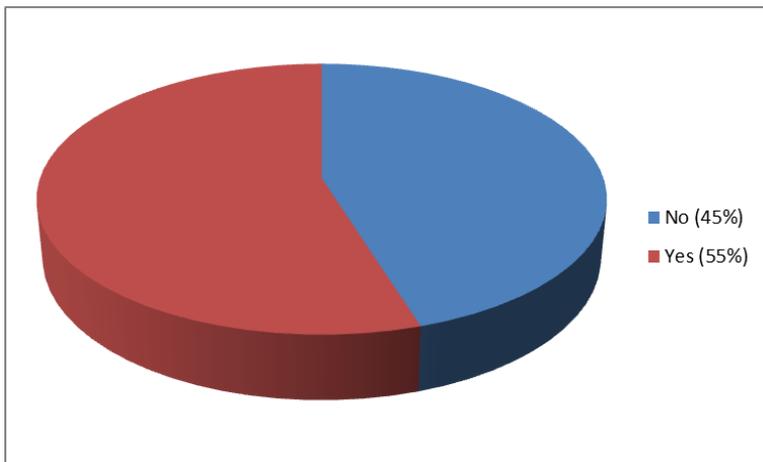
GRAPH 5
(Why those who don't participate don't participate)



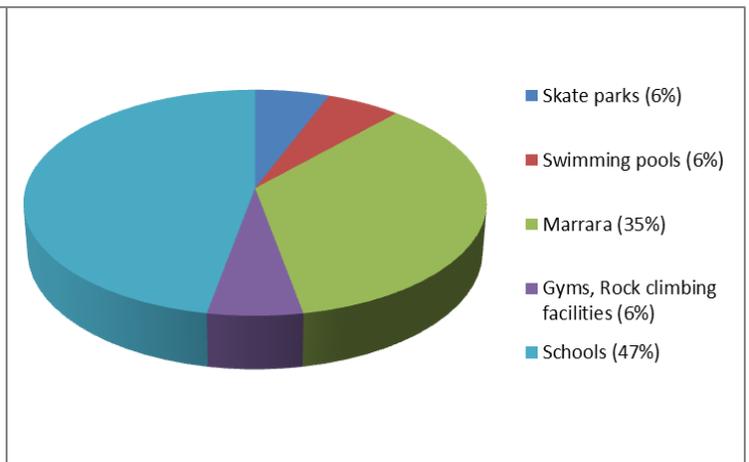
GRAPH 6
(Troubles people face trying to participate. They could choose multiple things)



GRAPH 7
(If those surveyed knew any facilities around them)

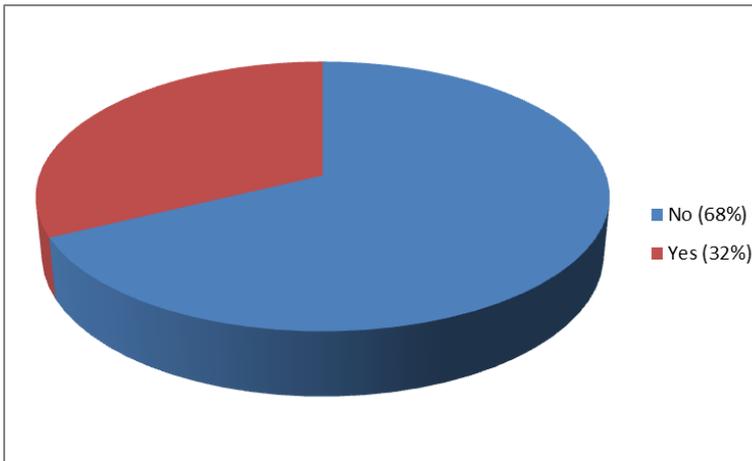


GRAPH 8
(The facilities that people)

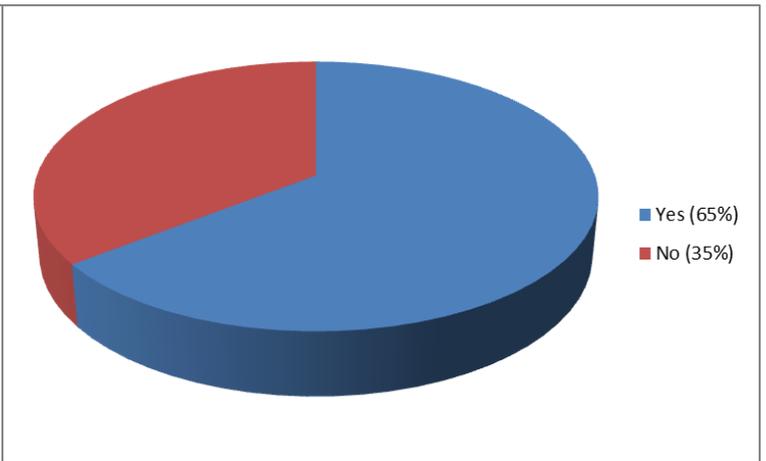




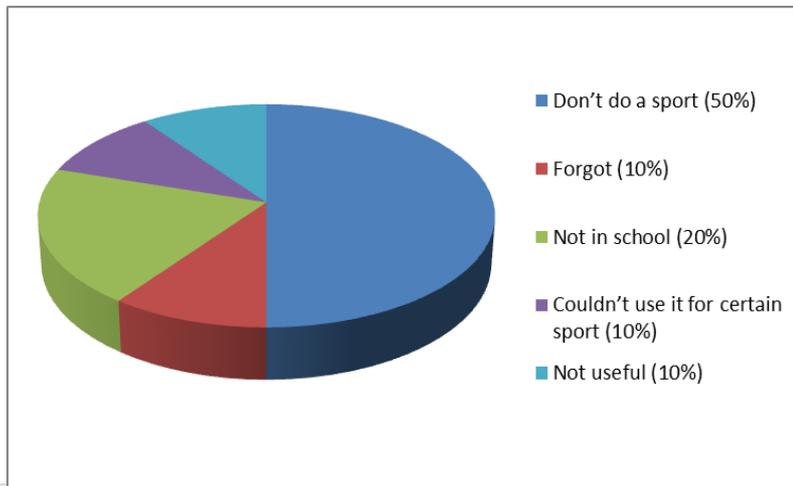
GRAPH 9
(How many of the people surveyed use the facilities)

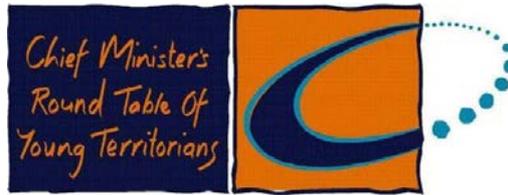


GRAPH 10
(How many of the people surveyed used their sports voucher)



GRAPH 11
(Why those who didn't use their voucher didn't use their)





REFERENCE LIST

Australian Government – Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), 2013, Australian Institute of Family Studies: Supporting Healthy Communities Through Sports and Recreation Programs. <http://www.aihw.gov.au/uploadedFiles/ClosingTheGap/Content/Publications/2013/ctgc-rs26.pdf>

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* Please contact Ned Hall through the Office of Youth Affairs for full list of references