

The Huddle



Program Overview

Each Monday afternoon, children from the local community visit the Flemington Community Centre to attend a sports program run by North Melbourne Football Club's The Huddle, the Moonee Valley City Council and the Blue Light Police Foundation. For 6 weeks, Royal Park Tennis Club coaches deliver a tennis program with the assistance of funding and resources through the ACE Program. The program aims to offer tennis as a sport option to the children who may not otherwise have the chance to play.

Barriers

The program is targeted towards primary school aged children from low socio-economic and multicultural backgrounds. For families, the main barriers to participation were;

- Transport
- Other family commitments
- Safety
- Awareness of opportunities
- Cost

Barriers to further participation at Royal Park Tennis Club

- Transport
- Cost

Solutions

Children were extremely positive about the program. They looked forward to it each week, although only few showed a passion for tennis in particular with parent's fondness for the game influencing the likelihood of continuing to play at Royal Park Tennis Club.

- Located close to housing commission
- Minimal cost for participation (\$5 per session)
- Supply equipment and coaches
- Provide a safe and welcoming environment with familiar faces

Solutions to further participation at Royal Park Tennis Club

- Scholarships provided for membership and equipment for 4 keen participants
- Carpooling
- Consistency of coach deliverers
- Appropriate shoes for clay courts provided.



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Program Elements

Challenge	Solutions
Range of ages and playing abilities	Tailored activities to suit all levels of play – engage the older players while supporting the younger
Potential cultural sensitivities such as gender interaction and negative perceptions around female participation in physical activity	Having female instructors providing role models for the girls, and organising groups into genders during activities
Cultural differences around time	Flexible program structure that allowed children to participate when they were able, or play in half the session if required. Children were not discriminated against if they couldn't attend every session.
Creating a passion for tennis	Further to the 6 week coaching program, children were invited to attend the Australian Open and were able to have a hit on Margaret Court Arena
Encouraging further participation	An excursion to Royal Park Tennis Club at the end of the tennis sessions showed the children where they could continue to play in a safe and welcoming environment

Outcomes

For parents

- Reducing screen time
- Engaging in physical activities outdoors

For participants

- Learning tennis skills
- Improving social skills
- Integrating children into the community

Having a program that occurs at the same time and location, and with the same facilitators every week creates a welcoming environment and trusting relationships.

Partnerships

Partnerships are key to the success of The Huddle program. To ensure the success of the partnerships and the program itself, meetings were held amongst all parties to clearly establish common goals and strategies, and responsibilities. From Tennis Victoria providing funding, Australian Open opportunities, and equipment; Royal Park Tennis Club providing the coaches, excursion and BBQ; to North Melbourne Football Club, Victoria Police Blue Light and Moonee Valley Council providing the facilitators, venue, contacts and transportation.

