



Legislative Assembly for the
Australian Capital Territory

Standing Committee on Economics,
Industry and Recreation

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into barriers and opportunities for participation in community sports in the ACT

Submission number: 151

Submitter: MARSS Australia Inc.

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MARSS Australia Inc.
Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services

17 October 2025

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: INQUIRY INTO BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY SPORT IN THE ACT

The Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services (MARSS) is a not-for-profit organisation that assists people from refugee and migrant backgrounds with services and supports to help them settle into the Canberra region and exercise their human rights. MARSS operates youth programs amongst a wide range of settlement programs. The range of services that we provide include home tutoring and after school tutoring; youth mentoring; training programs for youth; school holiday programs that include sporting programs; amongst other services.

MARSS welcomes this opportunity to provide a submission to this inquiry.

a. Challenges and barriers to participation in community sport by people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds: In our experience and interactions with people from CALD backgrounds, MARSS has identified several obstacles that prevent people from accessing community sport in the ACT. These include the following:

i. Accessibility to sport in countries of origin: many people from CALD backgrounds may have come from countries where poverty is prevalent or where the country of origin is impacted by war. In such situations, being able to participate in sport becomes a secondary consideration compared to being able to survive and access food, water, housing, etcetera. It may therefore be challenging to be able to attribute importance to participation in sport when moving to Australia.

ii. Culture: in some countries, it may be considered culturally inappropriate to engage in sports, particularly in relation to women. For example, women who come from countries where there is the strict implementation of *Sharia* law, such as in Afghanistan where women and girls are forbidden from playing sport. Thus, after moving to Australia such cultural beliefs may become ingrained, and difficult to shift.



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iii. Lack of time: Some CALD families may traditionally attribute household work and chores to young girls, even if they are engaged in full-time work. The importance of completing tasks such as caring for younger children, or cooking for the family, may take prevalence over participating in sport, given the lack of time available.

iv. Prohibitive costs relating to participation in sports: Many sports require spending money on registration fees, uniforms, fuel or other transportation costs related to reaching the place where the sport is practiced, etcetera. For people from CALD backgrounds who may be struggling with the high cost of living in Australia, spending money on sport may be a very low priority.

b. Possible solutions to overcoming perceived barriers: Some possible strategies that may be implemented to overcome these barriers, are listed below:

i. Invest in sporting programs that target CALD communities: Such programs should not just focus on the youth but also include older members of the community. These programs should cover expenses such as registration costs, uniform costs etc. The program could organise group transportation to ensure that participants are able to travel to training or sporting events.

ii. Invest in sporting programs that target CALD women: Place a special focus on CALD women, so that they can access sporting programs in a culturally safe way. For example, ensuring that for women's sporting teams that the coach is a female.

iii. Invest in promotional programs that target CALD communities: Advertise and market sporting programs in-language, using translated resources that are printed, on a website, on social media, etcetera. Utilise ethno-specific media, such as multicultural radio programs, to market these initiatives.

iv. Collaborate with multicultural NGOs: Work with multicultural NGOs in the ACT, such as MARSS and the Multicultural Hub, to be able to access community and provide culturally safe information sessions. Enable such organisations to help specific sporting organisations, for example, Netball ACT, to provide access to 'try before you buy' sporting programs, where participants can try the sport before deciding whether they want to get involved.

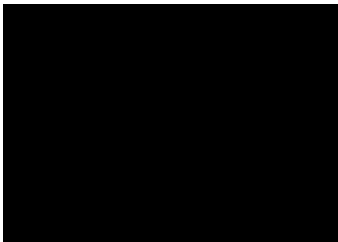




MARSS Australia Inc.
Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services

I wish the committee the very best as it progresses this inquiry. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you should require elaboration or additional information. I am very interested in participating in a hearing relating to this inquiry, if you should feel it might be helpful.

Warm regards



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