



July 16, 2010

Media Release

Prelude

Leading advocate for Youth Sports Participation, James Demetriou has recently resigned as senior executive of the North Melbourne Football Club and has now turned his full focus to his role as Chairman of Sports Without Borders, a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to providing support for young people from refugee and newly arrived backgrounds. His resignation from North is effective from July 15, 2010.

As Executive Director of the North Melbourne Learning and Life Centre, Mr Demetriou was the driving force behind the launch of North's highly successful and innovative education and community facility. In its first year, the Centre's schools, community and out of schools programs will reach 5,000 children in north and west Melbourne, and as far as Ballarat.

Sports Without Borders calls for Urgent Action for Australian Youth

Chairman of Sports Without Borders, James Demetriou has launched a major attack on declining youth participation in Sport.

Sports Without Borders is a not for profit organisation which is dedicated to providing support for young people from refugee and newly arrived backgrounds who are involved or want to get involved in sport. Mr Demetriou warned that Education and Sports authorities faced a crisis especially in Youth Sport.

Recent studies by the Australian Sports Commission clearly show there is a lack of Government funding to help newly arrived and kids from disadvantaged backgrounds to get off the couch and participate in sporting activities, Mr Demetriou said.

"Right now Sports Without Borders has first round funding requests from 85 individuals and organisations totalling \$200,000 - yet I only have \$20,000 to allocate.

To be fully effective we require much more significant support. We receive funding from Governments, Councils and philanthropists but more has to be done."

"Sports Without Borders has helped more than 2,000 Victorian kids over the past three years and while that has been extremely rewarding it has shown us the extent of the important job ahead which is only achievable with the right financing. "

"Evidence shows that obesity rates, diabetes, and sport participation are all linked and since 2004 we have seen a massive decline in young people's interest in sport and sports participation. At the epicentre of this crisis is our migrant youth population. Strong action on the issue is vital for our national health and well-being," Mr Demetriou said.

Sports Without Borders is developing two key programs specifically designed to tackle the issue head on.

Youth Action is an organised technology driven physical sports activity program for children including refugee and newly arrived Australian youth aged 5- 14 years. Participants undertake fun games and simple athletic movements over the course of a day. <http://sportswithoutborders.org/>

The Social Inclusion Through Sports (SITS) program also aims to leverage the benefits of sports to improve social inclusion outcomes. It is envisaged that the program will be delivered in partnership with five National Sporting Organisations (NSO's), State Government, multicultural peak bodies, local governments and local community service providers. <http://sportswithoutborders.org/>

Both programs will be incorporated into, and enhance SWB's core and highly effective direct grants program.

Sports Without Borders was formed in 2006 in response to the key findings of the Sports Participation report published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in 2005. The report identified a substantial sport participation gap between new migrant & traditional Australian communities. Non-English speaking Background (NESB) communities are two thirds less likely to participate in sport than the traditional Australian Community. The role of Sports Without Borders is to facilitate social inclusion. It achieves this goal by opening up participation pathways to sport for culturally and economically disadvantaged youth, providing accessible, multilingual resources and services, funding and direct financial support, training/mentorship programs and event capacity building. <http://sportswithoutborders.org/>

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