

## Game Changers: Tracking Better<sup>®</sup> at Football

In 2018 a new program called Game Changers was piloted in Derby with some of the girls in the community. Game Changers was a 5 day footy program that was funded and supported by the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, Broome and led by Garnduwa, Kimberley Mental Health and Drug Services, Derby District High School and Derby Youth Services.

A Community Working Group who know the issues facing the girls decided that football, sports performance skills and a camp was a good idea for girls.

Game Changers used footy to engage girls from the Derby community who were struggling with a range of behavioural and mental health problems. The program included 4 days of a footy camp and a day of learning about ways to have good coping skills, stop negative behaviour and thoughts among the girls, help the girls manage stress and to feel strong on and off the footy field. This training was called Tracking Better<sup>®</sup> at Football and gives the girls information that they can use in their everyday lives as well as when playing footy.

People wanted the Game Changers program to:

- Make sure the girls turned up and stayed every day for the program;
- Allow the girls to get to know staff at Derby youth and community services;
- Provide an opportunity for older girls to be mentors to the younger girls;
- Help the girls feel more positive and have better self-control and improve their footy;
- Give the girls opportunities to play for the Derby Tiger's Football Club and even register for the West Kimberley Women's Football Season.

Researchers from the Telethon Kids Institute in Perth were asked to evaluate Game Changers to see if it was a good program for the Derby girls, whether it was successful and what could make it better. The researchers talked to staff from the school, youth services, mental health and drug services, police and the 3 Mentors who were involved in the program. They asked lots of questions about the camp and the training and whether it was a good program. They heard about the good things and the things that can be better - like having more family involved to watch the girls at the footy games, giving the Mentors clear support and guidance and making the program longer than one week.

Everyone involved with the camp and the training who yarned with the researchers from Telethon Kids Institute agreed that Game Changers is important for helping young people deal with some of the problems in their lives like violence, not going to school, boredom, and bad use of social media like Facebook. People said that the girls turned up each day of the camp and



enjoyed themselves, and they learnt some things about how to be happier and not so angry with each other and themselves.

Some of the things people said about Game Changers:

*“inspired the girls to demonstrate leadership skills, improved confidence, commitment and motivation, respect to others, the importance of listening to your body and recognising the signs when you’re overwhelmed and under pressure.”*

*“Seeing the girls grow as individuals and as a team throughout the week, the excitement and enthusiasm from the girls.”*

*“Game Changers fostered a positive and fun environment where they worked collaboratively.”*

*“Through football we believe new friendships were formed and girls were able to exhibit their new learned skills in order to cope under pressure and enhance their performance.”*

The Evaluation thinks that the Game Changers program and the Tracking Better<sup>®</sup> at Football training was a positive experience for everyone involved and gave the girls some good ideas about caring for themselves and others, and how to be stronger at footy, at school, with their friends and in life.

Young people living in the Kimberley need programs like Game Changers to help them and to have something positive to do. The Derby Community also needs more opportunities to help its young people, particularly the girls and young women.

Game Changers and Tracking Better<sup>®</sup> at Football can give children, youth and communities something they like doing and care about and help them to feel they have more control of their thoughts and feelings. These programs can help people feel better about themselves and the community feel stronger and provide hope and meaning for the future.

Telethon Kids Institute would like to thank everyone who talked to the researchers and acknowledges the commitment and hard work of all the people in Derby and surrounding communities who were involved in Game Changers.

