

**EVALUATION REPORT**



# GAME CHANGERS

*Tracking Better® at Football*



**DERBY, WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

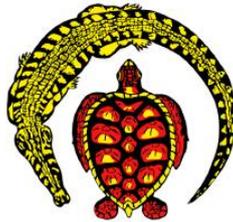
**2019**



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## Executive Summary

In response to high levels of trauma, problems with mental health and violence and a threat of disengagement from school with girls living in and around Derby in the Kimberley region of Western Australia, the professional community sought an opportunity to run a pilot project and provide the girls with a 'Game Changers' football camp. Many young people living in the Kimberley communities experience multiple and complex layers of disadvantage and trauma, resulting in high levels of mental health problems, poor prospects for the future, and in some cases, suicide. Developing skills which assist youth to recognise and manage their thoughts and feelings and develop strategies for self-regulation and impulse control is imperative. Using sport as a vehicle to assist youth to develop these skills is one way to achieve this. In 2018, the 'Game Changers' project was piloted as a week's camp in Derby, Western Australia using the Tracking Better<sup>®</sup> at Football program which teaches participants the core principles of self-regulation in order to improve their sporting performance, and more broadly their everyday coping skills.

The purpose of the evaluation was to first understand participant experiences of the one day Tracking Better<sup>®</sup> training for professionals and mentors, and to identify the suitability of the four day Game Changers football camp delivery and content and whether the anticipated objectives were achieved. The evaluation, second, sought to assess the impact of participation on participants; the girls, coaching staff and community partners involved in the delivery of the program. Specifically, the evaluation sought to understand:

- the barriers and enablers to delivering the Game Changers program
- engagement with the content of Tracking Better<sup>®</sup> at Football materials
- the benefits and broader outcomes from participating in the program for all participants

The evaluation also sought to provide useful insights for the future design and delivery of the Game Changers program and other services directed at young girls in Derby and the potential for its application more broadly in the Kimberley communities.

This report begins with an overview of the background to the project and a description of the Game Changers program and the use of the Tracking Better<sup>®</sup> at Football tools which aimed to:

- develop and enhance positive coping skills, reduce the use of negative coping strategies by the girls
- increase stress management skills
- increase resilience within a structured 4-day Game Changers football camp.

It then presents the results of qualitative data collected from participants. Interviews were conducted to explore their experiences of the Game Changers project.

The evaluation found that developing initiatives such as the Game Changers project were vital to address the complex and difficult lives of the young people. Addressing interpersonal and community violence, disengagement from school, problems with the use of social media which resulted from boredom was viewed as essential to address the social and emotional wellbeing needs of youth in the region. Results from the evaluation suggest that, overall the pilot was a very worthwhile initiative, however there were several areas which could improve future delivery of the program.

Participants who attended the Monday training session offered feedback on using the Tracking Better<sup>®</sup> tools and manual. They identified that there was a large amount of information, both delivered in the one-day training, and in the written material, and one day was not sufficient to truly understand and benefit from the program. Participants also suggested that resources be more culturally relevant for the Kimberley. For the young girls, the four day Tracking Better<sup>®</sup> at Football camp was positive, however behaviour management was at times problematic, and so setting ground rules at the beginning of the program is important for future delivery of the program. For professionals and



mentors in the Tracking Better® at Football camp, better definition of their roles and including broader family and community members would greatly benefit, both the project and community development.

The evaluation found, however that the benefits for the girls far outweighed the challenges. Despite the complexity of their lives the girls gained valuable skills and self-confidence. They were engaged and attended for the week, their relationships improved, and they gained skills in self-management and self-control which were apparent not only during the camp, but in the weeks following at school. Significant to the success of the program were the programs mentors. Overall, the Game Changers pilot project provided hope for future improvement in the self-regulatory skills of youth and was a welcome future initiative for addressing the many problems which confront youth living in communities in the Kimberley.



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We acknowledge the program emerged from the commitment and determination to provide an opportunity to support the youth, particularly the girls and young women in Derby, and more broadly in the Kimberley regions and communities, to positively experience the acquisition of skills for self-care, self-regulation, and self-determination through football.

We thank all the participants for their time and contribution to yarning circles, yarning interviews, for their deep reflections on the things that have contributed to the difficulties the young people in the Kimberley regions experience and acknowledge their commitment to developing flourishing communities. Although we were unable to interview the girls who participated in the Game Changers project, we acknowledge their commitment to participating in and completing the program despite their challenges, and hope the project provided them with an opportunity to learn more about themselves in a fun way.

### **Sharynne Hamilton, Amy Finlay Jones & Clair Scrine**

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## 1. Project Background

It is well documented that young people living in the Kimberley communities in Northern Western Australia are exposed to multiple layers of cumulative trauma and are at increased risk of destructive behaviours such as substance misuse, crime, self-harm and suicide which (Ralph, Hamaguchi & Cox, 2006). Young people who have been exposed to multiple and chronic stressors often experience complex trauma, which can lead to long term behavioural and mental health difficulties, as well as social exclusion, disengagement from education and employment, and are at increased risk of contact with the justice and child protection system (Malvaso, Delfabbro, and Day 2017). A common theme underpinning these issues are the self-regulatory difficulties that young people with complex needs frequently experience, which undermine their capacity to express and manage emotions, engage in goal-directed behaviours, and respond adaptively to stress. Clinical and research consensus suggests that promoting self-regulation, increasing engagement with peers and significant others, and enhancing positive affect are foundational to effectively working with youth complex trauma and related needs to increase self-regulatory capacities and promote resilience (Kinniburgh et al. 2017). Additionally, there is a need to recognise and respond to individual strengths and needs and help young people to develop both internal and external resources (Kinniburgh, et al., 2017). Nothing else highlights this need more than the recent Western Australian Coroner's report into the recent suicide deaths of 13 youth in the Kimberley (WA Government, 2019). Learning how to recognise challenging thoughts and feelings and engage healthy coping strategies is a first step in building internal resources and developing a sense of self-efficacy for coping with difficulties and engaging with goal directed behaviours.

The majority of community-based sport programs described in the literature have targeted young men and have highlighted a dire need for sporting programs that are more inclusive of girls and women (Stronach, Maxwell, & Taylor, 2015). Community-based sport programs represent a feasible and acceptable means of engaging young people in order to support self-regulatory capacities, promote self-efficacy, and enhance peer relationships and sense of community (Eime, et al, 2013). Football clubs often act as social hubs in rural Australian communities and may act as an accessible conduit to programs designed to support social and emotional wellbeing (Stronach, Maxwell, & Taylor, 2015). Such programs may be particularly important for disengaged youth, who may also have low mental health literacy and complex needs such as youth living in the Kimberley communities and regional centres. In response to the difficulties being experienced by young girls and women in the Kimberley, specifically in Derby, youth and other support services came together to consider delivering a program which would provide a fun way for the girls to learn skills in self-regulation, learn to support each other and develop skills for working together as a team.

### 1.1 Game Changers

Game Changers is a new program being piloted by Garnduwa, Kimberley Mental Health and Drug Services, Derby District High School and Derby Youth Services; supported by the Department of Sports and Recreation, that aims to engage at-risk girls from the Derby community. Game Changers was a five day program (Appendix A) which utilised the Tracking Better<sup>®</sup> at Football tools (Infographic: Appendix B) for developing and enhancing positive coping skills, reducing negative coping strategies, managing stress and increasing resilience within a structured four day football training camp.

The primary aims of the Game Changers program were to:

- engage at-risk girls across the full four day program;
- increase the girls engagement with Derby youth and community services; and
- to have the young women who attended the Game Changers program continue to train with the Derby Tiger's Football Club and potentially register for the West Kimberley Women's Football Season.



Game Changers uses the vehicle of sport to demonstrate application of the Tracking Better® at Football self-regulation skills in a practical and experienced manner. A community working party was assembled to identify the current issues facing the participants and explore how football, sports performance skills and a camp experience could best address their struggles and equip them to manage in a more helpful way. The Working Group, comprised of local community organisations, were also to be taken through the same modules using a sequenced and stepwise model that parallels the program as they prepare for the 4-day program, to provide them with a lived experience of the program that will be delivered to the girls. This facilitate some skill acquisition that can be applied to the challenges the Working Group face themselves in the preparation and delivery of the program. The program was funded by The Department of Sport and Recreation and was administered by Garnduwa. The final design of the program was determined by the Community Working Group.

## 1.2 Game Changers Camp

The Game Changers Camp represented the one week program that engaged the community participants for the first day to outline the tools the participants would be taught. The second to fifth day of the Game Changers camp delivered a program that taught football skills, included team building skills such as the “Crossing the River” activity, making lanyards (Appendix C). The Game Changers camp delivered the Tracking Better® at Football curriculum, provided nutritious food and transport for the participants. The football training, games and team building activities were used as opportunities to explore and practice some of the skills taught in the Tracking Better® at Football curriculum. An important component of the Game Changers camp was that multiple teachers and trainers from community youth and mental health services the girls would often meet in a school or after school context, were also participating with the girls in a positive context.

## 1.3 Tracking Better® at Football

The program integrates the Tracking Better® at Football tools for developing and enhancing positive coping skills, reducing negative coping strategies, managing stress and increasing resilience within a structured 4-day football training camp.

The Tracking Better® at Football program has been developed by a child and adolescent psychiatrist working in the Kimberley region, Dr Deeta Kimber, and teaches participants the four core principles of resilience (goal setting, body regulation, stress regulation and feeling regulation) in order to improve their sporting performance.

The sub-text of the Tracking Better® at Football program is “how to bring your best game exactly when you need it” and aims to increase skills in self efficacy in training preparation and sporting performance and their overall wellbeing. Sporting performance is taught through three key aspects of the game:

- Self-management before the game (training and match day);
- during the game; and
- building a positive team culture.

In addition, participants are encouraged to bring these resilience skills to their daily life and build their sense of hope and self-efficacy. The program is visual, teaching from pictures, visual prompts and real-life examples which are reinforced by sporting drills. It was anticipated that at the end of the 4-day program participants will have been introduced to key ideas in the following domains:

- Domain 1: Goal setting
- Domain 2: Stress regulation
- Domain 3: Body regulation
- Domain 4: Feeling regulation

More detail on the specific skills the program participants were taught are set out in the attached program (Appendix B).



## 2. Evaluation

Researchers at the Telethon Kids Institute in Perth were approached by representatives of the organisations designing and delivering the Game Changers program to evaluate the pilot program. The aim was to provide the relevant stakeholders with a preliminary indication of the extent to which the program is fit for purpose. For example, to identify the extent to which the program's delivery and content suited the context and target group and enabled the anticipated objectives to be achieved. To the extent possible, the evaluation also looked to assess the impact of participation on participants, both the young girls, coaching staff and community partners involved in the Working Group, and the sustainability of any outcomes over a short term.

### 2.1. Aims and Objectives

Because of the emergent nature of this pilot program, the evaluation sought to understand the feasibility and acceptability and future format of the Game Changers program and provide feedback on the Tracking Better® materials. The key evaluation questions to be answered were:

1. What were the barriers and enablers to delivering the Game Changers program?
2. How well did the target group engage with the Game Changers program and the Tracking Better® content?
3. What benefits and broader outcomes, both intended and unintended, resulted from participation in the Game Changers program and to what extent were these sustained for the participating girls, the coaching staff and community partners?

The evaluation also sought to provide useful insights for the future design and delivery of the Game Changers program and other services directed at young girls in Derby.'

### 2.2. Methods

#### 2.2.1 Participants

Eight participants consented to an interview about the project. Three participants were interviewed, 2 participants provided responses to interview questions on email, and 3 participants participated in a yarning circle. Participants included police, Community Workers, facilitators and peer mentors in the project. Three participants were Aboriginal Australian and five were non-Aboriginal Australian.

#### 2.2.2 Data Collection

The evaluation used qualitative interviewing for data collection, consisting of:

- Interviews with coaches and community working group members
- Interviews with young women mentors
- Daily journal and interviews with Dr Deeta Kimber
- The girls who participated in Game Changers were not interviewed due to their age, circumstances and potential vulnerability, however a small amount of data has been included in this analysis from three girls who participated in a yarning session at the end of Day 2 with Dr Deeta Kimber.

Participants provided written consent to participate in a semi-structured interview and were emailed nine questions for discussion (Table One). At the commencement of interviews participants were asked for verbal consent to voice record the interview. All participants verbally consented. They were advised that they could finish the interview at any time. Interviews were conducted over the phone and via SKYPE, and other responses were provided through email feedback. At the conclusion of the interviews, the researcher transcribed interviews and where possible, sent the transcript to the participant for double checking content and accuracy of interpretation.



What was participating in the Game Changers project like for you?  
 What did you like about it?  
 What challenged you?  
 How useful did you find the Tracking Better® skills for you?  
 How suitable do you think Tracking Better® is for working with the community?  
 What new skills did you gain from participating in the project?  
 What skills do you think the girls can take away from the week that will help them in other areas of their life?  
 Is there anything you would change? – for instance about the content (language / graphics), delivery, time involved?  
 What are your recommendations for next steps?

**Table One: Participant Interview Questions**

**2.2.3 Data Analysis**

The data were analysed using thematic analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Researchers reviewed the data and identified, compared and finalised key themes. Multiple reviews of the data were conducted, and team members met and discussed themes from the interviews.

**2.2.4 Ethics**

Ethics Approval was granted by the Western Australian Aboriginal Health Ethics Committee, Approval **844**, and the evaluation received support from the Kimberley Aboriginal Health Planning Forum Research Subcommittee: Reference **2018 – 003**.



### 3. Results

The Game Changers project was undertaken in the Kimberley region to assist girls who had been identified in the community as ‘at-risk’ of crime and poor life outcomes. We present the main findings from the interviews and yarning circles in three sections: 1) Game Changers participants and the community; 2), aspects for improvement, 3) what worked, and 4) the future.

#### 3.1. Game Changers participants and the community

All participants identified that the girls who participated in the Game Changers camp were at risk from harmful behaviours, problems with conduct and violence. Professionals in the community spoke of the complexity of the girls lives:

*... we see youths within the community coping with stress and trauma in an unhealthy way. Some of these coping mechanisms include drug abuse, alcohol consumption, violence, bullying, thrill seeking behaviour and self-harm.*

*This was a challenging group of girls, many with strong personalities and girls dealing with a range of personal issues.*

Problems with school and disengagement were also identified:

*Kind of the reason they were chosen was because there were constant battles at school.*

*There is a lot of bullying and conflict that goes on.*

*Truancy is a significant issue in Derby and many of the youths selected for Game Changers fail to attend school regularly*

Social media was identified as a problem.

*There's lots of dramas on social media, Facebook and Twitter.*

Participants identified that this was mostly because the girls have nothing to do:

*The kids get bored and just start picking fights*

*There is just nothing to do in Derby. Nothing to do and when wet season comes, there is just nothing eh. And that I think is where a lot of the stuff goes wrong.*

*Yeah [the boys] they get to go like hunting or fishing even like after school hours and all, weekends and the girls like they have like Girls Academy but the people who run it don't really do much with the girls. Like they don't take them out or anything.*

*And the girls don't really have much, like some of the girls who go to school here are in Banksia in Perth there, cause all they are doing is stealing.*

On occasions this was evident during the program:

*There were times during the camp where a couple of girls became frustrated and unwilling to participate. I believe these girls became self-conscious as many of them had not played football prior to this camp. At times it was challenging to sustain morale and avoid personalities clashing but this improved as the group bonded.*

It was therefore, identified by participants that setting and enforcing ground rules from the beginning of the Game Changers camp was important:

*I think at the start of the week we should have said, if you have a fight during the week, no one is playing until it is resolved, and this is how we resolve it. That is something I thought we could have done better, sit with the girls and say, what are the rules, what happens when we have a*



*disagreement or a fight, what do you think we should do about it? Yes, so I thought that was probably missing.*

### **3.2. Aspects for improvement**

On the ground delivery of the project provided various challenges for participants.

#### **3.2.1 Role Definition**

The mentors identified a lack of defined roles as challenging:

*I found that it was you know, I wasn't really told what my role was at the start and was just going through day by day and just picking up where I could. And then being thrown in at the deep end on the last day because the coach wasn't there, and I had to try and coach them and um, that was a challenge.*

*Yeah, look I think there was definitely defined roles, like the two facilitators had defined roles but everyone else kind of just picked up where they can.*

#### **3.2.2 Tracking Better® Training**

Participants who attended the Monday training session offered feedback on using the Tracking Better® tools and manual. The identified particular problems with the amount of information, both delivered in the one-day training, and in the written material.

*I think the face to face training sessions are brilliant, it's engaging, informative and there's lots of very relevant information to learn about emotional regulation. But the written content needs improvement. I find the content and language doesn't have a structure or a framework that helps to understand how to break it down.*

Participants felt there was insufficient time to truly benefit from the training:

*I thought the background to the project was clear and well delivered and motivations for the project were delivered and felt very placed based. I felt the training day was pretty well pitched. But there was a lot of information in there, too much. A bit of extra time for the manual would be better.*

*Because we were rushed, using the tracking tools, it was a little bit um, it was a lot to get your head around. We didn't really get enough time to practice, and to talk with each other about how we scored each other and stuff like that.*

*There were multiple smaller concepts that you had to get an understanding of, and then the team work and stuff like that we were looking at problem solving, team work, motivation, you know there was a lot so how do we make this real for the girls by really immersing ourselves in it as practitioners.*

A couple of participants felt that dividing the Tracking Better® and Tracking Better® at Football would have been beneficial.

*I would have done two sessions. One for the mentors and the Tracking Better® at Football stuff, and I would do a separate session for the more generic Tracking Better® stuff.*

*It was just a bit much in one day. I think the only other way around it would be to keep it in the Tracking Better® at Football kind of concept over two days and give us some more practice opportunities.*



### 3.2.3 Tracking Better<sup>®</sup> Resources

Some participants found the Tracking Better<sup>®</sup> resources were confusing, not well defined or culturally irrelevant:

*I think there needs to be a framework and a logical flow, ie. contents, sections, summaries, session plans and more practical information and less 'novelty' terms used that make it hard to make sense of quickly ie. "flo-mode" and "OMG". There also needs to be a documented practical workshop element if it is to be used with young people. The stress chart is too complex and also doesn't have any information on how to use it.*

*I think the resources themselves, like the posters for Tracking Better<sup>®</sup> are pretty busy, some of the stickers have words that clearly orientate you to where to put them on the page, so for me, when I try to think about how to use the Tracking Better<sup>®</sup> tools specifically with some of my families, I like, I sort of find it a little bit hard to know, even though they are colour coded and stuff I find it a little bit hard to know you know, which one is the rev-up and which one is the rev-down and then what relates to which part of the maps as well.*

*I think there was only one lot of stickers that didn't have words on them. I personally, think there needed to be more cultural stuff in there. There was lots of visual stuff like the animals. I can understand it working for Australia. They [the Derby girls] didn't know what a Tasmanian Devil was or the nature of it. Like everyone knows what a kangaroo is or an emu. I think they would be adaptable for Derby and generally, to the Kimberley itself.*

Interviewer: So, the visual learning and the animal pictures; do you think that had an effect on either, how well the girls engaged or how much they were able to take away?

*Not really, because it was well explained, but that is necessary. They would have to be explained to be able for them to get it. They couldn't just pick it up and say oh yeah, I understand this and how it relates to what I am feeling. So sitting down and explaining, including showing video's was quite lengthy and if they [the pictures] were more for the area they probably wouldn't have to go through all of that. It was difficult for them to grasp it, and once they had taught or learnt they got it but they went a long way around to do that.*

Participants discussed language and definitions:

*Tracking Better<sup>®</sup> works very well as a training session for service providers – however I don't think it is in a practical format yet. I don't believe the resources and manuals are at a point that people working at grass roots would feel confident to pick up the resources after the training and be able to use it in their work. I also don't think Tracking Better<sup>®</sup> is practical enough to implement with young people yet, there needs to be activities and workshops built into the package that are more practical and less theoretical.*

*Language like "stinking thinking" and "survival mode" or "focus muscle" all make sense when spoken about at the training but if you were to pick up the workbook and try to deliver to a young person, there is no explanations of these terms or teaching points to help you explain it.*

*Maybe if there were some definitions, you know, what does foggy thinking mean, you know maybe if there was a little manual written up which gave us some definitions and helps with you know, how you describe that to a child or a young person, how do you describe foggy thinking, how do you describe racy thoughts.*



### 3.2.4 Cultural, community and family inclusion

One participant spoke of dual advantages for non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal staff:

*You know, on the whole I think it is a great project for the Kimberley. The other two staff members here are both Aboriginal staff members who work with domestic violence, one with men and one with children and this stuff was so relevant to their work and for them it was broken down in a way they could understand and articulate and so then for us to have a shared language together, it was something a little bit unexpected I guess and very valuable.*

Another participant was more critical about the inclusion of the community in the consultation process, development and delivery of the project. In their view:

*It wasn't something like a bottom-up approach. It was top down. It was we have this program and we are going to deliver it here, it wasn't like community members saying, we have this issue, what can we do to try and work it out and what is the best way of doing this. If it does go on to something bigger and better, and I really hope it does, that these issues get taken into consideration, especially cultural aspects of the project.*

Another participant provided some explanation for this:

*During the 12-week period of time that the working group meetings were taking place, there was only a few people who could make all of the meetings regularly. From my conversations and experience, this reflects the under-resourced and over-worked nature of the youth sector here which we did try to plan for as we knew this would be inevitable. This meant making decisions and plans without comprehensive community input but at different times this was a necessity.*

The inclusion of families and communities in the project were also of concern. Recognising the geographical challenges, a participant said:

*I think because there was a game in Derby, a game in Looma and a game in Broome it was hard. But it would have been good to have it advertised or a note sent home saying they were going to play and inviting their parents and family members to come would have been nice.*

Another participant said:

*I also think the parents of the girls could have been invited to the first day, when all the service providers and the community came together – they [parents] should have got a special invite. Then they know what's going on – that their child will be involved in this program.*

### 3.3. What worked

Football, as a vehicle for learning self-regulatory skills and emotion management was seen as beneficial for the girls:

*As a pilot program I think it went very well. Engagement was very positive which I think spoke to how well football was as an effective engagement tool and the engagement work and careful selection of the girls by the school.*

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

*The benefits of playing team sport were clearly demonstrated during the camp.*

Even when they had not participated in something like this previously, participants noted:

*Some girls were completely out of their comfort zone but gained confidence as they progressed.*



Relationships benefitted:

*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.*

Importantly, these results both aligned with the conceptual framework and aims of the project.

### **3.3.1 Tracking Better<sup>®</sup> at Football**

The Tracking Better<sup>®</sup> at Football tools were found to be useful, both during the Game Changers camp and for the girls future self-management strategies:

*I think that a number of girls were able to grasp the main concepts and have hopefully taken away a better understanding of stress, when they feel stressed, what kind of stress they feel and how to manage that stress.*

*Out of all of this I think they would have taken away a better understanding of how we get stressed and what the different types of stress and body responses are. I think we could have improved on teaching practical ways of calming they can use every day.*

*The girls actually engaged with it [the manual], or used it as follow on you know, when things got out of hand, they were able to refer back to it. Still now we are able to go back to it.*

Visual Aids, games and making the lanyards were also identified as beneficial:

*The girls were more actively engaged during the visual and practical elements of the camp. Sitting for long periods of time was challenging for a few of the girls.*

*There were some things we did like Lanyards which just helped to calm down to.*

### **3.3.2 Mentors**

Mentors made a difference for staff and the girls who participated in the Game Changers camp:

*We had three mentors during the week. They were there during the day throughout the week and they were quite helpful and really got involved.*

*It made a big difference having mentors there. I think it cuts through any tension.*

One mentor said:

*I enjoyed being with the girls from the whole week and building that rapport with them as well.*

### **3.3.3 Visual Aids and Games**

*We talk about how to be calm when playing sport and how to hold your anger in ... they used animals as like feelings and like that and they have like this emu and that one is like basically an example of how people run around an oval, like how much energy they use and that.*

Interviewer: So, did you find the pictures were good for you to put together with a feeling?

*Yeah, it's like a good way to remember the feelings and action.*

One yarnning session participant saw the cards as a learning tool saying that, "they learnt what animal they were".

Games provided a source of hope for future improvement in the Game Changers camp participants self-regulatory skills and gave participants a chance to experience the skills practically.



*When we did that crossing the river ... a couple of squares and they had to get from one side to the other. We had them lying down, bringing their heartrate down and then getting up and running. So we broke them up into two teams and put them through things where they had to work together and a bit of stress, they got time stress and they got to work with each other and that can be frustrating and once they put into place some of those skills that they learned, like stuff like when you are calm you are better at it and if you work together you are better at it. That was something I thought we could build into future things, rather than like you say, sitting in a classroom getting frustrated. Or acting it out and feeling it physically and emotionally.*

### **3.4. The Future**

The project was a welcome future idea for the Kimberley “*whether it is a longer camp, or a longer-term program, a one day a week*”.

The mentors in the project said:

*I reckon [Tracking Better®] could be delivered over the term once a week. Yeah cause it’s a lot to hit them hard once a week, there is a lot of information. They could do it like Tuesday, Thursday every fortnight or something. Down at the school. Most of the girls will be going to school yep. Being at school and being in the classroom all the time is frustrating you know, they just sitting there in one place they get up start walking out of the class*

*Yeah and if they make it interesting enough, I reckon they could get the other girls to come back to school you know huh? I reckon what they need is more activities.*

*Make it kind of like football training and you could do this kind of training as well.*

Mentors were flagged for potential engagement in classrooms:

*Yeah so I reckon that would be a way, get mentors in the class like local mob, so getting classes like that that tell them like how stress-less and like what the stress signs are and stuff like that, and how to like how to handle their stress yeah.*

Participants were also keen to see opportunities for the girls to broaden their experience:

*You know, how young the girls are, I reckon like a bigger place to get them to experience like other girls, like say going to Kununurra and see other girls. Somewhere that’s a bit special, yes, even like Hedland or Karratha you know; or even Darwin, you know experience playing with other people from another place you know.*

Providing lasting memories was also important to participants:

*It would be nice for the girls to participate in another football game and also receive a DVD or photo book, so they continue to remember the camp and the skills they learnt.*

*The girls would have really appreciated keeping their football shirt at the end of the camp and it would have been a great memento.*

*We also think a resource book containing the Tracking Better® strategy should be developed as this can be used in all schools and the camp can be delivered to age appropriate students anywhere within Australia.*

#### **3.4.1 Positive Outcomes**

Game Changers, with the Tracking Better® curriculum, was an important initiative and well received by all participants as demonstrated by the full participation of the girls over the week:



*Seeing the girls grow as individuals and as a team throughout the week, the excitement and enthusiasm from the girls. Seeing the 3 young mentors grow in confidence and start learning about emotional regulation. Spending time working together on a positive project with the members of working group who came on the camp – often we are working together on crisis situations/ negative circumstances. Seeing the girls engaged in something they love (football) and having the opportunity to do it.*

*Game Changers encompasses such important skills for these teenagers which can assist them in their everyday life and during times when they experience significant pressure and anxiety.*

*It was wonderful to see a diverse group of girls slowly bonding and working together as a team.*

*As the week progressed, we could see the girls motivating and supporting one another.*

*I think the girls would have taken away a new sporting confidence, perhaps some new friends they didn't have before and improved relationships with those they weren't getting along with. New understandings about services available that can help them as well as new relationships with workers in these services.*

There was full participation over the week.

*We were particularly concerned that girls would not commit to the full week and numbers would decrease as the camp progressed. The girls clearly enjoyed the camp as each and every member attended the four full days. It also sparked an interest with girls who were not selected as other students asked to join the program throughout the week.*

*Game Changers provided a model which 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.*

Skills learned on the Game Changers camp translated to the classroom

*I know from speaking to the school representatives that there have been really positive (measurable) improvements by some of the girls who were involved – ie. number of behavioural incidents within a day. They also spoke about one girl who was using the fight/flight language from the program after getting into an altercation at school.*



#### 4. Discussion

The girls from Derby and surrounding communities who participated in the Game Changers camp have come from families where multiple layers of cumulative trauma have occurred, and as a result they are girls who are socially isolated, already have or are at risk of mental health problems, are disengaged or at risk of disengaging from their education, are at risk of contact with the law and will need support and prosocial interventions like what the Tracking Better® at Football program has to offer. They have lower self-regulation abilities which impedes their capacity to self-regulate their behaviour and emotions and respond to stressful situations. The Game Changers camp using the Tracking Better® at Football tools offered them an opportunity to participate in an activity which gave them insight into themselves, skills to recognise and associate their thoughts and feelings and giving them increased strategies for coping. It engaged the girls in a fun way, which assisted them to learn skills in self-regulation, learn ways to support, understand the importance of supporting each other and how to accomplish this and to develop skills for working together as a team.

Game Changers is a new program, and as such it is important to evaluate the benefits and learn from the challenges presented in running a program such as this in a remote community. All stakeholders identified a huge need for dedicated and sustained programs for girls in Derby. The evaluation found that developing initiatives such as the Game Changers project are vital to address the complex and difficult lives of the young people. Addressing interpersonal and community violence, disengagement from school, problems with the use of social media which resulted from boredom was viewed as essential to address the social and emotional wellbeing needs of youth in the Kimberley. Results from the evaluation suggest that, overall the pilot was a very worthwhile initiative, however there were several areas which could improve future delivery of the program.

The aim of the pilot project to engage at-risk girls across the full four days using a variety of visual tools to introduce skills which can be transferred to practices in their daily lives and build their sense of hope and self-efficacy. The participants attended every day, learning these skills through something they really enjoyed doing, playing football.

Participants who attended the Monday training session offered feedback on using the Tracking Better® tools and manual. They identified that there was a large amount of information, both delivered in the one-day training, and in the written material, and one day was not sufficient to truly understand and benefit from the program. A future version would benefit from more careful layering of skill building and targeting the teaching method to the educational age of the participants, such as careful integration of educational theory followed by reinforcing activities to emphasize the learning. Participants also suggested that resources be more culturally relevant for the Kimberley.

For the girls, the four day Game Changers camp was positive, however behaviour management was at times problematic, and so setting ground rules at the beginning of the program is important for future delivery of the program. For professionals and particularly the peer mentors assisting at the Game Changers camp, more clearly defined roles will assist them to feel more secure in their role and encourage other peers to be involved and be role models in the community. Finally, the inclusion of broader family and community members would greatly benefit, both the project and broader development in community healing and wellbeing.

The evaluation found, however that the benefits for the girls far outweighed the challenges. Despite the complexity of their lives the girls were engaged and attended for the week and gained valuable skills and self-confidence. Their relationships improved, and they gained skills in self-management and self-control which were apparent not only during the Game Changers camp but translated in the following weeks in the classroom. Significant to this success of the program were the programs mentors. Overall, the Game Changers pilot project provided hope for future improvement in the self-regulatory skills of youth and was a welcome future initiative for addressing the many problems which confront youth living in communities in the Kimberley.



There is much potential for running programs of this type again in Derby or any of the surrounding communities in the Kimberley region. Programs which focus on prosocial activity, building youth resilience and providing an opportunity to build up self-regulatory and other skills potentially build social inclusion and community relationships: hallmarks of community recovery. Furthermore, it increases the possibility for building self-regulatory skills such as controlling impulsivity, which has recently been considered a significant factor in tragic suicides of youth in the Kimberley, including Derby. Exploring the current levels of social capital and social networks which exist in the communities for these youth is important. Their families and kinship networks, schools or other education facilities, contact with members of professional organisations from health and mental health, justice or youth services and many other formal or informal aspects of their networks should be given much more attention than it currently is as an important part of keeping children safe at all times.

Prosocial activities which also have an educational component such as the Tracking Better® at Football curriculum would be very worthwhile investment for a number of reasons. Firstly the benefits for the youth. Secondly, by involving their families and the wider community in these kinds of activities, there is potential for the education of multiple protective adults for these young people, who can then assist with reinforcing the strategies and skills outside of the program. This potentially enables community members with opportunities for healing across the generations. By supporting communities to host these types of prosocial activity, there is potential to provide an environment where children, youth and communities can participate in something they care about, where they can be safely challenged and can safely challenge their own thoughts and feelings, achieve a stronger sense of personal worth, and stronger sense of community belonging and provide hope and meaning for the future.

Important next steps include consulting with communities about the prospects of trialling the project in communities, supporting the ongoing evaluation, including consultation to examine which outcomes are considered most meaningful for different communities and different members within a community. Future evaluations should consider long term sustainability of the program, including development of training models for program facilitators, evaluation of costs and benefits of program delivery, and the development of an implementation framework to support scale-up of the program while maintaining its fidelity.



## 5. Future recommendations

### 5.1. Community Consultation

- Future developments of the project should ensure involvement of community in its development and delivery and in defining meaningful and measurable outcomes for evaluation
- Particular attention should be given to the involvement of the girl's parents and families and look at opportunities to have shared activities.

### 5.2. The Game Changers Camp

- The pilot be expanded to a number of trial sites in remote, regional and urban communities
- Identify and set enforceable ground rules at the beginning of the Game Changers camp

### 5.3. Training

- Tracking Better<sup>®</sup> training be held over a longer period of time with regular opportunities for practice.
- Tracking Better<sup>®</sup> generic tools and Tracking Better<sup>®</sup> at Football be delivered as two separate programs.
- Ensure mentors are engaged in any future delivery of the project with clearly defined roles and tasks so they feel secure in their role.
- Training participants be provided with the manual prior to the training
- Training curriculum be broken down into foundation skills that can be built on in a sequential order once mastered.
- Clearly define specific roles for the professionals and volunteers for the duration of the Game Changers camp
- Future program work should consider the development of a training module for program facilitators and an implementation framework.

### 5.4. Materials and Tools

- Develop definitional material
- Consider the way games can be implemented in the delivery of self-regulatory strategies
- Provide reward/memory material for participants
- Consult with communities on culturally relevant visual material

### 5.5. The Future

- Evaluating the economic costs and benefits of program delivery
- Consider the implementation of mentoring projects for self-regulation in the classroom
- Consider the regular delivery of the Tracking Better<sup>®</sup> Football skills in the classroom and sports training
- Consider future Game Changers football camps in surrounding districts to increase social skills and opportunities for social inclusion
- Plan carnivals and events decided by the community which carry young people through times when they risk being bored and losing momentum on what they learn particular during school holidays.



## Appendices

### Appendix A: Game Changers Football Camp Program: 23-27 July 2018

#### Day 0: Volunteers and Community Working Party Training

##### Tracking Better® Curriculum:

Early Warning Signs of Stress

Stress Triggers and Survival Mode

Tools to Calm Down

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#### Day 1: Pre-season training

##### Planned Tracking Better® Curriculum:

Early Warning Signs of My Stress (Activity 1 in Manual)

My 5 Safe People (at home and on camp) (Activity 10 in Manual)

OMG, how do I calm down (Focus Muscle) (Activity 11 in Manual)

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#### Day 2: Away Match (Looma)

##### Planned Tracking Better® Curriculum:

My Triggers (Survival Mode) (Activity 2 in Manual)

My Stinking Thinking – I only see huge problems (Survival Muscle) (Activity 3 in Manual)

My Eagle Eye “Yes But…” and can see the positive (Survival Muscle) (Activity 4 in Manual)

Out of Survival Mode and into Flow (how does it feel different?) (Survival Muscle + Focus Muscle) (Activity 5 in Manual)

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#### Day 3: Home Match

##### Planned Tracking Better® Curriculum:

OMG, how do I calm down (Sensory Speed Dating) (Activity 11 in Manual)

#### Day 4: Away Match (Broome)

##### Planned Tracking Better® Curriculum



# Appendix B Infographic: Tracking Better® at Football

Tracking Better® at Footy Infographics

### TRACKING BETTER® AT FOOTBALL

*-How to bring your best game exactly when you need it!*  
 Your **Best Game** is where you have single minded focus and the actions that follow.  
 But... sport is a contest where you're gonna get **SMASHED**...  
 That will throw you into Survival Mode and off your Best Game.  
 But if you **TRACK** it happening you can **RESET** to play in **FLOW** using your...

**1. Physical Conditioning & Skills Training**  
Pre-season & season programs

**2. Healthy Diet, Sleep & Lifestyle**  
Better habits to follow every day

**3. Psychological Skills Training**  
Focus, Flow & Force Muscle

**4. Positive Team Culture**  
Build trust & earn trust, help teammates achieve & get it back

**Focus Muscle**

**Flow Muscle**

**Force Muscle**

*For the same physical effort, you can boost your performance...* [trackingbetter.com](http://trackingbetter.com)

### PUMP THE FOCUS MUSCLE

Create the "Eye of the Storm" - a place of choice in our mind and body

**2. Focused Mind**

- Create space in head between Action & Reaction.
- This gives choice to choose the **BEST** option.
- Need to focus on the things we **CAN** control - our response, our actions.

**3. Focused Body**

- Sense into our body: "Where are my feet, where am I looking?"
- Sense into each joint from the ground up.
- Get the body feeling switched on & ready to go.

**1. Focused Breathing**

- Big Belly Breath reverses the physiology of Survival Mode

**4. Focused Team**

- Close, connected, accepted, in rhythm after 2 laps.
- Know that feeling
- Hear the herd approaching

### Pump the Flo Muscle

Harness Survival Mode energy, add focus and get into Flo

**Cracked Up**

**Head Together**

**Shutdown**

**Survival Line**

**Flight**

**Freeze**

**Stinking Thinking**

**FLO-Mode: Learn how to bring my Best Game!**

**Eagle Eye Thinking**  
"Yes, but...?"

**Know Your Triggers?**

- ❑ Back call from ref
- ❑ Knock/Kick/missed
- ❑ Losing streak/Winning streak
- ❑ Duffed a shot
- ❑ Angry, Tired, Scared, Ashamed

### How we stand (Body Attitude) changes how we do stuff (Work Attitude)

*-And affects how we tackle **The Hard Part!** (THP) of what's getting in our way!*

**I CAN'T**

**I Dread THP**

**Slumped Body Attitude**

→ "I can't" Work Attitude  
 → Less Back Motivation  
 → "I can't fix it..." (Glass Half EMPTY)

**I sure CAN!**

**I THP is a Challenge, but I can see options!**

**Strong Body Attitude**

→ "I sure CAN!" Work Attitude  
 → Lean In & Own It Motivation  
 → "I CAN fix it..." (Glass Half EMPTY & find solution)

**1. Body Attitude**  
 Negative: Chest slumped  
 Positive: Chest up

**2. Work Attitude**  
 Negative: "I can't..."  
 Positive: "I sure can!"

**3. Motivation**  
 Negative: Ditch the hard task & lean back.  
 Positive: Own the hard part & lean in to it.

**4. How to Fix It**  
 Negative: It's ALL impossible "I still can't"  
 Positive: It's the hard part and tackle with strategy "I can fix it..."

Appendix C: Lanyards

<p><b>Tracking Better® at Football</b></p>  <p><i>"How to bring my Best Game exactly when I need it!"</i></p>	<p><b>1. Early Warning Signs of Stress</b></p> <div style="display: grid; grid-template-columns: repeat(3, 1fr); gap: 10px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Fight Survival Animal (Angry)</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Flight Survival Animal (Scared)</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Freeze Survival Animal (Sad/Meh)</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Late Warning Sign</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Late Warning Sign</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Late Warning Sign</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Middle Warning Sign</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Middle Warning Sign</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Middle Warning Sign</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Early Warning Sign</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Early Warning Sign</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Early Warning Sign</div> </div>	<p><b>2. My Stinking Thinking</b></p>  <p>..... .....</p> <p><b>3. Eagle Eye says "Yes, but"</b></p>  <p>..... .....</p> <p><b>4. My Triggers</b></p>  <p>..... .....</p> <p><b>5. What's FLOW feel like?</b></p>  <p>..... .....</p>					
<p><b>6. Committed Daily Practice</b></p> <p>Make a tiny change but commit to improving every day!</p>  <p>..... .....</p> <p><b>7. Training</b></p> <p>What's the problem?</p>  <p>What's The Hard Part (THP)?</p> <p>I can't: .....</p> <p>I can: .....</p> <p>I can if... .....</p>	<p><b>8. Pre-match &amp; Match</b></p> <p>What's the problem?</p>  <p>What's The Hard Part (THP)?</p> <p>I can't: .....</p> <p>I can: .....</p> <p>I can if... .....</p> <p><b>9. Team Work</b></p> <p>What's the problem?</p>  <p>What's The Hard Part (THP)?</p> <p>I can't: .....</p> <p>I can: .....</p> <p>I can if... .....</p>	<p><b>10. My 5 Safe People</b></p>  <table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 150px;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">1.</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">2.</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">3.</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">4.</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">5.</td></tr> </table>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1.							
2.							
3.							
4.							
5.							
<p><b>11. OMG how do I Calm?</b></p> <p>Breathing rate: .....</p> <p>Mind: .....</p> <p>Body: .....</p> <div style="display: grid; grid-template-columns: repeat(3, 1fr); gap: 10px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">SAFE NOW</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Orient To Safety</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Orient To Safety</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Move</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Move</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Grasp (Touch)</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Grasp (Touch)</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Grasp (Touch)</div> </div>	<p><b>Tracking Better® at Football</b></p>   <p>Name.....</p>						



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