

# Game Changers: Tracking Better® at Football

## Background

- Many young people living in the Kimberley communities have experienced multiple and complex layers of disadvantage and trauma which can result in high levels of mental health problems, school disengagement, poor prospects for the future, and in some cases, suicide.
- Programs that assist youth to recognise and manage their thoughts and feelings and develop strategies for self-regulation and impulse control are a key step in supporting better outcomes for young people and communities.
- Using sport-based programs is an engaging way for young people to develop these skills and to improve their social, emotional, behavioural, and physical wellbeing.
- To explore the impact of such programs, the professional community sought an opportunity to run a pilot evaluation of the Game Changers football camp for girls and young women. This project was piloted as a week's camp in Derby, Western Australia using the Tracking Better® at Football program.

## Key Findings and Recommendations

- Initiatives such as the Game Changers project are vital to address the complex and difficult lives of young people living in the Kimberley. Addressing interpersonal and community violence, substance misuse, disengagement from school, and problems with the use of social media are essential to improving the social and emotional wellbeing of youth in the Kimberley.
- The pilot Game Changers camp, utilising the Tracking Better® at Football tools offered young people an opportunity to participate in an activity which gave them insight into themselves, develop skills to recognise and manage their thoughts and feelings, and increase coping strategies. It engaged the girls in a fun way, which assisted them to develop self-regulation skills, strategies to support themselves and each other during times of stress, and skills for working together as a team.
- It is recommended that the pilot be expanded to several trial sites in remote, regional and urban communities, integrating specific recommendations outlined in the evaluation report and developed to suit the unique needs as defined by individual communities.
- In particular, future iterations of the project should involve community members in its development and delivery and in defining meaningful and measurable outcomes for evaluation.
- Particular attention should be given to the involvement of parents and families and members of the broader community and look for opportunities to embed the program into settings such as schools and community sports training programs.
- Attention should also be given to developing an implementation framework, with consideration of the scale-up of the program, including economic costs and benefits, and the development of a training model designed to promote community ownership and long-term sustainability.

