

# Whittlesea walking football program



## Project overview

Walking football is an activity of the Melbourne City Football Club's community outreach program that is run through its registered charity, the City in the Community Foundation (CITC).

Walking football addresses social isolation and inactivity in seniors. The program is run in a range of community organisations, aged care services and local government.

This project was run in collaboration with CITC, the City of Whittlesea and Whittlesea U3A.

## Project description

The project aimed to link isolated seniors into the walking football program to provide opportunities for a gentle form of exercise and social connection, as well as participating in the wider walking football program delivered across the Melbourne metropolitan area.

The walking football program is designed to improve fitness and health through a modified and slower version of the game, encouraging elderly members of the Victorian community and those with restricted mobility to be more active and use football as a vehicle to socialise.

A CITC project officer worked with the City of Whittlesea's Seniors Engagement Officer to encourage participants to come and try walking football and join a team.

## Project model

- Council Seniors Engagement Officer worked closely with several ethno-specific seniors groups and linked them with current walking football players.
- Players were trained as ambassadors to speak to groups and individuals within their own communities and encouraged people to join the program.
- Ambassadors reached out across the City of Whittlesea to promote the program and recruit seniors to join a team. During their talks they handed out promotional material including stress balls with walking football details.
- Seniors were invited to come and try and take part in the activity, and many became regular participants and joined a team.

## Budget

Total project cost	\$9,049
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## Project challenges

None reported.

## Project outcomes

- Twenty-six new players, both women and men, from more than seven communities joined the walking football program.
- The program developed and strengthened partnerships with local government, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) seniors groups, agencies and individual seniors.
- There was improvement in both the physical and mental health of participants from increased physical activity and social connection.
- Seniors from various CALD backgrounds had the opportunity to meet, learn about each other's cultures and extend their social networks.
- Participants were also involved in other activities such as attending Melbourne City Football Club matches and social events after games.
- The program also enhanced intergenerational connections between seniors and younger volunteers who assisted with the facilitation and delivery of sessions.

## Project sustainability

The Whittlesea walking football program will continue beyond the current project and will become part of the wider walking football program delivered by CITC.

CITC currently delivers weekly walking football programs in several locations, engaging with over 432 seniors in Collingwood, Fawkner, Coburg, Clayton, North Melbourne, Kensington, Glenroy, Flemington and Whittlesea.

The project has strengthened partnerships with local seniors groups and was promoted and celebrated at the Musculoskeletal Australia Victorian Active Aging Partnership forum, which allowed CITC to connect with other groups and stakeholders who are interested in working with them to expand the walking football program in their organisations.