Fair go, sport!
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Dr Gillian Fletcher
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Executive Summary

The *Fair go, sport!* project aimed to:

- Increase awareness of sexual and gender diversity in hockey and promote safe and inclusive environments, and develop a flexible model of engagement that can be adapted for other sporting codes and their governing bodies.¹

The project, which adopted an asset-based, action learning approach, resulted in a wealth of activities at pilot clubs, State Sporting Association (SSA) and National Sporting Organisation (NSO) levels. All activities were conceptualised and implemented within just 16 months, with the driving force for these activities coming from the four pilot clubs (and in particular the volunteer project advocates within those clubs), the SSA and the NSO themselves.² *Fair go, sport!* also created waves beyond the bounds of hockey.

Key project activities are listed below.³

- Pilot club Camberwell Hockey Club initiated the ‘What you say matters’ concept. Initially used as a poster within pilot clubs, ‘What you say matters’ is being developed by Hockey Australia into a resource linked to accreditation for hockey coaches across the country.

- Pilot club Werribee Hockey Club revised its registration day information and players’ handbook to promote *Fair go, sport!* and to move ‘Value the well-being and diversity of our people’ from the bottom of its list of Club Values to the top.

- Pilot club Old Carey Hockey Club developed an official Code of Conduct that explicitly rejects harassment or discrimination related to sexuality or gender identity.

- A review of the Australian Sport Commission’s statement and guidelines on transgender people is being carried out as a result of the project.

- One round of the 2012 state league will be renamed the *Fair go, sport!* round.

- Hockey ACT has since begun to develop its own *Fair go, sport!* project.

- Pilot clubs have committed to an annual presentation of *Fair go, sport!* cups and the project advocates have all committed to continuing the work of *Fair go, sport!* and to promoting wider involvement in the project within their clubs.

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¹ VEOHRC (2010a). *Integrity in Sport Project Matrix.* Melbourne, Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission. This paper makes no comment on the flexible model, which is described in a separate paper and will be evaluated in the future.

² The initial funding was for one year, but was later extended to 16 months to match the hockey season.

³ A fuller list of project achievements is presented as Appendix A.
The project’s primary achievement is that it developed an action learning impetus to drive cultural change. This led to genuine ownership of, and commitment to, the project at a pilot club, state, and national level within hockey. Project participants did not feel that they were told what to do or what to think. This, in turn, led to the beginning of real conversations and reflections on the existence, effect, and insidiousness of discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex (GLBTI) people in sport. These conversations have been acknowledged as challenging, often unpredictable and, above all, rewarding.

Projects that use an action learning approach need to pay great attention to building relationships, trust and confidence in the ongoing learning process. This is particularly important in the early stages of a project, where participants will inevitably feel somewhat ‘at sea’ without a traditional implementation formula to follow.

Conversations and reflections held as a result of the Fair go, sport! project have succeeded in unsettling many of these assumptions and encouraging deeper reflection on how things can be changed. A particular learning point for those involved has been the cost to GLBTI people of maintaining silence and invisibility in the face of an unspoken rule of ‘don't ask, don’t tell’ within sports clubs. This has led to actions that have been driven by those within the sport itself, sowing the seeds for lasting cultural change.

The overall success of the project can be attributed to five factors:

1. The project’s asset-based, action learning methodology (while acknowledging the adoption of such an open-ended, non-structured approach has its own challenges, particularly at the beginning of a project)
2. The way in which the project acknowledged and engaged with the complex, emotional and human aspects of sport, sexuality and gender identity (including acknowledging people’s desire to see their own clubs as ‘inclusive’)
3. Effective and consistent project branding
4. Commitment, expertise and representation
5. Use of networks to ‘spread the word’.

All of the pilot clubs and Hockey Victoria consider that they are ‘just beginning’ to create cultural change, and were eager to have further support to ensure change was long lasting and sustainable. The project brings into sharp relief the tension between use of an action learning approach (which builds momentum and ownership, and in which the focus is on process) and traditional, outcome-focused systems with short-term funding cycles that often focus on developing a product.

While the notion of sport as an important arena for culture change is widely accepted within public health circles, sportspeople often do not see their clubs (or their sport) in the same way. Fair go, sport! offers a positive case study of the benefits of involvement in a project that may seem to be ‘non-core’, but that has been identified as having actually contributed to the overall strength of the pilot clubs as a whole.
Sport as a site of discrimination

It is beyond doubt that sport can be a site of discrimination on the grounds of someone’s known or assumed sexuality or gender identity. Experiences of harassment, discrimination and exclusion have been documented in multiple international reports and research projects.

Australian research presents similar evidence. Hemphill and Symons questioned the Australian belief in sport as ‘a great equaliser’, instead identifying sport ‘as a significant site of discrimination’ for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (GLBTI) people. Such discrimination does not necessarily reveal itself in violence or outright abuse; Baks and Malecek have argued that:

The most common form of discrimination is silence and invisibility, which leads to the stabilisation of an extremely heterosexual environment in sports. There seems to be a persistent silence on the issue of gays and lesbians in sports amongst sport authorities, although a very few exceptions can be reported. Most regular sport organisations seem to be ignorant on homophobia and discrimination of gays and lesbians in sport.

Similarly the Submission to the Department of Health and Ageing Independent Sport Panel, developed by a consortium of peak community organisations and committed individuals within Victoria, stated:

Sport is recognised as a vital social institution, bringing people together, promoting health and providing important opportunities for the demonstration and celebration of sporting talent and achievement. It is also a place where GLBTI Australians are largely invisible, silent and marginalised.

Such silence and invisibility, often a result of the assumption by others that everyone is heterosexual unless they declare otherwise, leaves GLBTI people with the burden of having to either acquiesce and ‘pass’ as straight, or persist in attempting to assert their ‘difference’ in the face of resolute but usually unspoken policies of ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’. In a study of online accounts by North American gay athletes, Gough reported that ‘the personal costs of suppressing “inner” gay feelings and “acting” straight were noted in a variety of contexts, and themes of denial, guilt, and fear of being found out were evident’.

While the greatest burden of homophobia in sport is carried by GLBTI people, it has also been noted that abusive terms such as ‘dyke’, ‘poofter’, or ‘trannie’ are applied as a way of punishing perceived gender transgressions, regardless of someone’s known (or assumed) sexuality.

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4 This section has been adapted from the project literature review Fletcher et al., 2011.
5 Baks and Malecek, 2004; Demers, 2006; Gill et al., 2006; Gill et al., 2010; Harry, 1995; Hekma, 1998; Kian and Anderson, 2009; Maurer-Starks et al., 2008; Osborne and Wagner, 2007; Sartore and Cunningham, 2009a; Sartore and Cunningham, 2009b; et al.
6 Burton, 2000; Crawford, 2009; Hemphill and Symons, 2009; McCann et al., 2009; Plummer, 2006; Symons et al., 2010; Walsh et al., 2008; Watts, 2002; et al.
9 The Panel, and the context surrounding its establishment, is discussed in more detail in the following section.
10 ‘Challenging Homophobia in Sport Initiative’, 2009: 3
12 McCann et al., 2009; Plummer, 2001; Walsh et al., 2008
women who play ‘unfeminine’ sports, or women who are considered ‘overly’ competitive, are likely to be labelled ‘dyke’, regardless of their actual sexuality. Likewise, men who are considered somehow ‘effeminate’ will be labelled gay, regardless of their personal sexual preference.

The continued existence of homophobia and transphobia in sport (as elsewhere) does not mean that things have not improved over time. One gay male player, interviewed as part of this evaluation, recalled when he was outed (about 15 years ago):

Because the community was so small, other clubs found out about it and nobody would mark [a man who was known to be gay] because they were scared of getting HIV or AIDS…whereas…two years ago, when [another player] came out, you know a couple of other teams found out about it and certainly the reception that he got was far different. The players still marked him as you do in hockey to try and defend the ball.

Nor does the continued existence of homophobia and transphobia in sport (as elsewhere) mean that GLBTI people have acceded to exclusion from sport. Rather, they have employed a range of strategies to enable safer participation. For example, Hillier has reported how young women have coopted the homophobic and highly gendered assumption that women who play Australian Rules Football are all lesbians to create a space where women can enjoy sport and test gender and sex boundaries ‘in relative safety’.

Successful gay male sportspeople in the United States have reported refusing to remain silent about their sexuality, thus making visible – and confronting – the stereotype that gay men cannot play sport. Information on which mainstream sporting clubs are less homophobic than others has been shared within GLBTI networks. The player quoted above spoke of his experience in this regard:

The club committee was becoming less and less friendly towards my sexuality; while they weren’t being openly hostile about it, I was starting to see more passive type resistance, and so yeah basically…I did do my research beforehand, before jumping, because I didn’t want to go from one bad situation to another. I talked to other [gay] players.

GLBTI people have also worked together to create queer spaces within mainstream sporting contexts, or to create out and queer sports clubs. While none of these strategies is without risk, GLBTI people have persisted (and succeeded, to varying degrees) in finding or creating space for themselves within a range of sports.


The Fair go, sport! project ‘aims to increase awareness of sexual and gender diversity in hockey and promote safe and inclusive environments, and develop a flexible model of engagement that can be adapted for other sporting codes and their governing bodies.’

(VEOHRC, 2010a)
The project

Project initiation

*Fair go, sport!* – known at that stage as the *Integrity in Sport* project – received $150,000 from the Australian Sport Commission (ASC) plus a further $20,000 from the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (the Commission). The ensuing contract was signed in March 2010 on the basis that ASC and Commission would select one national team sport that met the following agreed criteria:

- governing bodies based in Victoria for ready access
- significant potential for buy-in by the sport's governing bodies and membership
- adequate resources to support the project
- a gender balance
- played at various levels from community to elite.

After the contract had been signed, and based on discussions with the ASC, hockey was selected for the following reasons:

1. Potential buy-in: both Hockey Australia and Hockey Victoria expressed clear interest in the project from the start. Hockey Australia had also been highly supportive of the first Asia Pacific OutGames.

2. Resourcing: hockey is a relatively large and established sport, able to contribute resources to the project without being so highly resourced that its achievements are not replicable by most other codes.

3. Gender mix: hockey is neither a predominantly male, nor predominantly female, sport. It also has club infrastructure that supports both sexes.

4. Stratification: hockey is played at all levels, from community through to elite. It also has strong junior and veterans sections.

Senior staff members within both Hockey Australia and Hockey Victoria demonstrated great enthusiasm for, and commitment to, the project. Hockey Victoria CEO Ben Hartung and Operations Manager Andrew Skilern took responsibility for driving the project within hockey in Victoria. Hockey Australia’s Game Development Manager Grant Weir took the lead for Hockey Australia, with the support of CEO Mark Anderson. It must be noted that participation in the project did not result in either Hockey Australia or Hockey Victoria receiving any project funds. The wholehearted participation of hockey’s National Sporting Organisation (NSO) and Victoria’s State Sporting Association (SSA) was because of the organisations’ commitment to, and enthusiasm for, *Fair go, sport!*, and the project would not have achieved what it has without this commitment and enthusiasm. Hockey Victoria CEO Ben Hartung explained their commitment as follows:

> Club environments, that whole-of-club development, is absolutely a priority for us. We are very fortunate to have these strong hockey clubs with multi-million dollar facilities, but previously we have been relying on these clubs to actually engender the culture that’s in their own hockey club...I think our desire as Hockey Victoria is to actually play a far greater leadership role in the culture that’s in hockey clubs.

Commission-employed *Fair go, sport!* Project Officer Peter Gourlay, and Commission Communications Adviser Ian Row provided technical assistance on communication and media. *Fair go, sport!* was also supported by a steering...
committee, established to ‘ensure the project is relevant and appropriate to both the identified sporting organisation and its membership, as well as to the GLBTI community and a broader range of stakeholders’18.

In May 2011, ASC and the Commission committed further funds to extend the project by four months, optimising the project’s potential by continuing work with pilot clubs until the end of the hockey season.

**Project methodology: a focus on continual learning**

The overall project methodology, as well as its aim, objectives, anticipated key activities and evaluation matrix, were defined during a workshop attended by project partners and led by evaluator Dr Gillian Fletcher and colleague Dr Sue Dyson (September 2010).19

Taking the initial funding agreement as a starting point, workshop participants talked through their vision for the project and began by agreeing that the project aim, as defined in the initial funding agreement, was too negative. This aim had been defined as: ‘To reduce the experience and impact of homophobia in an identified sporting code, as a model that can be adapted by other sporting codes and their governing bodies’.20

The agreed final aim of the *Fair go, sport!* project – ‘to increase awareness of sexual and gender diversity in hockey and promote safe and inclusive environments, and develop a flexible model of engagement that can be adapted for other sporting codes and their governing bodies’21 – is notable for its lack of reference to homophobia and for its focus on positive action that builds on existing strengths (as demonstrated by use of the phrase ‘*increase awareness*’).

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19 This section draws on the project literature review.
21 Above n. 1
Indeed, the minutes of the first steering committee meeting (held prior to the project matrix development workshop), note that ‘it was considered much better to be positive about “promoting sexuality and gender diversity” rather than taking a more negative or reactive approach to “challenging homophobia’”\(^{22}\). What the committee was calling for here can be described as an asset-based approach to culture change. Dyson and Flood explain this as one in which ‘respect for self, others and the team’ is maximised and project participants are supported and encouraged to internalise ‘the message that they can do something’\(^{23}\).

This desire for an inclusive, supportive, positive project formalised into the adoption of an asset-based, action learning methodology during the project matrix development workshop. Participants agreed that a wealth of data exists regarding the existence of homophobia and transphobia in sport, but that the focus now should be on greater action to rectify this. It was agreed that the combination of an asset-based approach with an action learning process would provide the best framework for identifying commitment, opportunities and existing strengths in relation to promoting safety and inclusion for people of diverse sexualities and gender identities.

While different forms of enactment of action learning exist, there is widespread agreement that, at its base, action learning means exactly what the name implies: ‘learning from action or concrete experience, as well as taking action as a result of this learning’\(^{24}\). There is a dynamic, iterative cycle of examination of experience, reflection and learning, planning, then action. Action learning draws on the same basic paradigmatic principles of Participatory Action Research (PAR), which has been represented by the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs in the Action Learning Model diagram (page 10):

The asset-based approach ensured that, within the project, the examination, learning and action embedded in the action learning cycle did not focus on deficit, but on what positive experiences existed or what positive change might be possible.

In practice, the project involved ‘talking, talking, talking’ according to Project Officer Peter Gourlay. Informal discussions on what the project could do, what opportunities could be identified and what was possible (both within each club, within Hockey Victoria and, to a lesser extent, within Hockey Australia) were held throughout the project lifespan. Reflection meetings were held to enable cross-learning between the volunteer pilot club project drivers (known as Project Advocates), and to encourage the advocates to brainstorm together on what might be possible, what challenges were arising and how these challenges could be faced. Each of these meetings was also attended by either Ben Hartung (CEO) or Andrew Skillern (Operations Manager) of Hockey Victoria. The Project Officer and a representative of Hockey Victoria attended pilot clubs, and talked to committees and other club members about what could be done. Steering committee meetings were also run in a participatory, discursive fashion. Whenever possible, these discussions were tied to reflection on actions already taken and to identification of possible future actions, based on in-project learning.

As this report makes clear, this methodology (combined with a methodologically consistent evaluation, which will be discussed on pages 14-16) played a key part in the overall success of the project.

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22 Steering Committee Meeting Minutes, August 13, 2010
Project objectives and anticipated key activities
The matrix development workshop described on page 11 led to the identification of the following project objectives and anticipated key activities. From the beginning, it was acknowledged that these anticipated key activities were not intended as a rigid template to be followed but, rather, as a guide to be altered depending on project learning and context. Thus the activities do not specify individual pilot club actions; the anticipated key activity is, instead, ‘Project Advocates develop ideas and trial them in the clubs.’

Objective 1
To engage key stakeholders in identifying existing policies, codes and procedures and map current experiences, practices, attitudes and perceptions in order to develop pilot interventions at all levels of hockey.
Anticipated key activities included:
* developing a communication strategy and identifying existing channels of communication that can be utilised by the project
* auditing of existing Hockey Australia, Hockey Victoria and ASC policies/codes and procedures
* developing and implementing an online survey to identify perceptions of what constitutes gender identity and sexuality-related harassment
* engaging club presidents
* holding open meetings to promote the project
* identifying key contacts in clubs.

Objective 2
To develop, with key stakeholders, pilot interventions that promote safe and inclusive environments and reduce homophobia.
Anticipated key activities included:
* selecting 2–4 pilot clubs for pilot interventions
* identifying and supporting volunteer project advocates to facilitate whole of club engagement with the project
* conducting regular meetings between project advocates, in order to promote cross-learning
* developing ideas and trialling them (by project advocates in pilot clubs)
* sharing of information between the Commission and Hockey Victoria.

Objective 3
To develop a flexible model for safe and inclusive environments in hockey that is transferable to other sports.
Key activities included:
* holding a project workshop to finalise the development of a flexible, transferable model for hockey that can be transferred into other sports
* collating feedback and comment on proposed model by members of project steering committee
* disseminating the model across codes.

Objective 4
Evaluate the project after 12 months to ascertain its effectiveness and the difference the engagement has had for the sport and its participants.
Key activities included:
* facilitating project mapping workshop
* undertaking literature review
* convening monthly project reflection meetings between the evaluator and Project Officer
* working with the Project Officer to develop an online survey on homophobia and analyse responses
* conducting a maximum of 15 individual interviews with key informants from non-pilot intervention clubs to enable an in-depth review of any shifts that have occurred in club activities relating to policies, codes of conduct and practices (based on framework developed under Objective 1)
* facilitating a lessons learned workshop with project advocates
* facilitating project workshop to finalise development of model
* facilitating feedback workshop on evaluation findings
* facilitating reports (community report plus full report).
A focus on learning from activities, not on activities as outcomes

Each of the objectives has been achieved, in part, as a result of the anticipated key activities outlined previously on page 12. However, the anticipated key activities are just one small part of the Fair go, sport! story. This was a project in which outcomes arose from an ongoing learning process, rather than from a predetermined work plan.

For example, in arranging the open meetings described under Objective 1, project partners began by assuming that official messages from Hockey Victoria to clubs and affiliates would reach the ‘right’ people, and would be enough to generate interest and the desired action (attendance at the open meetings). The meetings were planned for November and December 2010, just one month after a Hockey Victoria memo revealing that hockey had been chosen as the project partner sport. Hockey Victoria CEO Ben Hartung sent personal invitations and reminders to all state hockey clubs and associations, inviting them to attend one of two meetings (one at the State Netball and Hockey Centre, the other in Warragul). Response to these invitations was so muted that the decision was taken to cancel both meetings.

If the project had been focused on the meetings as an outcome, rather than as part of a process of engagement, cancelling the meetings would have been seen as a failure. But as Ben Hartung commented: ‘That wasn't seen as a major setback. We all just went: “Okay that didn’t work, how can we get what we need out of it in a different way?” We learnt from it, picked up the pieces and did something else.’

The ‘something else’ involved giving more space and time to one-to-one conversations between the Project Officer and those clubs or individuals that had asked for information on the project (either as a result of the open meeting messages or as the result of a flyer from the project asking for expressions of interest in participating in the project). There was a ‘slow build’ of interest, that in each case began with one person in a club hearing about the project and, over time, having conversations with other club members (or committee members) then becoming convinced to get involved.

The pilot clubs and project advocates

Four pilot clubs were selected by the Commission, in discussion with Hockey Victoria, from an initial 11 expressions of interest. In addition, before the pilot clubs were finalised, a volunteer project advocate was identified in each club.

The clubs, described in brief below (with name of project advocate recorded), are highly diverse in terms of size, structure, facilities, and membership profile. Likewise, the project advocates represent diverse individuals with a personal and sometimes professional interest in a range of justice and wellbeing issues such as community arts, sport and inclusion and mental health (see page 32).

Camberwell Hockey Club

Camberwell Hockey Club (Camberwell HC) is one of the largest hockey clubs in Melbourne. As of the 2011 season, Camberwell fielded eight men’s sides, three veterans’ teams and six women’s teams. The club’s junior program is recognised by Hockey Victoria as the biggest in Victoria with 25 teams across all age groups of competition. Camberwell HC’s home ground is based in Canterbury and the club has recently partnered with Koonung College in Box Hill to establish a second pitch for training and home match spread. Camberwell fields both men’s and women’s teams in State League One. As of April 2011, Hockey Victoria had Camberwell’s player membership recorded at 966 (of which 424 were juniors).

Project Advocates: Member Protection Officer Jenny Sach (from start of project), who was later joined by Women’s Committee member Bridie Walsh.

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25 Lessons learned from the process of identifying and selecting these pilot clubs will be examined in the ‘In hindsight’ section of this report.
Old Carey Hockey Club

Old Carey Hockey Club (Old Carey HC), a member of the Old Carey Grammarians Association, draws players from Old Carey Grammar School alumni as well as from the broader community. The club, which celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 2011, does not have its own pitch but plays its home matches from Box Hill Hockey Club’s Elgar Park ground. Old Carey has two open age men’s teams and one senior men’s team. They also have one women’s team and one senior women’s team. As of April 2011, Old Carey HC had 82 adult members (51 male and 31 female) and just one junior player, who played with the seniors.

Project Advocate: President Polash Larsen (who stepped down from his role as President at the 2011 AGM).

Werribee Hockey Club

Werribee Hockey Club (Werribee HC) has approximately three men’s and three women’s teams as well as seven junior teams. The club is currently working on building their Under 11 numbers from one team to two in 2011. Werribee is working hard on developing their club in all areas. Werribee HC’s men’s and women’s senior teams both play in State League 3. In April 2011, Hockey Victoria reported Werribee’s player membership as 209 (of which 110 were juniors).

Project Advocates: From project start to approximately halfway through the project, the Project Advocate was club Publicity and Grants Officer Kirsty Forsdike. When Kirsty left Werribee, the Project Advocate role was taken over by Renea Cooke, who is now Werribee’s Publicity and Grants Officer.

Baw Baw Hockey Club

Baw Baw Hockey Club (Baw Baw HC) is based in Drouin, Gippsland, and has four senior teams and four junior teams. Until 2009, Baw Baw HC played their home matches in Berwick at Berwick Secondary College. The Drouin synthetic ground was completed in July 2010 and this is where the club now plays its home matches. Many of its senior players are drawn from across Gippsland and the Latrobe Valley. Baw Baw men’s team plays in State League 3 and the women’s team plays in State League 2. In April 2011, Hockey Victoria reported the club’s player membership as totalling 124 (of which 64 were juniors).

Project Advocate: President Keith Sutton.

In keeping with the project’s overall asset-based, action learning methodology, the pilot clubs and Hockey Victoria were supported to develop their own project activities (which will be reviewed in the ‘Project Achievements’ section).

Evaluation as collaboration

The theory

Programs that aim to achieve social, cultural, and institutional change are not laboratories in which external factors can be accounted for, and effects of experiments can be measured using ‘objective’ measures. Instead, they are complex systems of human interaction in which experiences, emotions, motivations and perceptions of outcome can and will vary for reasons of geography, politics, time, relationships and context. Attempts to produce ‘objective’, quantified measures of the success or failure of such complex systems have been critiqued for their inherent risk of:

1. Failing to identify the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of a program, through focusing instead on finding a quantifiable ‘what’ (for example number of meetings held, number of people involved) and presenting that ‘what’ as a decontextualised, unproblematised measure of project worth

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Effective evaluation is not an 'event' that occurs at the end of a project, but is an ongoing process [that] helps decision makers better understand the project.

Cuman et al., 1998: 3
The practice

The project matrix development workshop, discussed on page 11, provided the basis not just for the project as a whole but also for the evaluation. Evaluator Dr Gillian Fletcher facilitated the workshop to ensure that the project aim, objectives, anticipated activities and evaluation design were coherent and complementary.

The first evaluation task was to produce a literature review that provided background to the project and reviewed similar projects. The review noted that ‘…while there are several published recommendations for tackling homophobia and transphobia in sport, there is limited literature that reports on the effectiveness (or otherwise) of implementing such recommendations.’  

The review added that there were ‘few examples of good practice or guidance to follow’ and ‘a sense that either socially or organisationally the challenge of addressing LGBT issues in sport successfully is still some way off’.  

The project’s adoption of an asset-based, action learning methodology meant that the evaluation could be truly collaborative, in that use of an iterative implementation process fits best with an iterative evaluation process. Thus evaluator Gillian Fletcher held regular reflection meetings with Project Officer Peter Gourlay throughout the life of the project, encouraging him to reflect on challenges faced and achievements made and to consider his own plans for moving forward. These meetings were recorded, and field notes kept. As part of the project matrix development, it was agreed that an online survey should be carried out in order to identify attitudes, values and assumptions related to sexuality and gender identity within the Victorian hockey community.

(The primary purpose of the survey was to assist in guiding thinking around project implementation, not for collation of quantitative evaluation data). This survey was developed with input from ARCSHS, analysed by ARCSHS and feedback provided to project partners, the Steering Committee and project advocates.

The evaluator also attended events when possible (keeping field notes) and facilitated reflection meetings with the project advocates and the Steering Committee. Background discussions were held with key staff members in Hockey Australia and Hockey Victoria during the life of the project. Outputs from reflection meetings and background discussions became evaluation data. In addition, towards the end of the project interviews were held with nine people from non-pilot clubs and evaluation workshops held with project advocates, project partners (including the ASC) and the Steering Committee.

The links between this evaluation approach and the project’s asset-based, action learning methodology was identified as one of the strengths of the project, as will be discussed later.

This evaluation report

Given all of the above, this report does not follow a traditional format in that it does not offer ‘findings’ but, rather, outlines key project achievements; discusses aspects of the project that have been identified as contributing to these achievements; and ends with an ‘In hindsight…’ section, with points for consideration in future projects. These points for consideration have already been discussed with, and agreed to by, project staff from the Commission, the ASC, Hockey Victoria CEO, Ben Hartung and Operations Manager, Andrew Skillern.

The data presented in the rest of the report is drawn from a range of sources, including:

* steering committee minutes
* the online attitudes, values and assumptions survey
* background documents
* notes of reflection meetings with the Project Officer
* interviews with people from non-pilot clubs
* outputs from reflection workshops held with the Steering Committee, project partners and project advocates.

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31  Fletcher, Gillian; Smith, Lizzie & Dyson, Sue (2010). Fair go, sport! Promoting Sexual and Gender Diversity in Hockey: A Literature Review, Melbourne, Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society and the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission.
33  Above n. 32.
Project achievements

‘This project has started conversations in our club that have never been there before.’

Renea Cooke, Werribee HC Project Advocate
Throughout, those involved in the project have acknowledged that the success of this project (and those both directly and indirectly involved in the project speak of *Fair go, sport!* as a success) is due in large part to a strong focus on learning processes leading to unanticipated outputs rather than on predetermined outputs, without due consideration to learning or adaptation.

The events, project materials, documents, awareness raising and networking activities described below arose from a spider’s web of ongoing conversations, brainstorming, reflections, planning and actions, involving different project partners at different times and to different levels. The scope and range of the conversations, brainstorming, reflection, planning and actions grew throughout the life of the project as relationships, trust, and confidence grew. All project participants played a role in this.34

It must be stressed that no one is claiming these activities will prevent heterosexism and ensure full and open participation and inclusion of GLBTI people in hockey (or any sport). As Renea Cooke, Werribee Project Advocate, noted: ‘If people have felt excluded for a long time, then it’s a bit like “Just because you have waved a rainbow flag around for a few months, don’t think I am going to fall for that.”’ But these activities have generated conversations and actions, and begun to create a positive image of hockey as a sport that recognises and actively includes GLBTI people and that will not tolerate clubs who do not recognise and actively include GLBTI people. In this sense, they have sown the seeds for cultural change.

There have been different levels of conversations in different pilot clubs; the nature of action learning is such that this is inevitable due to the different contexts, different relationships, and different places that each club is at in its own culture. Nonetheless, the project advocates were convinced that participation in the project brought multiple benefits to their clubs. These benefits included receiving positive publicity within the community; enhanced relationships with Hockey Victoria and Hockey Australia; enhanced relationships with the local council and local politicians; increased takings during special events; and increased sense of pride and achievement at a committee level.

For all project advocates, however, the project funding ended before they felt satisfied with what they had achieved. As Baw Baw HC Project Advocate Keith Sutton reflected: ‘In some respects, I find it hard to see what the club achieved in promoting sexual and gender diversity in sport, however I do know that our involvement in the initiative has made an impact upon some individual club members and that the committee is keen to build on what was done in 2011.’

Despite this sense that the project had only just begun, the project outputs (achieved in just 16 months) are both important and impressive as can be seen from the highlights below:35

* Camberwell HC pilot club initiated ‘What you say matters’. Hockey Australia is taking the concept further by developing a resource of

34 When referring to ‘project participants’, I include Steering Committee members, Commission staff members connected to the project, myself as evaluator, the Project Advocates, the members and committees of pilot clubs, Hockey Victoria and Hockey Australia.

35 A timeline containing many of these outputs is provided at the end of this section.
the same name. The resource will be linked to accreditation for hockey coaches across the country to help address the way language can contribute to discrimination and reduce participation.

- Hockey Victoria developed a *Fair go, sport!* strip, worn by state teams the Vipers and the Vikings throughout the 2011 season.

- *Fair go, sport!* rainbow socks were developed to allow pilot club players to show their support for the project; one pilot club and one other club requested Hockey Victoria permission for a formal strip change to allow them to wear the socks.

- Werribee HC pilot club revised its registration day information and players’ handbook to promote *Fair go, sport!* and to move ‘Value the well-being and diversity of our people’ from the bottom of its list of Club Values to the top.

- Old Carey HC pilot club developed an official Code of Conduct that explicitly rejects harassment or discrimination related to sexuality or gender identity.

- The Australian Sports Commission has commenced a review of their statement and guidelines on transgender people as a result of the project.

- Hockey Victoria will rename one round of the 2012 state league the *Fair go, sport!* round.

- Hockey ACT has since begun to develop its own *Fair go, sport!* project.
  - Pilot clubs have committed to an annual presentation of *Fair go, sport!* cups and the project advocates have all committed to continuing the work of *Fair go, sport!* and to promoting wider involvement in the project within their clubs.

A fuller list is provided as Appendix A. Importantly, the majority of Hockey Victoria member clubs were exposed to the *Fair go, sport!* message through pilot club special events.

Initiatives within hockey were followed keenly beyond hockey, with the project featured in multiple press reports and other publications and presentations at a number of conferences, including the following:

- Media
  - 7.30 program (ABC)
  - The Age
  - Herald Sun
  - Local and community newspapers
  - GLBTI-specific publications and radio programs
  - Vicsport and ‘Play by the Rules’ newsletters

- Conferences and forums
  - The Asia Regional OutGames Human Rights Conference (NZ)
  - Sport and Recreation Victoria’s Executive Officer Network
  - The Vicsport Members Sports Talk Forum
  - The Sports Management Association of Australia and New Zealand (SMAANZ) Conference
  - National Equal Opportunity Conference
  - The Australasian Evaluation Society Conference.
Pre-project context of activism, evidence of heterosexism and homophobia in sport in Australia, and increased funding for sport participation.

### April-June
- Selection of sport
- June: Hockey confirmed as the project’s state sporting organisation partner

### May 2010
- Project funding starts
- Steering Committee formed

### Aug 2010
- 1st Steering Committee meeting
- Members explicit in wanting ‘positive approaches’

### Sept 2010
- Project mapping workshop (led by evaluation team)
- Asset-based, action learning approach adopted
- Project aim re-worded to better reflect the project approach
- Key outcomes, indicators & framework are finalised

### Oct 2010
- Hockey Victoria & VEOHRC have to cancel two planned open meetings due to lack of attendees

### Nov 2010
- Project represented at Midsumma Carnival & Pride March (Hockey Victoria CEO Ben Hartung joins the parade)

### Dec 2010
- Project funding extended

### Jan 2011
- Project name & logo agreed by Steering Committee
- Presentation made to the Hockey Victoria Presidents’ meeting
- Call for EOIs from potential pilot clubs
- Literature review completed
- Online gender identity & sexuality attitudes & opinions survey completed
- Hockey Victoria re-launches Code of Conduct, endorsed by CEO Ben Hartung

### Feb 2011
- 4 pilot clubs finalised:
  - Camberwell HC
  - Old Carey HC
  - Werribee HC
  - Baw Baw HC

### March 2011
- 1st Project Advocate reflection meeting
- Werribee HC revises its registration day information and players’ handbook, and adopts new slogans in the light of the project

### Project Champions identified
- Project media launch
- Presentation on the project at the Asia Regional OutGames, Wellington NZ
Fair go, sport! A work in progress

April 2011

Peter Gourlay and Ben Hartung present to the Hockey Australia Council Forum

Gillian Fletcher and Peter Gourlay meet with the Old Carey HC committee

Hockey Victoria participates in International Day Against Homophobia (IDAHO)

Fair go, sport! special events:
- Camberwell HC pitch opening (Camberwell HC vs Waverley HC)
- Camberwell HC play Baw Baw HC
- U13 & U15 Boys’ and Girls’ State Junior Championship held in Melbourne; Fair go, sport! is promoted throughout the tournament

May 2011

Fair go, sport! cup held in Canberra, to mark Men’s Round 1 of the AHL

Ben Hartung & Peter Gourlay attend Camberwell HC Committee meeting

2nd Project Advocate reflection & brainstorming meeting: ‘What You Say Matters’ poster idea

Idea of rainbow socks takes shape

June 2011

Peter Gourlay meets Baw Baw HC representatives & Waverley HC committee to talk about the project

Facilitated Steering Committee discussion held: ‘What is the ideal club?’ to learn more about club culture

Fair go, sport! special events:
- Old Carey HC project launch
- Werribee HC Family Day (Werribee develops its own version of the ‘What You Say Matters’ poster, plus wristbands and business cards)
- Evaluation workshops

July 2011

Hockey Australia commits to linking the ‘What You Say Matters’ idea to its coaching accreditation and training, through development of a ‘What You Say Matters’ resource kit

Hockey Victoria secures funding from VicHealth, to promote the inclusion of women and girls

Fair go, sport! special events:
- Old Carey HC project launch
- Elite hockey player Gus Johnston publishes a YouTube video, talking about how he stayed in the closet during his playing career and how it affected him

September 2011

Hockey Victoria hosts the U15 Boys’ National Championship; Fair go, sport! is promoted throughout the tournament

Annual Hockey Victoria stakeholder survey adopts questions from the Fair go, sport! survey

August 2011

Fair go, sport! special events:
- Old Carey HC project launch
- Werribee HC Family Day (Werribee develops its own version of the ‘What You Say Matters’ poster, plus wristbands and business cards)
- Evaluation workshops

October 2011

Old Carey HC launches an official Code of Conduct, with specific reference to sexuality and gender identity

Project promoted during U17 Boys’ & Girls’ State Junior Championships, held in Melbourne

November 2011

Beyond Nov 2011:
- Fair go, sport! cups to continue on an annual basis
- Hockey presence at Midsumma Festival, including a Fair go, sport! forum
- Review of Member Protection Policy
- Bridie creates (and fills) FGS committee post at Camberwell HC

Gillian Fletcher October 2011
Factors contributing to project achievements

'This open-ended approach leaves you alive to possibilities that you would never have thought of in the beginning.'

Polash Larsen
Old Carey HC Project Advocate
Factors contributing to project achievements

As part of the evaluation process, the project partners, the Steering Committee, Project Officer and Project Advocates were asked to identify the factors they considered contributed to the achievements of the project. A series of brainstorming and reflection exercises resulted in identification of the following five key areas:

1. **Project process (including evaluation approach)**
2. **Paying attention to the complex, emotional, human aspects of the project**
3. **Branding**
4. **Commitment, expertise and representation**
5. **Use of networks to ‘spread the word’**

**Project process**

The positivity, openness and flexibility of the project’s asset-based, action learning methodology won praise all round. At the project partners’ evaluation workshop (involving the Commission, ASC, Hockey Victoria and Hockey Australia), one participant noted the project did not have a ‘cargo cult mentality, flying a complete set of activities in’. Instead, participants noted ‘the tone of the project’ was: ‘bring it and share it’.\(^{36}\) During an evaluation workshop meeting, the Commission’s Community Relations Unit Manager Yvonne Kelley won nods of agreement when she stated: ‘I think we all agree that part of the power of the project was that it unfolded and it took us in directions that we had not anticipated in the beginning’. Similar comments were made at Steering Committee level, from the project advocates, the ASC, Hockey Victoria and Hockey Australia. A committee member from another pilot club commented: ‘There was no “you have to do this”, no fixed formula forced on the pilot clubs. The idea was there and we were able to run with it.’

Special mention was made of the role that Project Officer Peter Gourlay played in encouraging, cajoling and reassuring people that there was no ‘fixed formula’ (outside of the action learning approach). Comments included: ‘Peter’s mantra was that there is no right or wrong here, we are learning as we go along’.\(^{37}\)

During the project, several people who were closely associated with *Fair go, sport!* admitted that they had initially been somewhat cynical of whether or not the project could, in fact, move beyond ‘lip service’ and ‘motherhood statements’, given the short timeframe. One Steering Committee member noted:

> I thought there would be some policies and there would be some things written down and there would be some engagement with some people and that it would turn out to be more of a branding exercise than anything practical happening. I thought it would be really difficult to do anything concrete in that short period of time.

Nonetheless, the process was not without its challenges. Not least of these was the need to overcome a strong expectation that there would be a prescribed set of activities, to be implemented at club level. This expectation is indicative of deeply entrenched practices within sports organisations, as noted in the quote from Shelley Maher, then-VicHealth representative on the Steering Committee (page 24).

Indeed, at one meeting between Project Officer Peter Gourlay, evaluator Gillian Fletcher and the Old Carey HC committee, one member commented that he was expecting to be ‘told what to do’.\(^{38}\) In the early stages of the project,

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36 Project Partner evaluation workshop, August 2011

37 Pilot club committee member, evaluation workshop August 2011.

38 Meeting notes, Fletcher, 2011.
there was also a desire to have a clearly defined ‘product’, to be achieved through a defined set of activities. At one of the evaluation workshops held to reflect on the project, Ben Hartung, Hockey Victoria CEO, said:

“It was incredibly hard at the start for Peter [Gourlay, Project Officer] and others to talk to the clubs [about becoming a pilot club] because there were just questions. It’s easier to ‘sell’ something definitive, but the project was the product. The unknown has been the beauty of this project.

Having a project that unfolded step-by-step, as the pilot clubs and project partners identified and clarified their own opportunities for action, was disconcerting for some initially. Project Officer Peter Gourlay admitted that ‘the process is a challenging one, and it is very much a case of having to experience it’. However, he added: ‘I also think for a lot of people there was a lot of reassurance in the fact that they weren’t going to be required to do things that they weren’t ready for, or that didn’t reflect their club.’

Camberwell HC Project Advocates Bridie Walsh and Jenny Sach summed up the conflict between structure and openness in a discussion during one of the regular project advocate reflection meetings. Bridie noted that ‘at times, I felt like it would have been easier to have been given a kit, especially in relation to key messages’, to which Jenny added: ‘If you have to follow a kit, you have to change yourself to fit that kit. But like this, we worked from where we were.’ Later, Bridie reflected:

Having no template to roll out...was a big challenge, but the way it was set up was to then invite us back and workshop our ideas, share a space and brainstorm to come up with possible next steps. And Peter [Project Officer] was invaluable; he walked along with the choices we made and brought along whatever stuff we needed and supported us.

Perhaps the greatest indicator of the importance of the project process to the overall project success comes from the fact that Hockey Victoria has decided to adopt a similar approach to a new project it is conducting through the VicHealth State Sporting Associations Participation Funding round. This project aims to increase participation by women and girls. Andrew Skillern, Hockey Victoria Operations Manager, said:

“In the past our projects have been very much ‘we are going to do this, this, this, this, x,y,z’. What we have liked about this project [Fair go, sport!] has been that there is no fixed formula, it has allowed us to explore much more. We are now much more confident at asking: ‘What is it about our governance and our structure and about hockey in Victoria that inhibits women from being involved? Why do women leave hockey?’ We will do that now, instead of just running some extra competitions for women for example. It will be very much about: ‘Let’s find out where we are at.’ Now we are going to do this the Fair go, sport! way.

Andrew’s views were supported by CEO Ben Hartung, who stated the project process encouraged Hockey Victoria to ‘take time out, as a board and staff, to look at the bigger strategic picture. If we hadn’t had something like this project we would more than likely be stuck in that grind of going through weekly affiliate issues rather than reflecting on “What do we stand for?”’ He added he had been informed that Hockey Victoria’s application for the VicHealth participation and inclusion funding was viewed ‘far more favourably because of our involvement in Fair go, sport!, and the underlying principles of the project’.

I think that [sports funding bodies] are phenomenally prescriptive to sports clubs... usually [the clubs] are given something and they will implement it as we tell them.

Shelley Maher, then-Manager, Physical Activity unit/Participation and Equity for Health section, VicHealth. Steering Committee meeting February 18, 2011
The role of the evaluation in contributing to the project process

The *Fair go, sport!* Project Officer, project advocates and other partners have all stated that the collaborative nature of the evaluation, and its commitment to ongoing, project learning, was integral to the success of the project. Project Officer Peter Gourlay commented:

The evaluation is also part of the project and many of the evaluation strategies have played a role in the development of the project. Right from the word go almost, in terms of the project matrix, the workshopping, the design of [the survey, frameworks for discussion questions] and so on…Your contribution has been the consultation, the advice, the facilitation, the provision of space for reflection.

Sometimes, with your questions it feels a little bit uncomfortable; I might not know the answers, but the questions are ones that make me reflect. Your role is largely to do that. There have been questions around information gathering, also guidance around process, questions about the process. Lots of ‘what ifs?’ and the main question: ‘Why?’ The big difference between this model and other standard [evaluation] models is that we didn't want ‘what happened and was it successful’, we wanted a ‘what could happen, why, and how’. We were always interested in the why and how.39

Paying attention to the complex, emotional, human aspects of the project

Sexuality and gender identity are contentious, highly emotive topics people are often happy to leave out of conversation. Yet, if we are to contribute to breaking down the invisible walls of silence that often surround GLBTI sports people, and increase participation and acceptance, conversations about sexuality, gender identity, and people’s right to feel included rather than excluded, need to occur. Why would anyone come out themselves, or talk about having a GLBTI relative or friend, if they did not feel safe in doing so, or were unsure how they would be received? Such silencing goes hand in hand with a deep desire within sport clubs to be seen as inclusive (see below).

*Fair go, sport!* has contributed to conversations on sexuality within the pilot clubs, within hockey in Victoria, and further afield. These conversations have occurred at the personal level and at the institutional level. For instance:

- pilot club committee members reported that they had begun to think about why they did not know of any gay men at their clubs, when there were out lesbians (this issue is discussed in more detail below).
- Andrew Skillern (Operations Manager, Hockey Victoria) reported that one of his personal friends, a teacher, had begun to pick up pupils on saying ‘that’s so gay’, as a result of their chats about the project and the issues involved.

‘What a load of crap this whole discussion is. People’s sexuality should not be a matter of public discourse. Politically correct rubbish. Find something better to do to improve our sport.’

Hockey Victoria online survey, 2010.

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39 Project Officer/Evaluator reflection meeting, October 2011
Ian Row, a Commission Communications Adviser, reported that ‘when I have been to [Fair go, sport! related] events, people have just come up to talk to me and to tell me things; like one player saying he had a lesbian sister, so the project really resonated with him’ (evaluation workshop, 2011).

Other sports have approached the Commission and expressed an interest in adopting Fair go, sport!

The ACT Minister for Sport expressed a desire to put homophobia on the agenda for the 2012 National Meeting of Sports Ministers, following a meeting with Fair go, sport! representatives.

VicSport invited Project Officer Peter Gourlay and Hockey Victoria CEO Ben Hartung to present at their AGM and Members’ Forum (in November 2011).

Acknowledgement of emotions

Anyone who doubts the human impact of acknowledging, or not acknowledging, GLBTI sportspeople needs only watch the video made by retired State and Essendon HC goalkeeper Gus Johnston. Gus played hockey for 19 years, but in all that time kept silent about his sexuality, in large part because he was afraid of the reactions he might face, if he told his club mates he was gay. In 2011, he chose to come out as gay in a YouTube video. His decision was prompted, in part, by the Fair go, sport! project. Before making the video link live, Gus called a meeting at Essendon and showed it to his teammates and colleagues. One of the men present that evening, Andrew Beck, later wrote a comment piece for The Age about his personal reaction to the video, stating:

Gus is a fearless hockey player and a natural leader. To realise that it had taken someone this courageous 32 years to open up to his friends was deeply upsetting. It was heartbreaking.

None of us had known, and none of us knew what to say...we sat there, dealing with the shock and the nasty realisation that we had all in some way contributed to our friend’s distress.

Beck’s overall reaction was one of support for Gus. But Gus had no way of knowing what reactions he would receive when he decided to show the video.

The reality is, as noted by a committee member from one pilot club: ‘I didn’t know which way people would jump. It is not a conversation that you usually have.’ One project advocate added:

One of the major stakeholders in our club is a conservative private school. It was a major concern for me, but it was my own fear. The question is: how well do I know these people, really? I had a fear of confrontation and that I would suddenly have to stand up and advocate for a position that I didn’t feel that informed about, I actually had the same fear when I spoke to my committee the first time. What if one of these people I have known for more than 20 years turns out to be a...nutcase and I don’t know?

All of the project advocates acknowledged feeling worried that they might ‘rock the boat’ in their clubs by taking up the Fair go, sport! project. When asked to brainstorm negative words that the project conjured up for them, the responses were telling:

Fear (of embarrassing people or of being embarrassed; plus fear of facing conflict), linked to:

- Shame
- Discomfort
- Cowardice (not raising issues, because of fear)

In relation to the last point, one of the project advocates revealed that ‘What you say matters’ posters put up at a pilot club had been taken down (the name of the club is not being revealed for reasons of confidentiality). The project advocate speculated about posters being removed from clubrooms and questioned their own bravery for not challenging the person who was believed to have removed the posters: ‘It is a challenge; maybe we needed to have more discussions? Maybe when the poster was torn down, I needed to go and say: “Why did you do that?” If it was motivated by prejudice, then it could be challenged. Hopefully a project like this, in small ways, allows people to start thinking differently.’

Ben Hartung and Andrew Skillern of Hockey Victoria and the project advocates all admitted that at the start of the project, they were also somewhat anxious that they may ‘say the wrong thing’, or inadvertently use an incorrect terminology when discussing Fair go, sport! issues. These anxieties were in large part resolved by the Commission’s development of a project glossary.

Renea Cooke, who came on board as Werribee Project Advocate partway through the project, described her experience of having discussions regarding the project as ‘like walking through a minefield, sometimes’, particularly when

40 Before making the video
42 Project Advocate reflection meeting notes, 2011
43 Project Advocate evaluation meeting, August 2011
44 Project Advocate evaluation meeting, August 2011
45 Project Advocates evaluation meeting, August 2011.
junior players were involved. Keith Sutton, Baw Baw HC Project Advocate, reported a similar experience: ‘I spoke to parents of our under 17s about the Fair go, sport! match they were playing against Camberwell. We had some very positive responses, plus “why are we shoving this down people’s throats?” But the kids themselves were very keen.’

Very careful messaging is required to deter some parents from making the (inaccurate) assumption that talking about sexuality within an environment equates to talking about sexual acts, which is something that some parents are very wary of. This was dealt with in the project by focusing on the importance of health and wellbeing for all young people, while highlighting the effect of heterosexism on the health and wellbeing of young people in Australia as demonstrated in the Writing Themselves In 3 report (and previous Writing Themselves In reports).46

To summarise, talking about – and thinking about – sexuality and gender identity is confronting on many levels and often seen as ‘inappropriate’, especially for junior teams. This view was expressed both within pilot clubs and by interviewees from non-pilot clubs. All of the above issues combine to create a situation in which sexuality and gender identity can swiftly become subsumed underneath the broad ‘participation and inclusion’ agenda. The risk here is that sexuality and gender identity once again become invisible, reinforcing a framework of ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ for GLBTI sports people.

Indeed, evidence of such slippage became clear during one of the evaluation reflection workshops. One project advocate reported that the club had decided to present Fair go, sport! to its junior members as being about general inclusion and participation, rather than being specifically about sexuality or gender identity because of concerns about parents’ reactions. (In other pilot clubs the response to this challenge was not to avoid talking about sexuality and gender identity once again become invisible, reinforcing a framework of ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ for GLBTI sports people.

Another project advocate reported that during a Code of Conduct review, committee members objected to specific reference to types of discrimination (including discrimination based on sexuality and gender identity) preferring to refer to ‘discrimination’ because ‘it covers everything; why do we have to pull out specific issues?’ The project advocate stood firm, and specific types of discrimination are mentioned in the revised Code of Conduct.

Of course we are inclusive!

Sports club members are highly invested in seeing their clubs as inclusive and accepting; oases of mateship and team spirit in which everyone pulls together towards the common aims of more members, a continuing club legacy, greater match success, and better facilities. This can result in what one project advocate described as ‘chest thumping statements of “look at me, look how inclusive I am”,’ made by club members on hearing about the Fair go, sport! project. The desire to defend the image of club inclusiveness in response to the existence of the project (and what was clearly perceived as the project’s threat to that unquestioned image of inclusiveness) resulted in attitudes such as these from pilot club hockey players:

Mate, I don’t care if they are pink, purple, blue or have sex with goats, as long as they can swing a stick it’s all right by me. Why do we even have to think about this? Can’t we just play hockey?

Can’t they just stay in the background? Why do we have to have this issue shoved down our throats?

When members of non-pilot clubs were interviewed as part of this evaluation, the perception of clubs as already being inclusive – and therefore having no need for a project such as Fair go, sport! – came through again and again. One interviewee stated:

I don’t think that we need to highlight it [sexuality and gender identity]. Um, for our club, I couldn’t see a purpose. It could cause, it might actually cause, another view point.

Interviewer: Okay, can you tell me more about that?

I mean people might not want to be participating in that [the project] and not want to be associated with it, so they all know we are one club and everyone is treated equal, when we try to identify specific groups or, try and equalise balance and that, that could cause problems. I won’t say will, but it could.

Another non-pilot club interviewee was similarly sure that his club was already accepting and, as such, felt that the issue of sexuality and gender identity was best left undiscussed:

I’m sure there is [sic] tens, 20 or 30 gay people playing at this club, but it’s not an issue for me...I don’t think it needs to be [discussed] at a club level, I don’t. The club is already accepting of that person; if they are a bad

46 Hillier, Lynne; Jones, Tiffany; Monagle, Marisa; Overton, Naomi; Ghan, Luke; Blackman, Jennifer & Mitchell, Anne (2010). Writing Themselves In 3. Melbourne, ARCSHS.
person, they will probably get shunted out; if they are a good person, they will probably be kept in here regardless of, you know, um, whether they are homosexual or transgender or whatever they want to be, so I don’t think that it is an issue, to be honest.

As noted earlier, sport is ‘also a place where GLBTI Australians are largely invisible, silent and marginalised’. GLBTI people participate in mainstream sport, but they often do so by disappearing into the background and not challenging insidiously heterosexist comments or behaviours. This disappearance can be unthinkingly supported by non-GLBTI players and club members assuming that just because there are no out players at a club, there are no GLBTI players at the club. As the committee member of one pilot club admitted: ‘Until recently, we hadn’t thought about this question [does a club assume that everyone is straight?]’. We acted implicitly as though everyone was the same.’ One project advocate reported:

I have played in the Women’s Vets team and towards the end of the season we would have a get together; some of the husbands would come along and do a barbie, but one of the women never brought anyone along. Then one year she finally brought two women along…One of the women was her partner, and she said: ‘I didn’t know if everyone would accept her’. She had played with us for years and she had never said about her partner and we had never known that she was frightened to bring her partner along, because of how we might react.

This incident, which took place about three years before the Fair go, sport! project, had obviously made a major impact on the project advocate.

She had been forced to question her own vision of the club to which she belonged. Yvonne Kelley, the Commission’s Community Relations Unit Manager, summed the issue up as: ‘In your own mind, a club is inclusive if that club includes you.’

Hockey must be inclusive, because we have out lesbian players

One of the arguments used by some people in hockey to defend the inclusiveness of their sport is that there are several out, lesbian hockey players (including at the national level). Trish Heberle, the Project Champion, was one such player; however at the project launch she reported that she had been outed, rather than choosing to come out herself.

Time and again, reference was made to the existence of lesbian players in hockey. Gay, bisexual, transgender of intersex people were, however, largely invisible. Keith Sutton, Project Advocate from Baw Baw HC, stated:

At our club, we have a few players that are recognised as gay, but only within select groups. It is not open. When we were talking about wearing the [rainbow] socks, a comment I got was: ‘Oh, but you’re not going to speak to so and so and so and so, are you? They don’t really want to make it known’.

This was consistent across pilot and non-pilot clubs, in conversations about the project, and in project participants’ experiences over many years of playing or being involved in hockey, from club to state level. Gus Johnston’s story is, of course, telling in this regard. One male hockey player from a non-pilot club revealed in interview that he had been outed against his will, then added:

Strangely many of the players that I’ve been playing with, I’d been playing with for four or five years, a couple of them kind of suspected that I might be gay, but you know, it was one of those taboo topics you just don’t talk about.

In the survey carried out early in the project to ascertain attitudes regarding gender identity and sexuality within the Victorian hockey community, respondents were asked to respond ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to the following questions:

- Do you think a lesbian would feel able to take her girlfriend to a social event at YOUR hockey club?
- Do you think a lesbian would feel able to take her girlfriend to a social event at MOST hockey clubs?

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47 Challenging Homophobia in Sport Initiative, 2009: 3
48 Project Partners feedback workshop, 2011
49 Launch minutes, May 2011
50 Project Advocates evaluation workshop, August 2011
51 Non-pilot club interviewee
Do you think a gay man would feel able to take his boyfriend to a social event at YOUR hockey club?

Do you think a gay man would feel able to take his boyfriend to a social event at MOST hockey clubs?

There was a marked difference between responses for ‘your’ and ‘most’ hockey clubs, and a marked difference between responses for the questions on lesbians and gay men. A total of 95 per cent of respondents said a lesbian would feel comfortable taking her partner to a social event at their club; whereas only 77 per cent said a gay man would feel comfortable. When asked about ‘most’ clubs, responses dropped to 75 per cent and 41 per cent respectively. The purpose of citing these figures is not to offer some quantified ‘measure’ of responses but to indicate important differences in respondents’ sense of the ‘acceptability’ of lesbians in hockey as opposed to gay men in hockey – and also to highlight again the desire for club members to perceive their own clubs as inclusive.

Of note here is the intersection between stereotypical thinking regarding gender and sexuality, which runs along the lines of: lesbians must be ‘butch’ and slightly ‘manly’, so they play sports that are perceived as ‘tough’. (And ergo, all women who play those sports are at risk of being stereotyped and labelled as lesbian). As one respondent to the project survey noted:

It doesn’t seem as bad these days, but when I was a teenager I was bullied about being butch, just because I played hockey...I was a pure heterosexual, who always had boyfriends, but I was still bullied, just because I played hockey.

Gay men, on the other hand, are ‘feminine’ and ‘unmanly’, so avoid all contact sports. One of the non-pilot club interviewees stated: ‘I really don’t know about gay guys playing, so on the whole I’m not sure how many of them are inclined to play a really rough contact sport’.

Fair go, sport! raised awareness of these stereotypical assumptions within pilot clubs, and was instrumental in starting discussions on the invisibility of gay men in the sport. Polash Larsen, Project Advocate for Old Carey HC, said:

I asked the question [among a group of male players]: ‘You know, some of the best women players in our club have been gay, and they are individuals that I personally look up to and respect and admire, but in 20 years of playing in this club, there has never been a situation where a man has felt able to come out. What does that tell us about our culture?’ The conversation went from someone wanting to show how open they were, to a more thoughtful discussion.

Polash also referred to what he described as one player’s ‘transformational realisation that a gay friend who was part of the social group and who had come to games and social events for years could not be tempted on to the field for love nor money.’ He added: ‘The player had never thought before about gay men maybe feeling uncomfortable about playing sport because of risk of discrimination.’

Gender and sexuality policing

Stating that this project is a success is not the same as claiming that a 16-month project carried out in four pilot clubs in one state sporting association is more than just the start of the work needed to effectively ensure that sport is a safe and inclusive environment for GLBTI people. Throughout the project, examples arose of the types of ongoing, insidious policing of gender and sexuality norms that continues to contribute to the invisibility and silencing of GLBTI people. These are included here as a reminder of the fact that Fair go, sport! has succeeded in starting conversations, not in eliminating explicit and implicit homophobia and transphobia from hockey as a sport.

'I like my company to be young, white male heterosexuals, because this is what I am. I do not detest all others, but by the same token I prefer to be around my own kind.'

Hockey Victoria online survey, 2010.
Some examples of this have already been covered (for instance the presumption that gay men do not play hockey). Other examples included all Project Advocates agreeing that they had heard players and coaches use gender and sexuality stereotypes such as ‘You play like a girl’ and ‘That’s so gay’. As noted by Grant Weir, Hockey Australia’s Game Development Manager, the use of such terms by coaches is particularly concerning: ‘Teams will often meld around the attitudes and values of their coaches and captains. They set the environment there, the culture. Most definitely. They are the ones who tell other players: “This is who we are.”’

A total of 18 people who identified as coaches responded to the project survey question: ‘During a match, a player calls a member of the opposing team “queer” or “butch” or “faggot”…What do you think about this behaviour?’ Response options given were:

- a) It’s against a Code of Conduct
- b) It’s acceptable tactics to put the other player off their game
- c) It’s just done in the heat of the moment and not to be taken seriously.

Three of the coaches chose option c. The same option was also chosen by one of three survey respondents who identified as an umpire.

Such attitudes simply reinforce the sense that either being a girl, or being gay, is somehow lesser than being a boy, or being straight. One project advocate who has children who also play hockey, even reported: ‘When I got involved in this, my mother said: “How dare you do this to your children? Now everyone will think they are gay”.’

At best, the children’s grandmother believed that being gay would leave them vulnerable to abuse; at worst, she did not want anyone thinking her grandchildren were gay (because it diminished them (and her). Despite this, the project advocates 15-year-old son (who is also a hockey player) is an advocate for the project in his own right. He proudly trains in a pair of rainbow socks – despite having been jeered at for being ‘gay’ when attending Under 16s hockey training.

Grant Weir of Hockey Australia, who has a long-term engagement with sport both as an administrator and as a player, noted:

In a sporting environment, often, if someone sees you have done something that is seen as weak, then, automatically it’s: ‘That’s so gay’. And it can be a world of Benny Hill-like double entendres, especially among the guys. That is ingrained in them. I have never seen any physical violence around this issue in sport; I believe that the vast majority of people I have been involved with over countless years in the sporting world would never think of bashing someone who was supposedly gay, but there are constant putdowns and so-called jokes. The big change will be when someone says something like: ‘You’re gay!’ and someone else in the club challenges them on it, or just says: ‘Have you really thought about what you’re saying?’

For Grant, a volunteer baseball team coach in his spare time, involvement in the project personally encouraged him to begin to challenge his young players on homophobic and sexist language. Similarly, the project advocate’s 15-year-old son (referred to above) still wears his socks (along with a Fair go, sport! badge) and tells his peers that he is doing so to show support for people’s rights. Other young hockey players are not as enlightened. One non-pilot club interviewee reported that, at her club:

There’s a lot of homophobia…like the majority of the first three teams are still in high school and a girl at the club was talking to me about being gay earlier this year, and was expressing how homophobic people were and [she] was finding that really, really stressful. I sort of didn’t see that, and then I was chatting to some of her friends only a few weeks ago, and they were saying things that I thought were clearly homophobic, and so I can sort of see where she was coming from.

Another non-pilot club interviewee, who identified as gay himself, said:

We need to get out of this state of apathy and consider that our club is diverse and [we have to] just not think of people as numbers, of trying to get 15 players on the team…certainly my experience when I’ve been on the field [is that] every now and again, one of my fellow players will make a homophobic comment, but actually not be mindful that it’s a homophobic comment unless somebody mentions it to them, you know after the match.

**Branding and visibility**

As noted earlier, a project ‘brand’ and associated materials in and of themselves will never effectively combat heterosexism, no matter how attractive and brightly coloured. Indeed, it was noted by Project Officer Peter Gourlay that while use of the rainbow flag has particular significance among the GLBTI community, it has often been used without regard to ‘the unwritten rules’ about what its use signifies but, rather, simply as ‘a marketing tool’. Nonetheless, given the project’s message of openness and visibility and previous comments on...
the cost of silence and exclusion to GLBTI people, a clearly identifiable project ‘brand’ was important. Writing Themselves in 3 reports how GLBTI young people felt safer in schools that actively acknowledged their existence. Similarly visibility was found to be an important factor in the successful implementation of the Ally Network at the University of Western Australia, which aimed “to create a more diverse and inclusive culture at UWA by promoting greater visibility and awareness of... GLBTI staff and students and their issues.”

The brand is best represented by the logo, based on the national hockey logo. As noted at a project reflection workshop:

The logo emphasised the support of the National Sporting Organisation for the whole project and meant that it was also easily transferable to other states’ events. Other sports should keep this in mind from the outset...that where possible, even if one particular state is the pilot, that they should incorporate their NSO’s logo which would also help forward planning if it’s rolled out in other states.

Successful development of the logo and associated project materials was made possible by the involvement of the Commission’s Communications Adviser Ian Row throughout the project. Money was set aside from the budget to ensure this contribution was guaranteed.

A clear achievement of the logo and associated materials produced was in helping to get conversations started. An Old Carey HC committee member reported how, in his club, no one had really asked about Fair go, sport! until ‘at one point we ended up having a beer together after training and we had brought the Fair go, sport! banner along.’ He added: That got everyone talking. People started asking questions.

To date, the rainbow socks have been the greatest conversation starters, although not all of these conversations have been supportive. Jenny Sach, Camberwell HC Project Advocate, reported: ‘At the under 17s night, where they wore the socks, I heard a comment where someone said: “I really like those socks”, but when someone told him what they were for, he said: “I won’t bloody well be wearing them, then!”’. Even such negative comments open up the possibility of conversations in which heterosexism can be identified and challenged.

In addition, the project branding and materials enabled those who support inclusion to feel proud of hockey and to feel that they were part of something positive, rather than feeling silenced (as can so easily happen). One non-pilot club interviewee said:

I remember chatting to a hockey friend about it [after the project was announced] and saying, isn’t it cool that this was happening in our sport...I love diversity and it upsets me to see people who can’t embrace that diversity... being a hockey player I thought [Fair go, sport!] is pretty cool...that the Hockey Victoria people recognise that this was a good issue to jump aboard and be representative of and yeah, that was a bit of hockey pride.

Old Carey HC Project Advocate Polash Larsen reflected:

Now that we have had our event, it is an amazing way of building momentum. It was just amazing. It was the success of a really small, under-resourced club that doesn’t have [enough of its own] money to make the banner or the socks, but for us, just to put on something like that, display the banner, wear the socks and hand out a couple of medals, the impact was terrific.

The project’s level of media coverage – and opportunities for the pilot clubs and Hockey Victoria to be involved with the media – must also be recognised here. In its initial stages, the project was ‘a hard media sell’ in that there were no tangible products to describe, such as training sessions. Nor were there ‘sexy’ messages, despite the Herald Sun incorrectly reporting that the project was asking GLBTI sports people to ‘come out’.

As the project went on, however, media interest grew as activities occurred. Each of the pilot clubs contacted their local media and received coverage for special events held. The value of support from the Commission throughout the process of developing media releases and speaking to representatives of the media was acknowledged by project advocates and Hockey Victoria. Andrew Skillern, Hockey Victoria Operations Manager, said:

We don’t have a full-time media adviser, so things like the media, the media launch, the media releases; personally, being involved with that, with radio interviews and speaking publicly about the project, I think they were all positive professional development opportunities.

54 Above n 46.
55 Skene, Judy; Hogan, Josh; de Vries, Jennifer & Goody, Allan (2008). The ALLY Network at The University of Western Australia: The Early Years. Crawley, WA, UWA.
56 Group work output, Reflection workshop, October 2011
Commitment, expertise and representation

This project has been exceptional for the degree of commitment shown by everyone involved. Yvonne Kelley, the Commission’s Community Relations Unit Manager, noted that everyone who was contractually involved in the project had contributed far more than was either required or expected. Project Officer Peter Gourlay also played a crucial role. During group work with project partners as part of the project evaluation, the following comment was recorded:

‘This project worked well because of Peter for a number of reasons: his community links, his outgoing nature, his human rights background and regular communication and fantastic planning capability. Additionally there was a consistent message [from Peter] to the club advocates: “There is no right or wrong way to do this.”

This combination of expertise and approach led the same group to note that, in their opinion, a dedicated resource outside the SSA to guide and support practice was fundamental:

Most SSAs are already lightly resourced and without an external Project Officer, the project is likely to not have the required level of time/commitment as it would be dealt with in between normal sport operations and perhaps lose its way and be ineffective through loss of momentum.

This point must be considered in relation to resources available; nonetheless, it reflects a clear need for someone to be able to give ongoing priority to project implementation and practice support, without being pulled into working on day-to-day activities of an SSA.

The commitment and dedication to the project of Hockey Victoria’s two senior managers was noted by everyone involved in Fair go, sport!. They received no financial benefit for participating in the project, but took on an enormous amount of extra work, often at weekends and evenings.

The way in which Hockey Victoria’s relationship with the pilot clubs has shifted as a result of the project is remarkable. Comments from project advocates included:

Hockey Victoria is now a partner in our goals, not just the administrative body that puts people under the pump.

There can be a perception that Hockey Victoria is a big, faceless organisation that just takes fees. But Ben [CEO]…and Andrew [Operations Manager], talking to committee members, talking to players at events; it has all been so important.

I think this has shown that senior leadership is not just thinking about hockey on the pitch, but also about health and the broader sport.

Steering Committee members faithfully attended meetings and offered their ideas and enthusiasm; as one of them stated: ‘We all need to not just come to meetings, but to do something; to make actions that create change’. Hockey Australia was actively engaged in the Steering Committee and other activities. The project advocates, of course, took on their roles on top of already having heavy volunteer commitments within their own clubs. Their combined passion for, and commitment to, the sport of hockey and to the Fair go, sport! project, is to be applauded.

While the project advocates held different roles within different types of clubs and came from different backgrounds, the following similarities are of note:

* In each instance, the person who became a project advocate was the same person who first showed interest in the project, discussed the project informally with the Project Officer, then took it upon themselves to convince the rest of the club committee to submit an official expression of interest. In two instances, this person was the club president; in two instances it was not. 58

* Prior to becoming involved in the project, the project advocates shared a personal commitment to issues of social justice, as demonstrated either in their work life outside of hockey, or in the position they held within the hockey club. For example, one Camberwell

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58 In interviews with members of non-pilot clubs, carried out as part of the evaluation, one participant reported that he had been extremely interested in getting his club to become one of the pilot clubs but was unsuccessful, and reported: “there seems to be a fair amount of apathy and they see that there are higher priorities other than talking about a person’s sexuality in the club and how the club handles that” (non-pilot club interviewee 2).
Project Advocate is the club’s volunteer Member Protection Information Officer; the other works for an international non-governmental organisation; Old Carey’s Project Advocate is involved in arts participation; Werribee’s first Project Advocate was just starting a PhD on sport and inclusion as *Fair go, sport!* began; and Baw Baw’s Project Advocate works in mental health.

There is no ‘template’ for finding a good project advocate; rather, *Fair go, sport!* shows that within hockey, and no doubt within all sporting codes, there are people who are already committed to, and willing to promote, the values of diversity and equity. What they need is opportunity, support and approaches that harness their enthusiasm and skills.

**Use of networks to ‘spread the word’**

Anyone who has read thus far can be left in no doubt as to the effectiveness of Project Officer Peter Gourlay in liaising with an extensive range of people, organisations and local, state or federal government departments and representatives. The Steering Committee contained representatives from GLBTI organisations including RJM Trust, Transgender Victoria, and Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria (GLHV). Researcher Caroline Symons (lead author on the influential *Come Out To Play* report) was also a member. Sports and health organisations represented on the Steering Committee included Sports and Recreation Victoria, VicHealth, and representatives from every level of hockey: Hockey Australia, Hockey Victoria, the Central Victoria Hockey Association and Parkville Women’s Hockey Club (the only lesbian-identified club in the state hockey league). The ASC was also represented.

Steering Committee members – and, by extension, the networks represented by those members – were kept regularly informed of project activities and plans through invitations to all events and regular, written updates from the Project Officer. At the Steering Committee evaluation workshop, it was acknowledged that these updates and clear information flows helped to keep members actively engaged in the project, rather than feeling removed from the ‘action’.

In addition, news of *Fair go, sport!* was regularly shared across Hockey Victoria (e.g. by presentations at the Presidents’ Meeting, by regular updates from CEO Ben Hartung and by the *Fair go, sport!* web page linked (from the Hockey Victoria site) and within Hockey Australia (for example through a project presentation to the Hockey Australia CEO meeting, Council Forum, links to state and territory affiliates’ websites and the ACT *Fair go, sport!* cup). Other sports have expressed an interest in becoming involved in *Fair go, sport!* (for example rugby, skating and bowls) while local, state and federal politicians have shown support for *Fair go, sport!* special events, as well as expressing an interest in seeing *Fair go, sport!* extended to their geographical areas.

The importance of relationships was stressed throughout the project evaluation process, underlining the points made earlier regarding the importance of acknowledging the human aspects of the project. Key relationships were described in two evaluation reflection workshops as those that existed between:

- Hockey Victoria and Hockey Australia
- project advocates, encouraged by the project advocates reflection meetings
- project advocates and their pilot club
- pilot clubs
- pilot clubs and other clubs.

‘When we heard that senior people from Hockey Victoria were coming down to our event, we were really impressed.’

Pilot club committee member.
In hindsight...

‘If we have the luxury of continuing… would we do it differently? Of course. Because we have been through that process and we have thought about it and we are not threatened by it; we have refined our story.’

Peter Gourlay, evaluation feedback workshop, November 2011
As noted, evaluation-led feedback and reflection occurred throughout the life of the project in order to allow adjustments to be made as the project progressed. Further, the asset-based nature of the project is such that this report focuses mainly on what worked well, and what can be learned from those successes. Nonetheless, this section will present some of the key reflections that arose during the life of the project (as identified by project participants, throughout the project and during the evaluation process). These need to be considered in tandem with the section ‘Factors contributing to project achievements.’

There is conflict between processes of ongoing learning, and outcomes-focused systems with short-term funding

While the project has achieved great things, its primary achievement has been to develop an action learning impetus to drive cultural change that has genuine ownership and commitment at a pilot club, state and national level within the sport of hockey.

Further, it is creating waves of interest beyond the code of hockey. This impetus must be both sustained and enhanced if it is to contribute to wider-ranging, long-term change in attitudes and behaviours. To quote Project Officer Peter Gourlay: ‘Ultimately, this is not about just making a fantastic project for hockey; it is about sport in Australia.’

The project advocates felt particularly strongly that, as Polash Larsen put it: ‘We have just started these important conversations; there hasn’t been a chance to really embed [the project message] yet.’ His colleague from the Old Carey HC Committee, Cameron James, added: ‘Because we have done something this year, it has given us an impetus, it makes people feel included; but it has to be an ongoing commitment’. Renea Cooke from Werribee added: ‘This project is just a baby. It needs nurturing,’ Keith Sutton from Baw Baw HC added: ‘If you want real engagement, you have to be thinking two years at least.’

Project Officer Peter Gourlay was left with a series of questions:

- How do we support the embedding of the project across hockey, and into other codes?
- Where do we find the resources? Everyone wants there to be a legacy of change, but how do we maintain the project integrity and the learning we have achieved? How do we make it sustainable? The pilot clubs have now got to a certain stage, but how do we keep moving on?

At the time of writing, the project’s 16-month funding period (which was already an extension on the original one year period) has finished. The ASC and the Commission are exploring how best to ensure the project leaves a legacy and contributes to further work; post-project ideas being explored by the ASC include educational and development opportunities with national sporting organisations (NSOs) through workshops and webinars. The Commission is also working to develop a Phase 2 project, with shared funding from other state agencies and the Commission itself to enable them to:

- maintain momentum and build community interest
- build sustainability within hockey to support lasting cultural change
- extend reach into another sporting code.
Equally, many of the club-based initiatives highlighted in this report are designed to ensure momentum is maintained into the future.

Nonetheless, cultural change projects do not sit easily within traditional project funding cycles, or within traditional project systems that require end of project evaluation before consideration is given to future funding (thereby inevitably resulting in a hiatus). An alternative model would be to learn from and respond to ongoing evaluation processes (such as this) before the end of a funding cycle, thereby reducing risk of loss of impetus. In a training model, activities can be completed, assessed then perhaps re-run at a later date. In this sense, the project product – the training – is not lost. But in the words of Hockey Victoria CEO Ben Hartung, with *Fair go, sport!* ‘the project was the product’.

**Funding cycles need to recognise the realities of sports seasons**

Sport is an arena in which timing is everything. The sports season runs to its own specific calendar, yet the original funding was due to run out before one whole hockey season had been completed. This arrangement came about because funding commenced before the sporting code had been selected. The four month funding extension provided by ASC and the Commission allowed the project to run till the end of the 2011 hockey season. Keith Sutton, Project Advocate from Baw Baw HC, was adamant that the timing of projects in terms of the sporting season needs to be considered: ‘You need to engage [hockey] clubs when they are at their most active, which is during the winter season.’

**Explicitness about, and role modelling of, the action learning process could help to get conversations started earlier**

While everyone involved in the project identified use of the asset-based, action learning methodology as one of the project’s great strengths, this is also an area where (in hindsight) more could have been done to assist the process.

The nature of action learning is such that there is no prescribed formula to follow. When an action learning approach is adopted in any arena, the early stages of such projects are characterised by the need to build relationships, trust and confidence in the action learning process. Yet, as already noted, sport is an arena where prescribed formulae are expected. It is possible that this expectation exacerbates the need to build confidence in the action learning process, within the sports arena.

This does not mean that *Fair go, sport!* should have adopted a more prescriptive approach but, rather, that the project may have been enhanced if the thinking behind action learning, and the clear steps involved in an action learning process, were articulated more clearly at the start. Here are two situations in which such an approach could have been taken:

1. **Early stage discussions between project advocates and club committees**

Stronger initial support and mentoring of conversations and reflection within clubs (specifically at a committee level), as well as continued reassurance that action may start tentatively, but will become less tentative and more dynamic as the project matures, may have helped to reduce anxiety and uncertainty among the project advocates and pilot clubs in the earliest days of the project.

Commission Communications Adviser Ian Row reported that in his experience with the project advocates and the pilot clubs ‘there was a time where it was “so what do we do? Can we do this?”’ He added that a contributing factor here was that the project advocates were not mentored to use action learning with their committees in the early days of the project. ‘The relationship between the Project Advocates and their committees, especially in the beginning, was not very tight or supportive,’ he said. ‘I think one of the parts that was hard was about when the advocates had to actually look into their clubs; what their attitudes were, and then, well if that is what we actually think, what can we do as a result of that; let’s talk about this as a committee.’

Closer mentoring in the action learning process may have been of help here.

This should not be read as a criticism of the *Fair go, sport!* project but, rather, as a reflection for future interventions (and, hopefully, for the future of *Fair go, sport!*). As Project Officer Peter Gourlay noted: ‘We must never forget that for a lot of people, there was a lot of reassurance in the fact that they weren’t going to be required to do things that they weren’t ready for, or that didn’t reflect their club’. He also reiterated the importance of learning from doing:

We had to go through a process; we tried things out and we learnt. If we have the luxury of continuing the relationship with the four pilot clubs, and if we can bring in a few more pilot clubs because we can find a few more resources to do that, would we do it differently? Of course. Because we have been through that process, and we have thought about it, and we are not threatened by it; we have refined our story. But I think we could have been a little bit more explicit without being too directive.
2. Use of action learning to bring to life the results of the online project survey regarding attitudes to GLBTI people in hockey

As noted in the section ‘Project objectives and anticipated key activities’, it was agreed from the start that an online survey should be developed by the project in order to ‘identify perceptions of what constitutes gender identity and sexuality-related harassment.’ The survey, which was managed by Hockey Victoria, was made available to members of all clubs and associations in Victoria and produced some fascinating and, potentially, highly useful results (e.g. the different opinions on the acceptability of lesbians and gay men in hockey, discussed in the section ‘Gender and sexuality policing’).

ARCSHS assisted with the design of the survey and analysis of the results, and fed information on this back to the Steering Committee, project partners and project advocates. The analysis focused on identifying potential areas for future project consideration (for example young males, women of reproductive age, coaches), however the results do not appear to have strongly influenced the nature of the activities undertaken in clubs. In hindsight, project advocates and pilot clubs may have more actively engaged with the survey results if they had been involved in the initial survey or in running specific versions within their clubs and using the results to help reflections on what might be done within each club.

The widespread perception that culture change is not part of sport’s ‘core business’ must be recognised, and responded to

Finally, while VicHealth (undated) has noted that ‘sport – and the culture surrounding sport – can initiate the change required to reduce health inequalities in our society’, we cannot lose sight of the fact that many people get involved in sports clubs simply because they love playing the game. Many clubs struggle to get the committee members and volunteer support they need if they are to keep playing season after season, and there is a very limited pool of time, energy and commitment for activities that are seen as extraneous to the ‘core business’ of playing (and, preferably, winning) one’s chosen sport.

One project advocate commented: ‘I think our club is a classic example; most people are totally focused on showing up to play the game. We don’t get the participation we need to run committees, let alone to make it a social club.’ Towards the end of the project funding cycle, the project advocates were asked to define what, for them, was their club’s ‘core business’. Most responses focused on what happens on the pitch, for example:

To be perfectly honest, successful hockey. Having teams promoted.

Same for us. Playing hockey and having people recruited to play hockey. Plus developing teams to higher levels in the competition.

Ben Hartung, Hockey Victoria CEO, noted that within hockey, and within other sports, the initial view of ‘core business’ is that it is ‘about what happens on the pitch and league success’. He added: ‘Community aspects come secondary. This is something that we really need to promote and support’.

In one hockey club, the need to focus on ‘core business’, and ensure that the club kept going, was given as justification for not becoming involved in Fair go, sport!. A club member interviewed as part of the evaluation process explained: ‘Certainly I would have liked our club to be one of the pilots for Fair go, sport!, but I just couldn’t get any support…[the response was] we’ve got higher priorities…at the time we were having trouble trying to get enough coaches.’ He added that without coaches, players would be lost; and without players, membership income goes down and the club loses status and ability to attract new players.

‘It’s one of those Catch 22 situations,’ he said.

Hopefully, the overall success of Fair go, sport!, and in particular the many benefits that have accrued to pilot clubs – ranging from positive publicity to enhanced relationships with Hockey Victoria, the local council, local politicians and media, increased club house takings during special events and perception of the clubs as GLBTI-friendly – may serve in the future to persuade more clubs that culture change can indeed be ‘core business’.
Appendix A

Becoming a pilot club has raised our profile, helped create links with other pilot clubs and made us reflect. We still have to implement many of our ideas, but will now have a mantra to mull over and reflect on as we continue the life of a hockey club – 'What you say matters'.

On a personal level, I have learnt a great deal and more importantly come to recognise some aspects of my ignorance.

Keith Sutton, President and Project Advocate Baw Baw HC
Appendix A

*Fair go, sport!* project activities

**Special events**

- The project’s public launch was timed to coincide with the first Melbourne game of the women’s Australian Hockey League (AHL). The launch involved:
  - Victorian team, The Vipers, playing in 2011’s special *Fair go, sport!* strip
  - Dr Helen Szoke, then Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commissioner, presenting the *Fair go, sport!* cup to the winning team
  - Promoting the project in a full-page article in the program
  - Judy Flanagan, General Manager, Sport Strategy and Participation, Australian Sports Commission, attended and declared the project was ‘innovative, groundbreaking and extremely important in relation to providing safe and inclusive environments for all Australians’
  - A panel discussion featuring Project Officer Peter Gourlay; Hockey Victoria CEO Ben Hartung; Dr Caroline Symons (Victoria University, lead author of the Come Out to Play research report); Dr Helen Szoke; Jenny Sach, Camberwell HC Project Advocate; Mark Anderson, CEO, Hockey Australia; and Trish Heberle, former Olympic Hockeyroo, Hockey Australia High Performance Network Manager and *Fair go, sport!* Project Champion. At half time, Ben Hartung interviewed Adam Commens (Head Coach of the Hockeyroos) and Jason Duff (Assistant Head Coach of the Hockeyroos)
  - Trish Heberle – who was outed as a lesbian during her playing career – told the project launch audience: ‘People say: is this issue relevant to hockey? It is relevant to society; we are just a community within a broader society. I still think the fact that we have to have a program like this indicates we haven’t made the progress that we need to. We all have a responsibility, especially people in leadership roles…we have a particular responsibility to be aware and to keep promoting the need for inclusiveness, the need for acceptance of diversity, the need to stamp out homophobia’.

It has been estimated by Hockey Victoria that most of its member clubs have had exposure to *Fair go, sport!* through pilot club special events, usually involving matches against non-pilot club teams complete with project branding (for example presentation of project promotional materials to members of opposing teams) speeches, media releases and resultant media coverage:

- Camberwell HC combined the relaunch of its Matlock Reserve pitch with a *Fair go, sport!* Family Day and a full day of matches:
  - Two *Fair go, sport!* Cups were up for grabs
  - Camberwell wore *Fair go, sport!* rainbow socks (see project branding and materials, page 41)
  - The club launched its own poster, with the slogan ‘What you say matters’ (page 19)
  - Guests included Ben Hartung, CEO Hockey Victoria; Mr Andrew McKintosh, State MP for Kew; Ms Georgie Crozier, State MP for Southern Metropolitan
Region; Dr Helen Szoke; Mr Graham Watt, State MP for Burwood; and Ms Anna Burke, Federal MP for Chisholm.

Nicholas Tragas, Mayor of the City of Boroondara at the time, gave the opening address, stating: ‘The *Fair go, sport!* initiative is an incredibly important way hockey and other sports can work to make sporting safer and more inclusive’.

Club President Mr Andrew Minter said: ‘*Fair go, sport!* has inspired us to explore our club practices to see what is working and what we can do to make hockey more inclusive of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex people.’

* Baw Baw HC used its annual Sponsors’ Day to promote *Fair go, sport!*:
  - A *Fair go, sport!* cup was played between Baw Baw and Yarra Valley women’s teams.
  - Baw Baw’s players wore the rainbow socks.
  - *Fair go, sport!* medals were presented to the players who displayed the spirit of *Fair go, sport!* (as voted by their opponents)
  - Andrew Skillern, Hockey Victoria Operations Manager, attended the Sponsors’ Day and presented the *Fair go, sport!* trophy and medals. These are perpetual trophies that will be played for annually.
  - When the Under 17s boys and girls teams from Baw Baw and Camberwell played each other at Camberwell on 29 July 2011, the project was promoted, with the fairest team member on each team presented with a *Fair go, sport!* medal by the opposing team.

* A *Fair go, sport!* day held at Werribee HC involved:
  - A day of hockey (accompanied by all-day barbecue and social), with Werribee players in rainbow socks.
  - Special guests including Karen Toohey, Acting Commissioner, Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission; Ben Hartung, CEO of Hockey Victoria; Councillor Marcel Mahfoud from Wyndham City Council, Keith Sutton, Project Advocate and President of Baw Baw HC, and Baw Baw HC Vice President, Mark Anderson.
  - Councillor John Menegazzo (Mayor of Wyndham City Council) and Karen Toohey presented the *Fair go, sport!* cups.
  - Werribee players presented their opponents with rainbow wristbands and business cards (both club initiatives), bearing the slogan *Fair go, sport!*.
  - Two *Fair go, sport!* cups were presented to the winners of the feature matches for the day; Baw Baw HC men’s team played Werribee HC men’s for one of the cups.
  - *Fair go, sport!* medals were presented at the end of the four senior games to the fairest players on each team, as selected by their opponents.
  - According to Project Advocate Renea Cooke: ‘Organising the Family Day sparked conversations in the club. Also local media coverage contributed. We are really saying: “This is the sort of club that we want to be”. This sort of Family Day, with a message, has never really happened before at our club. And it has come from the project. We have had sponsors’ days before, but that has just been about the hockey’.
  - The day was identified as one of the ‘big sporting moments in the west in 2011’ by the Maribyrnong Weekly newspaper.59

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Old Carey HC marked its 50th anniversary by:
- Launching a new *Fair go, sport!*-inspired Code of Conduct
- Unveiling a new club banner complete with *Fair go, sport!* logo (see page 42)
- Playing a *Fair go, sport!* match, with Old Carey players wearing rainbow socks
- *Fair go, sport!* medals were presented at the end of the game to the player on each team who best represented the *Fair go, sport!* spirit, as selected by their opponents. Hockey Victoria CEO Ben Hartung was present.
- Presenting a *Fair go, sport!* cup at the club’s presentation night to the member who best demonstrated the spirit of *Fair go, sport!* during the season

Hockey ACT incorporated a *Fair go, sport!* cup into Round 1 of the Men’s Australian Hockey League in Canberra (Victoria versus ACT); the project was featured in the program and a *Fair go, sport!* banner was on show during the event.

Project branding and materials
Project logo and core promotional materials: banners (including an Old Carey HC version of the banner, developed to mark its fiftieth anniversary), giant hockey sticks, posters and lapel pins. The Commission’s Communications Adviser Ian Row was responsible for development of the project logo (based on the national hockey logo), and of the core promotional materials.

Hockey Victoria developed a special *Fair go, sport!* strip, which was worn by state teams the Vipers and the Vikings throughout the 2011 season. This ensured that the logo and the project were visible across the country.

The ideas and momentum for the following materials came from the pilot clubs themselves:

*Fair go, sport!* What you say matters’ posters were first developed by Camberwell HC (page 19), based on a slogan created by Project Advocate Bridie Walsh during a project advocates reflection meeting. The poster was then adapted by Werribee HC for launch at their *Fair go, sport!* day. Each poster features the relevant team colours. The posters have been put up around both clubs; there were initial reports of some posters being taken down at one of the clubs, but the project advocate put them up again and the posters stayed up. While Baw Baw HC has not yet made its own version, club President (and project advocate) Keith Sutton reflected: ‘What we say, how we say it and what we don’t say and how we avoid saying it makes or breaks the sense of belonging, being welcome, valued and respected.’

The concept of ‘What you say matters’ has since been adopted by Hockey Australia and is set to be turned into a major game development and coaches training tool (see ‘Having an impact beyond funding end’).

Without a doubt, the project’s most eye-catching idea was development of rainbow socks. The socks, which are fast becoming a collectors’ item, were first suggested by Camberwell Project Advocate Jenny Sach and enthusiastically supported by all project advocates. They were initially developed to be worn during pilot club special events, but have been taken up by other clubs. Parkville Women’s Hockey Club (the league’s only lesbian-identified club) has been given Hockey Victoria permission to change their strip to include the socks. Baw Baw HC has also asked for permission to keep wearing the socks. As Project Advocate Keith Sutton explained: ‘Our State League Men’s and two under 17s teams want to wear the socks each week. They have been a real talking point; “what’s with the socks?”’.

Old Carey Project Advocate Polash Larsen added: ‘When I broached the idea [of a special FGS event], and said “we will all be wearing rainbow socks”, they all went “cool, yeah!”’. It all became real at that point’. The socks led Werribee HC to develop a special *Fair go, sport!* wristband, and business card (pictured below), handed out at the Werribee HC *Fair go, sport!* day. These have been shared among the other pilot clubs.

The rainbow socks, now being worn beyond the pilot clubs.
Amendments to, and development of, documents

Hockey Victoria relaunched its Code of Conduct in late 2010, as a result of the project.

Werribee HC revised its registration day information and players’ handbook to promote *Fair go, sport!* As part of the revision, the club agreed to move ‘Value the well-being and diversity of our people’ from the bottom of its list of Club Values to the top. In addition, the club adopted two new slogans – ‘Celebrating diversity through hockey’, and ‘Valuing diversity in Wyndham’. The slogans feature on the web page, registration documents, members’ information and other club documents.

Old Carey HC developed an official Code of Conduct, instead of relying on informal assumptions. As one committee member described it, ‘We all agreed that we had this informal Code of Conduct in our heads, that we all knew about, but then when we were asked questions [when Evaluator Gillian Fletcher and Project Officer Peter Gourlay attended a committee meeting] that made us think about it, so we could then work on that and move forward.’ The Code of Conduct explicitly rejects harassment or discrimination related to sexuality or gender identity.

A review of the ASC statement and guidelines on transgender people is being carried out as a result of the project.

Awareness raising and networking

The project was represented at Midsumma Carnival and Pride March, 2011; the Commission established a *Fair go, sport!* presence at its stand and promoted the project at the Midsumma Carnival, while Hockey Victoria CEO Ben Hartung, Grant Weir from Hockey Australia, Gina Smith from the project Steering Committee and the Central Victoria Hockey Association and the Project Advocate from Old Carey Hockey Club marched at Pride (despite project funding having ended, there are plans for a big *Fair go, sport!* participation in Midsumma 2012).

Promotion of *Fair go, sport!* during both the week-long U13 and U15 Boys’ and Girls’ State Junior Championships (July 2011) and the week-long U15 Boys’ National Championship, both held at the State Netball and Hockey Centre. The *Fair go, sport!* banner was on show, the program for both events promoted the project and its aim, and coaches were reminded of their responsibility to promote respectful and inclusive environments (on the pitch and off) via coach assessments during the event. During the State Junior Championships, the annual ‘Play By The Whistle’ awards (for fair play) were linked to *Fair go, sport!*.

All pilot clubs featured the project on their web pages; Camberwell HC men’s, women’s, and junior committees sent emails to members promoting the project; Old Carey HC linked to the Old Carey Grammarians Association (OCGA) and promoted the project through both the OCGA website and newsletter.

Werribee HC displayed the project banner when taking part in a community fun run.

The project was featured in multiple press reports and other publications, including:
- 7.30, ABC TV
- *The Age*
- *Herald Sun*
- Local newspapers including the *Banyule and Nillumbik Weekly*, the *Warrigal Gazette*, *Melbourne Times*, and the *Leader* (Camberwell)
- GLBTI-specific publications including *MCV* (Melbourne Community Voice); and *Southern Star Observer*, as well as several interviews with key project partners aired on Joy FM’s *Rainbow Report* program
- *The Torch*: magazine of the Old Carey Grammarians Association (OCGA) which goes out to 7,000 people internationally

*Old Carey HC marking the club’s 50th anniversary with it’s *Fair go, sport!* banner, 2011.*
Fair go, sport! A work in progress

(article written by Polash Larsen, Old Carey HC Project Advocate; Polash also spoke about the project at the annual Association meeting, by invitation from the OCGA President)

- VicSport newsletter
- Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria e-newsletter
- Pride in Diversity e-newsletter
- ‘Play by the Rules’ newsletter.

Presentations on Fair go, sport! have been made at:
- Hockey Victoria’s Zone Coordinators’ meeting
- The Asia Regional OutGames Human Rights Conference, Wellington, NZ
- Hockey Australia Council Forum and CEO meeting (involving the Hockey Australia Board and CEO, State and Territory Hockey Association Presidents, CEOs and general managers)
- Sport and Recreation Victoria’s Executive Officer Network
- The VicSport Members Sports Talk Forum
- The Sports Management Association of Australia and New Zealand conference
- The National Equal Opportunity Conference
- The Australasian Evaluation Society Conference
- National Sporting Organisation’s PBTR’s Forums

A short project briefing was provided for the Victorian Attorney-General, the Honourable Robert Clark

All state and territory Hockey Association CEOs and general managers have been regularly updated on the project via national meetings, individual meetings and emails from Hockey Victoria CEO Ben Hartung and Project Officer Peter Gourlay

Project web pages were established on the websites of Hockey Victoria, the Commission, ASC and ‘Play by the Rules’, with other associations and clubs, including Hockey Tasmania, Hockey NSW sites and Hockey Victoria affiliates adding links to on their websites

Project Officer Peter Gourlay has developed and maintained an incredible network of connections, all of which are either directly or indirectly related to the project. These networks have included:

- The AFL Players Association, Headspace and RJM Trust in relation to the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHO)
- ASC discussions on the introduction of online Member Protection Information Officer training

AFL Victoria:

- Peter is a member of AFL Victoria’s ‘Fair Game: Respect Matters’ Reference Group; the AFL internal working group on diversity; and connects with the AFL’s Female Football Development and Cultural Strategy and Education projects and participating in the AFL’s Vilification Working Group

VicHealth:

- Liaising with the Violence Against Women program
- Participating as a member of VicHealth’s Inclusive, Safe and Supportive Sporting Environments Project Technical Group and think-tank;

Sport and Recreation Victoria, and in particular:

- Sports and Recreation Community Programs and Industry Development;
- Meeting to discuss the Victorian Code of Conduct for Community Sport and its implementation;

Department of Early Education and Child Development Sexuality Education Policy and Projects.

Links have been established with other sports, and briefings provided at a mix of national, state and local levels. These sports include: golf, netball, cricket, lacrosse, bowls, skating, soccer and rugby.

One of Werribee HC’s teams at the club’s Fair go, sport! and Family Day, 2011.
Having an impact beyond funding end

At a national level

* The ACT Minister for Sport expressed a desire to put homophobia on the agenda for the 2012 National Meeting of Sports Ministers, following a meeting with Fair go, sport! representatives.

* Grant Weir, Hockey Australia Game Development Manager, is developing a ‘What you say matters’ resource to support coach education as a result of discussions held as part of the Fair go, sport! project regarding the role language plays in making people feel included or excluded. As Grant noted: ‘Language is a key thing here. Language can reveal attitudes and create an atmosphere, so if language changes it can be an indicator of changes in attitude.’ The resource, which will be linked to accreditation for hockey coaches across Australia, will address a range of ways in which language can contribute to stigma, discrimination, and participation in sport. At the time of writing, it was envisaged the resource would have an emphasis on case studies related to sexist, homophobic and racist language, as well as to language that disparages or denigrates people with disabilities. The aim was to develop a coaching competency linked to respectful communication and the need for coaches to pick people up on disrespectful or discriminatory language within a coaching context (even if ‘it’s only a joke’).

* Trish Heberle, Project Champion and High Performance Network Manager, Hockey Australia – responsible for the training of elite players – has identified an opportunity to incorporate diversity messages into the National Futures Program curriculum for 14–16-year-old elite players.

* Other state hockey associations are keen to participate in Fair go, sport!: ACT Sport and Recreation Services, in partnership with the ACT Human Rights Commission, will implement a Fair go, sport! program in the ACT in 2012, with support from Project Officer Peter Gourlay.

Within Victoria

* One round of the 2012 state league will be renamed the Fair go, sport! round. Gus Johnston, the former Essendon and Victorian goalkeeper whose decision to come out to his hockey colleagues was influenced by Fair go, sport!, will be the spokesperson for the Round. ‘Gus came to us and said: “What can I do to help?”’ explained Hockey Victoria CEO Ben Hartung. ‘We are honoured to have him involved’.60

* There are plans for a big Fair go, sport! participation in Midsumma 2012, including a Fair go, sport! forum to be held at Hockey Victoria, participation in Pride March, and a stand at the Midsumma Carnival.

* Other Victorian hockey clubs have approached pilot clubs to find out how they can adopt the Fair go, sport! logo; as a result, Baw Baw HC Project Advocate Keith Sutton has proposed that Hockey Victoria develops a Fair go, sport! annual quality assessment tool. Under this proposal, clubs that achieve certain standards or commit to achieving certain standards would be able to use the Fair go, sport! logo and brand themselves as Fair go, sport! clubs (with annual reassessment).

* Baw Baw HC has planned a ‘Play by the Rules’ workshop in Warragul (in partnership with Gippsport and Baw Baw Shire) for March 2012.

In other sporting codes

* Other sports have approached the Commission and expressed an interest in adopting Fair go, sport! (including Bowls Australia, Skate and Rugby Union).

* The rainbow socks and wristbands (explained under ‘Project branding and materials’) were also taken up by soccer: they were presented to the most valuable on the ground (as chosen by the referees) at the end of the 2011 Justin Fashanu Cup. The Cup is played for each year between Melbourne Rovers and Sydney Rangers in commemoration of Justin Fashanu (the first English football player to come out as gay only to be vilified and disowned by his brother, another top flight footballer. Justin Fashanu eventually committed suicide). This was the first year the Football Federation of Victoria officially supported the event.
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