



## Red Dust Heelers

### Checklist for an Inclusive Community Sports Organisation

The Red Dust Heelers (the Heelers) are Aboriginal and other athletes with disability. Some of us are Paralympians. We co-design and deliver community engagement programs with Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) across Australia. We focus on awareness raising about the ability of people with disability, and increasing inclusion in sport, education and employment for young people with disability. We've been doing this since 2013.

Our lived experience of disability guides the work we do, and our relationships with Outback Academy Australia Cultural Advisors and the ACCOs we work with in various communities. We know the valuable role grassroots Community Sports Organisations (CSOs) and schools can play in encouraging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to have a go at sport. These are a few of our tips.



You can also watch us at work at:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/0qxuck0fdmd1pc8/Red%20Dust%20Heelers%20-%20V5.mp4?dl=0> and <https://www.invictusgames2018.com/red-dust-heelers-hit-the-court-for-exhibition-match/>

## **Our Tips for Creating a Welcoming and Inclusive CSO environment.**

1. Be courageous. You may make mistakes. Be prepared to listen and learn
2. Remember Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people come from different cultural, family backgrounds, and life experiences – avoid making assumptions
3. Reach out to local Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), for support. ACCOs may have staff whose role is to support healthy lifestyles, youth, cultural education, social connections, and NDIS. They may be able to support the education journey for your CSO and connect you to community members
4. Remember, disability is viewed differently within different cultural groups, and even families. The word disability may not be used at all – avoid assumptions
5. Focus on the person, not the disability, their interests and goals with sport and other areas of their life, and how the CSO may be able to support
6. Make sure new members have the gear they need, equipment, and support to travel to training and competition– this may be a challenge for some families. Do this discretely for all Club members
7. Always follow through. Aboriginal people have often experienced promises without follow through. Don't commit to something you cannot follow through on
8. Coaches and others should avoid *shaming* language and behaviours such as yelling, punishment and negative criticism. Positive and accurate feedback is more inclusive
9. Remember the lived experience for many Aboriginal people in towns and missions was exclusion and judgment, so shame is a very real fear
10. Have the two flags, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags displayed at sport venues. We travel with both
11. Celebrate Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week in your Club. There are many ways you can do this. You'll also find useful information at <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/national-reconciliation-week/> and <https://www.naidoc.org.au/>
12. On International Day of People with Disability and other special events arrange a Welcome to Country (an Elder from Country) or an Acknowledgement of Country (can be done by an Elder who is off-Country and/or Senior Person at the Club before starting the event)

13. Be ready for the young person, get to know them. Make reasonable adjustments to accommodate what they may need to feel safe in your sport environment. For example, be able to join with a friend, have a peer, a mentor
14. Make reasonable adjustments for disability. Listen to Brydi Saul speaking about not being able to participate in dancing, but in contrast Anika Coppin-Foley speaking about her cricket coach getting her to bat and someone else to run for her. Refer to: Wiinyarr Ganbina\_Anika Coppin-Foley video clip on 'Victoria University, Women in Sport' website <https://www.vu.edu.au/about-vu/university-profile/sport-at-victoria-university/women-in-sport>
15. Get creative. Young people, coaches and others may enjoy hearing from Aboriginal Paralympians and other athletes. Create times for this to happen. For example, Indigenous Games could be run during Reconciliation Week for all Club members  
Your Club could also visit with community members with guidance from an ACCO.

Most of all aim to have some fun. The sports experience needs to be one where people feel they belong, are respected, welcome, and valued. This is what will make the biggest difference in attracting and keeping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people with disability, and other young Australians with disability and their families to your Club.

You can learn more through listening to Aboriginal women speaking about their experiences at <https://www.vu.edu.au/about-vu/university-profile/sport-at-victoria-university/women-in-sport>

Note: If you don't know who your local ACCO is, and/or you just want to get some informal advice, let us know and we may be able to make that connection for you.

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