



# OUR CLUB

## Evaluation Report

2019-2021

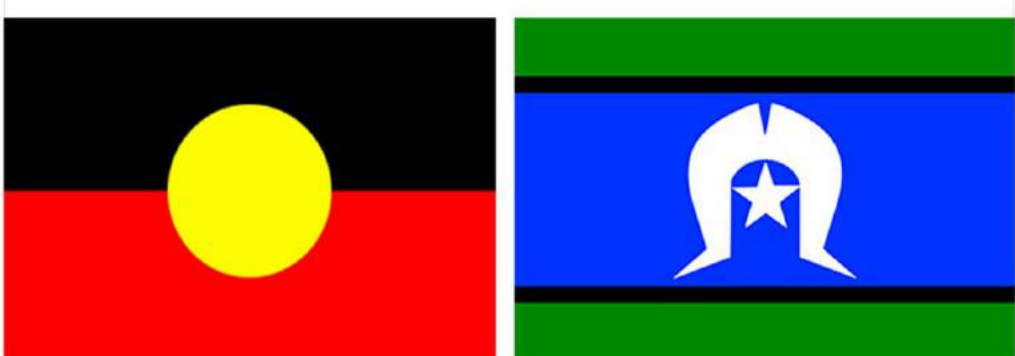
Published by Outer East Primary Care Partnership, EACH, Maroondah City Council, Knox City Council, Monash City Council 2021.

Project partners would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we delivered this project and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

This report covers the evaluation of the "Our Club" project 2019-2021.

For more information about the project please contact:

[robyn.williams@maroondah.vic.gov.au](mailto:robyn.williams@maroondah.vic.gov.au)



The Action on Alcohol Flagship Group (AAFG) is a partnership committed to taking action in the EMR

to reduce the harmful impacts of alcohol in our local communities. The Partnership members includes representatives from the seven Eastern Councils, Community Health services, special interest groups and the Primary Care Partnerships.

# Contents

Executive Summary	03
Introduction	04
Objective 1	05
Objective 2	07
Objective 3	09
Objective 4	18
Strengths and Weaknesses	19
Challenges and Barriers	20
Learnings	22
Conclusion	26

# Executive Summary

The Our Club project was a club strengthening initiative that took place in 41 EFNL clubs and 3 clubs from other sporting codes, in 2021. The project was funded by the Australian Alcohol and Drug Foundation and the Outer East Primary Care Partnership. Our Club aimed to create a culture of welcoming, inclusive and supportive club environments, through the use of values-based messaging, as research shows that these elements of club culture are protective factors against risky drinking and mental health.

The project co-designed two values-based messages with representatives from clubs, councils and the EFNL, to address alcohol culture and mental health, in workshops delivered by Common Cause Australia. These messages were utilised on a number of resources including:

- 16 x social media tiles
- 10 x celebrating our club during covid social media tiles
- 2 x boundary banners
- 5 x posters

In addition, a mental health support sheet, club engagement guide and communications guide were developed.

The project was delivered with the assistance of the partnering organisations; EFNL, EMR AAFG, seven Eastern Region Councils and Community Health Services. The implementation and evaluation were impacted by covid-19 lockdowns, however the campaign still had significant reach and created some level of behaviour change.

Major findings from the project were:

- 98% of workshop participants improved their understanding of values-based messaging and intended to use values-based messages
- 82% of workshop participants said they would use the values-based message developed
- 69% of workshop participants said they believed the message developed could change attitudes towards misusing alcohol
- The campaign reached 78,665 people
- There were 1,503 interactions with the campaign on social media
- 100% of committee members and 83% of spectators said the message "Our Club: A Place for Everyone" was relevant
- 100% of committee members and 90% of spectators said the message "Our Club: Supporting Each Other" was relevant
- 70% of spectators said they thought more people were offering help
- 60% of spectators said people were having more conversations about mental health

A number of strengths and weaknesses of the campaign were identified. Additionally, there were a number of learnings and recommendations for the future of this project.

# Introduction

In 2019, the Eastern Metropolitan Region Action on Alcohol Flagship Group (EMR AAFG), was successful in receiving a grant from the Australian Alcohol and Drug Foundation to mobilise the community around harmful drinking cultures, through sporting clubs. The project developed was named Our Club.

Our Club is a club strengthening initiative. The project initially aimed to create safe, inclusive and welcoming places for everyone, through values-based messages that encouraged the audience to think about the drinking culture within the club. Local footy clubs provide a place where people of all ages get together to meet their mates, play sport and cheer on their team. Sometimes, there are people who may not feel included or welcomed in these environments, due to excessive drinking or poor language, very few women present or a lack of diversity evident in the crowd. To address these issues, it is important to build strong and connected communities within local footy clubs. Our Club aimed to do this by creating opportunities to bring people together, increase participation in sport, promote social connection and create a sense of belonging.

The 'Our Club' project intended to start a conversation with football club committees, volunteers and supporters that got them thinking about:

- How to create a welcoming club environment for all
- Who is not in the crowd
- How boundary behaviour might look to an outsider
- How to serve alcohol responsibly

The Covid-19 pandemic paused the implementation of the project in 2020 and raised other concerns in football clubs, such as mental health and social isolation. It was identified that values-based messaging could also assist in addressing these issues. As such, the Our Club campaign was extended, with an aim to encourage club committees, volunteers and supporters to consider:

- How to support each other
- How to start conversations to support everyone's wellbeing

Initially eight Eastern Football League clubs from Maroondah City Council area were selected to pilot the project. However, after the expansion of the campaign it was decided to offer the initiative to all interested clubs in the Eastern Football Netball League (EFNL). Clubs could show their support by hanging a custom team colour boundary banner, displaying the campaign posters around the club rooms and sharing the media tiles and messaging on their club social media through the season.

The EMR AAFG partnered with the ENFL, seven Eastern Region Councils and Community Health Services to support the implementation of the project over the 2021 season. This included the promotion of the social media tiles and assistance liaising with clubs.

The following report details the objectives of the Our Club campaign and the impact it had on alcohol culture and mental health within clubs. The season was greatly impacted by a number of covid-19 lockdowns, resulting in many missed weeks of football. This not only affected the exposure of the campaign but also the evaluation. As such, the working group collected evaluation data mostly from the eight Maroondah clubs. A break down can be found below:

- Committee Surveys (n=9) - Maroondah clubs only
- Captain Survey (n=1) - Maroondah clubs only
- Spectator, Parent or Player Surveys (n=30) - All clubs/general public

It is important to acknowledge the impact of covid-19 whilst interpreting the results from this evaluation.

# Objective 1

**"Conduct alcohol test purchasing with 8 EFL clubs within Maroondah City Council - to increase awareness of non-compliance of EFL clubs regarding potential service of alcohol to minors; - to motivate 2+ Maroondah EFL clubs to become cultural change agents to then engage with and motivate other clubs in the EFL"**

## **Process Measure 1& 2 : Evidence of 8 EFL clubs tested in 2019 and 2021**

In 2019, two rounds of alcohol test purchasing were conducted in eight EFL clubs in Maroondah City Council area. The purchase attempts were undertaken by young people who had been judged by a panel to look under the age of 18 years (even though they were over 18). A member of the research team monitored their attempts. If asked for identification, the young person advised your staff that they did not have it. The responses of staff at sports clubs were then written down and compiled in a community report.

After the first round of testing, a letter was written to each club, advising them of the results and suggesting that they review their policies and practices to ensure that, in line with industry best practice, ID was requested for anyone who looked under the age of 25. Clubs were advised that a further round of testing would occur. A second round of testing took place approximately 6 weeks after Round 1. Results from both rounds of testing, found that seven of the eight clubs failed to ask for ID.

The alcohol test purchasing was meant to occur a year later in 2020, after the implementation of the Our Club campaign. Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, the 2020 season was cancelled and therefore the implementation of Our Club was put on hold.

As over 1 year had passed, the working group decided to re-test the eight clubs in Maroondah at the beginning of the 2021 season. The working group planned to use these results as a baseline and re-measure at the end of the season. Covid-19 lockdowns unfortunately meant that clubs were not able to be tested a second time.

All eight clubs tested, failed to meet compliance in the 2021 testing. This includes the following:

- Did not check ID of a young person who looked under 25
- Sold alcohol to a young person without checking or requesting ID

While conducting test purchasing, the confederates made additional observations at some of the clubs, including:

- Male dominated crowds
- Intimidating for young women to navigate their way through the crowd and on occasions feeling uncomfortable
- Alcohol selection was more suited to stereotypical 'male preference'
- Only one club had a "dry" area

Confederates reported back to their supervisors that they were surprised by how easy it was to purchase alcohol at the games.

The eight clubs were contacted via email to let them know their results. Two of the clubs responded to the letters, thanking the working group for bringing this to their attention and stating they would rectify the situation. The remaining six clubs did not respond. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, the working group was unable to measure any improvement in clubs, as a result of the letter.

N.B. The lockdown prevented any opportunity for the working group or Council to engage with clubs about the test results and to offer support.

### **Process Measure 3: Attendance of key influencers from 2 EFNL teams at Common Cause Workshop**

In September 2019, a Common Cause workshop was held to learn about values-based messaging and explore how that knowledge could be applied to messages for use throughout EFNL clubs in the Eastern Metropolitan Region. The day was conducted in two parts; the morning theory session was available to a range of partners and stakeholders and the afternoon session was specifically for creating messages for the ENFL.

7 local sporting clubs, including their key influencer(s) attended the Common Cause workshop.

### **Impact Measure 1: Measure of change in EFNL clubs tested in 2019 and 2021**

The working group planned to conduct test purchasing pre and post the Our Club campaign to determine if the campaign resulted in any change in alcohol culture. However, given the multiple lockdowns in the 2021 season, the working group was unable to conduct follow up test purchasing. Due to this, it is difficult to ascertain if any changes were made after the baseline testing.

### **Impact Measure 2: Measure engagement of EFNL clubs to be agents of change post workshop.**

After the 2019 Common Cause workshop, the Our Club Campaign was launched, in partnership with the ENFL, at their club development event on the 2nd February 2020. The launch included a presentation by Capiche Consulting, who framed the campaign in the context of improving club culture and referencing the test purchasing results; and the in context of statewide and legislative requirements emerging for clubs regarding harmful alcohol practices and safety. The outcomes of the launch resulted in 41 EFNL clubs registered to be agents of change and participate in the campaign. In addition to this, 3 clubs from other codes including soccer and rugby, registered for the project through other networks. For the purposes of this report, only EFNL clubs were included in the data.

The break down of EFNL club registrations, by local government area, can be found below:

- 1 x Boroondara
- 2 x Manningham
- 3 x Monash
- 6 x Yarra Ranges
- 7 x Whitehorse
- 8 x Maroondah
- 14 x Knox

## Objective 2

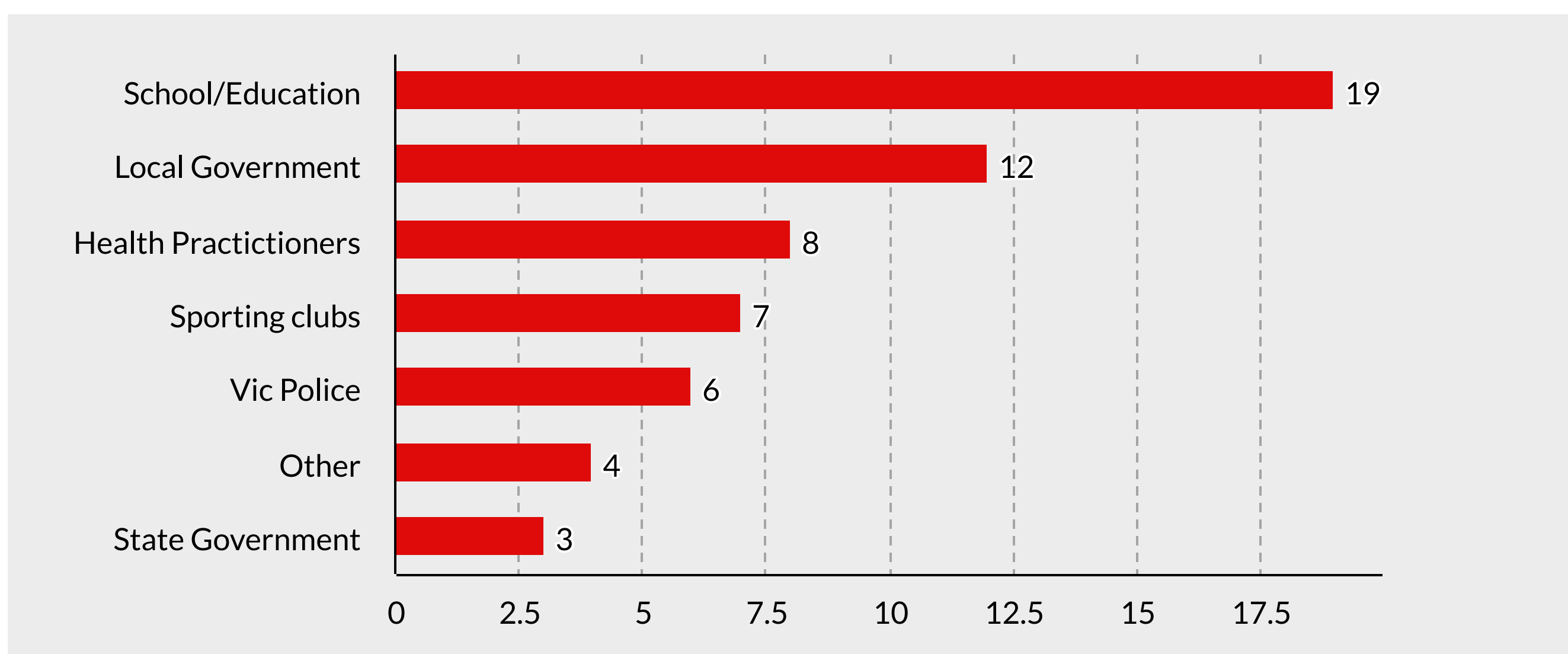
**"Work with key community leaders - including key influencers (senior coaches/players) from at least 2 EFL clubs - to workshop and develop values-based messaging to promote culture change for design & use for all Maroondah practitioners and sporting clubs"**

### **Process Measure 1: A region wide forum for practitioners and EFNL club representatives**

In 2019, a workshop was held in partnership with Common Cause to co-design values-based messages to promote positive culture change. Clubs worked together to develop a message that highlighted the importance of belonging through club culture and wellbeing.

Overall, 70 attendees from local councils, education, health services, government and EFNL attended. The afternoon session focused on the message development and was attended by 30 participants from the morning session. The organisations represented, can be broken down as follows in figure 1.

Figure 1. Attendance at values-based messaging workshop



### **Process Measure 2: Evidence of ENFL club participation**

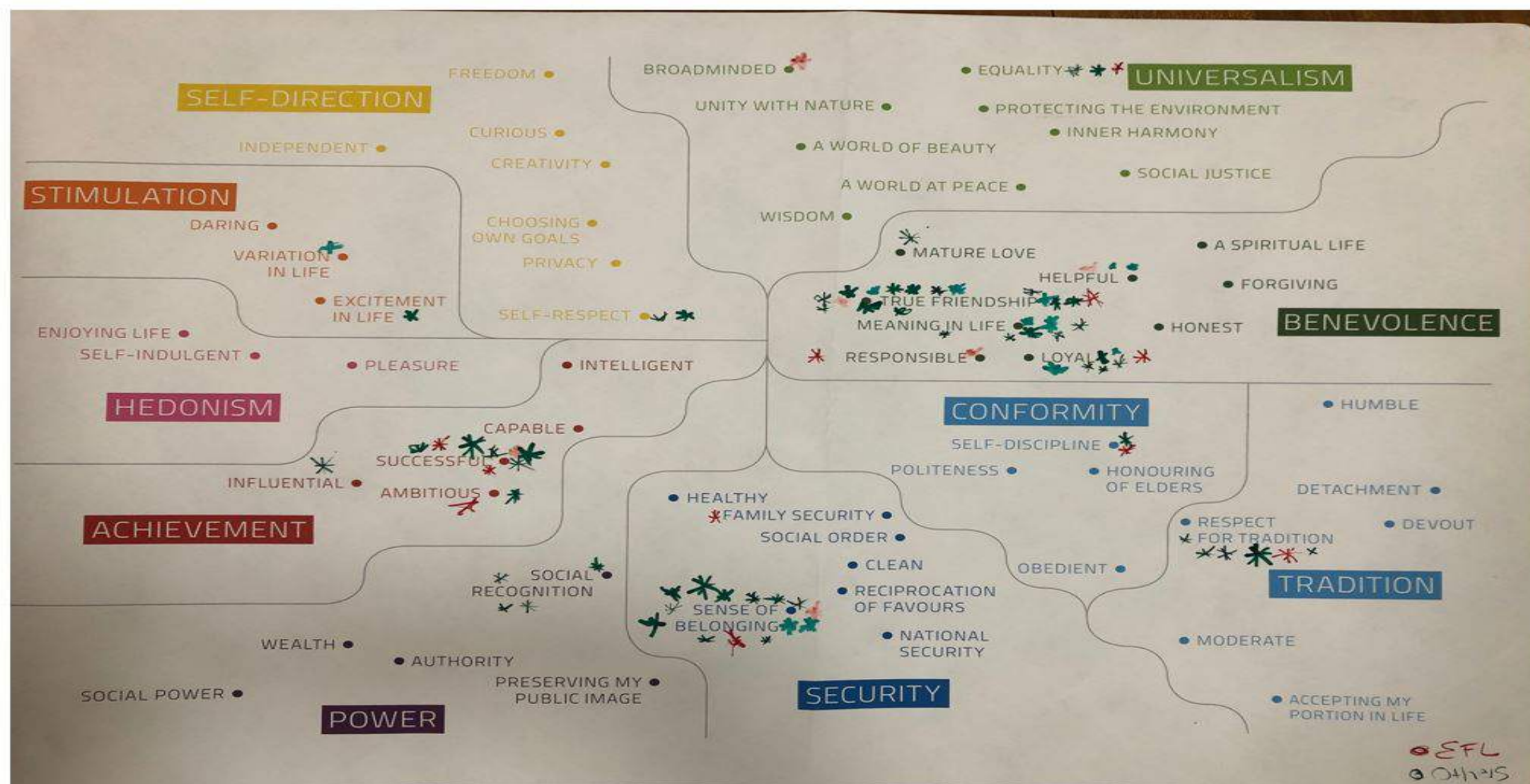
7 local football clubs attended the workshop that co-designed the values based messages. The key values selected by the EFNL clubs during the workshop were:

- Sense of belonging
- True friendship
- Loyalty
- Success
- Respect for tradition

The selected values can be found, in figure 2.



Figure 2. Key values selected by EFNL clubs



**Impact Measure 1: Participants report an increased understanding of VBM and how to embed its practice.**

An evaluation survey was completed post the workshop, with 98% of respondents (n=59) indicating that they were likely to use what they learned during the session. Additionally, 98% thought the session improved their understanding of values-based messaging.

Two key themes dominated the evaluation comments:

- 1) Priming: Post-workshop evaluation, participants better understood how to prime a message to illicit a response.
- 2) Audience: Post-workshop evaluation, participants better understood the importance of knowing their audience. This included understanding what motivates the audience, in order to communicate more effectively.

Feedback from participants included:

*"A key take away message for me is 'Emotions drive decisions and values drive emotions'" - Participant*

**Impact Measure 2: Participants better understand VBM and culture change message design.**

When surveyed, 82% of respondents thought they would use the messages developed in the session. Additionally, 69% agreed or strongly agreed that the messages could change attitudes towards the misuse of alcohol.

The ways in which respondents thought they could use the messages were;

- 1) To support the conversation about action on alcohol
- 2) In communications with sporting clubs and their committee leadership groups

*"VBM was an indulgence, but it taught me so much about how to develop messages for particular issues" - Council Staff Member*

## Objective 3

**"Through the Common Cause workshop and EFL co-design process, produce printed and social media resources to promote positive culture change messaging to be launched at facilitated EFL Clubs Culture Change Workshop in February / March 2020"**

The co-designed message developed in the Common Cause workshop was used as the basis of the campaign. The message can be found below:

### **Our Club – A Place for Everyone**

We all want our club to be a place where everyone feels welcome. A place to meet old friends and new. A place where families enjoy themselves. A place we can all be proud of.

If you see fellow club members acting in ways that might make others feel uncomfortable or unsafe, help them out. You might offer them a water instead of another beer, or remind them to watch their language when kids are about. Every little bit goes a long way to creating a healthier culture for our club.

Play your part. Make our club a place for everyone.

When Covid-19 restrictions began in 2020, the working group asked clubs to identify their main health concerns. Overwhelmingly, 92% of clubs said they were concerned about the mental health of their players and members. In response, the working group developed another element of the campaign, encouraging club members to look out for one another.

In order to develop the messaging for the mental health component of the campaign, the working group consulted with Common Cause, EFNL, clubs and partners such as councils and community health services. The narrative is below:

### **Our Club – Supporting Each Other**

Our club is a place where we all look out for each other. We can't always see when someone is going through a tough time and might need our help. Perhaps they're not coming to games anymore? Maybe they're withdrawn or just don't seem like themselves?

Asking for help can be difficult. You can make it easier by reaching out. Make that phone call, start a conversation or let them know you've got their back. It could make a world of difference.

In order to develop the banners, posters and social media tiles, two photo shoots were held in partnership with LightYears. The cast were selected based on feedback from clubs that the images needed to represent their members. The images and messages were then combined to create a series of resources that were distributed to clubs.

# Objective 3

## Process Measure 1 & 2: Number and type of resources produced + take-up and distribution reach of resources

### Social Media Tiles

16 x social media tiles were developed and housed on the OEPCP website. Clubs, councils and health services were emailed the social media tiles and associated communication guide. In total 4 x communication guides were developed (1 x EFNL guide, 1 x local government and community health, 1 x ENFL clubs, 1 x other clubs).

The social media tiles and communication guide can be found in figure 3, below.

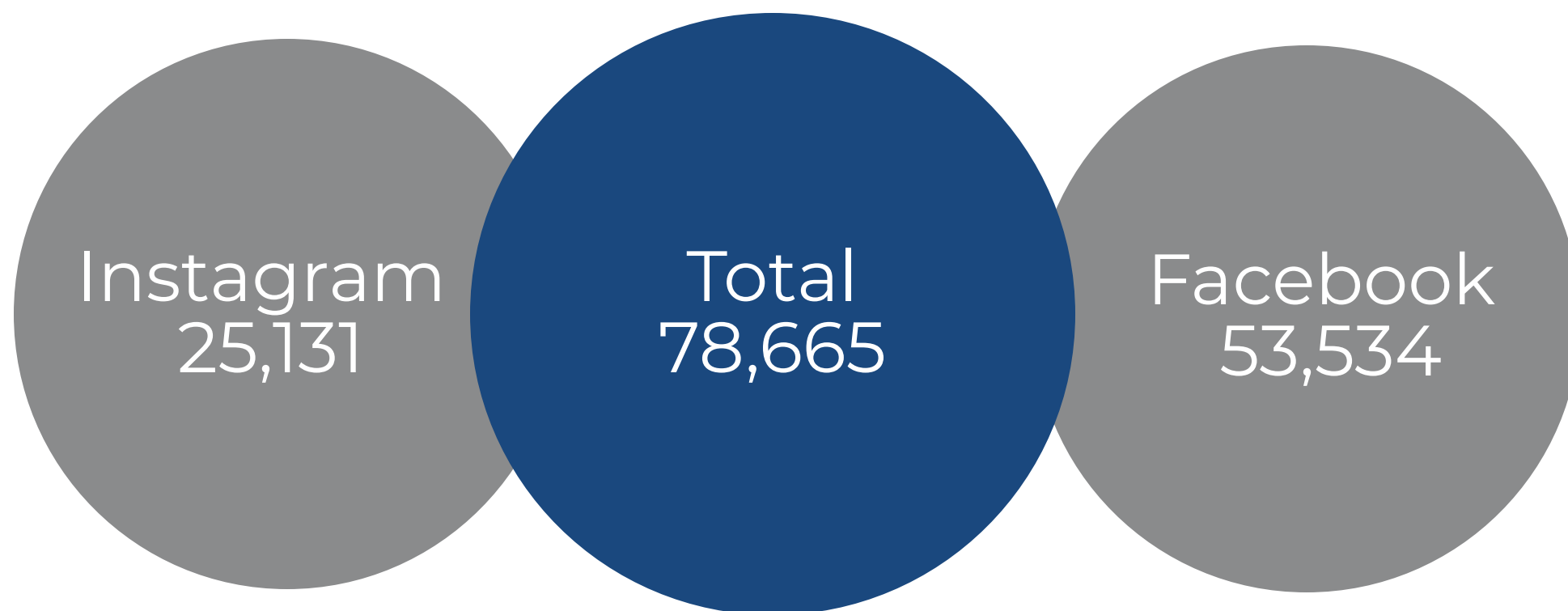
Figure 3. Social media tiles and communication guide



## Social Media Reach

Reach of social media campaigns can be difficult to measure without having social media insights from each of the organisation that posted the tiles. The reach can be estimated however, by adding the total number of followers from each page that posted the tiles. Therefore, through this method, it is estimated that the campaign had potential to reach 78,665 people online.

Figure 4. Social media reach



Of this, 1,503 people liked, commented or shared the social media tiles. More posts were made on Facebook; however, Instagram proved to have higher levels of engagement. The social media engagement is below, in figure 5.

Figure 5. Social media engagement

	Reach	Number of posts	Interactions
<b>Facebook</b>	53,534	47	597
<b>Instagram</b>	25,131	45	906

The tiles that received the most interactions, can be found in figure 6.

Figure 6. Top three tiles for interactions



255 engagements



161 engagements



114 engagements

## Boundary Banners

2 x Boundary banner designs were developed. Banner 1 had the messaging "Our Club: A Place for Everyone" across the image of a multi-generational family. This banner was made in custom club colours for 25 clubs.

Banner 2 included the messaging "Our Club: Supporting Each Other" over an image of two young adult males and young female child. This banner was only given to the 8 clubs in the Maroondah City Council catchment.

The banners can be found in figure 7.

Figure 7. Boundary banners



## Banner Reach

It is difficult to estimate the reach of the banners. In order to estimate this, recall was used as a measure. In a survey of members, spectators and players, 80% of the respondents, said they recalled seeing the banners throughout the season. Furthermore, 60% of respondents said they recalled seeing the posters and banners on-site, in at least 1-3 other clubs. This highlights a high rate of exposure in the EFNL community.

In addition to the banners being used in EFNL clubs, one banner was displayed on Mt Dandenong Road, East Ringwood. This is a major transport route, therefore it can be assumed that public exposure was also high.

## Posters

5 x posters were developed with images from the two photoshoots, including three posters with the messaging "Our Club A Place For Everyone" and two posters with the messaging "Supporting Each Other". These posters can be found in figure 8.

Figure 8. Posters



## Poster Reach

Similar to the banners, it is hard to measure the reach of the posters, therefore recall was used as a measure. As with the banners, 80% of survey respondents, recalled seeing the posters. The most commonly recalled posters were:

- 1) Our Club Supporting Each Other - Older Men
- 2) Our Club A Place for Everyone - Teenagers
- 3) Our Club Supporting Each Other - Younger Men

The most commonly recalled place for seeing the posters was social media, inside club rooms and entry doors.

## Additional Resources

A number of additional resources were developed to support the Our Club campaign. This included the following:

- 10 x "Celebrating Our Club" social media tiles were developed in custom colours during the first lockdown to promote social connection. An example can be found, in figure 9. The reach of these tiles was not measured.
- 2 x mental health support sheets (1 x online version, 1 x print version). These were developed in response to feedback from the clubs that they needed to know what do to and where to go, if a member was to confide in them. The support sheet provided links to local services as well as crisis lines such as Lifeline and BeyondBlue. The mental health tip sheet can be found in figure 10. The reach and use of the mental health support sheets were not formally measured, however they were shared on social media, resulting in 120 engagements.
- 1 x club engagement guide was developed as a supporting resource for clubs. The guide included 10 tips to improve club engagement and can be found in figure 11. The reach of the guide was not measured.

Figure 9. "Celebrating Our Club" social media tile



Figure 10. Mental health support sheet

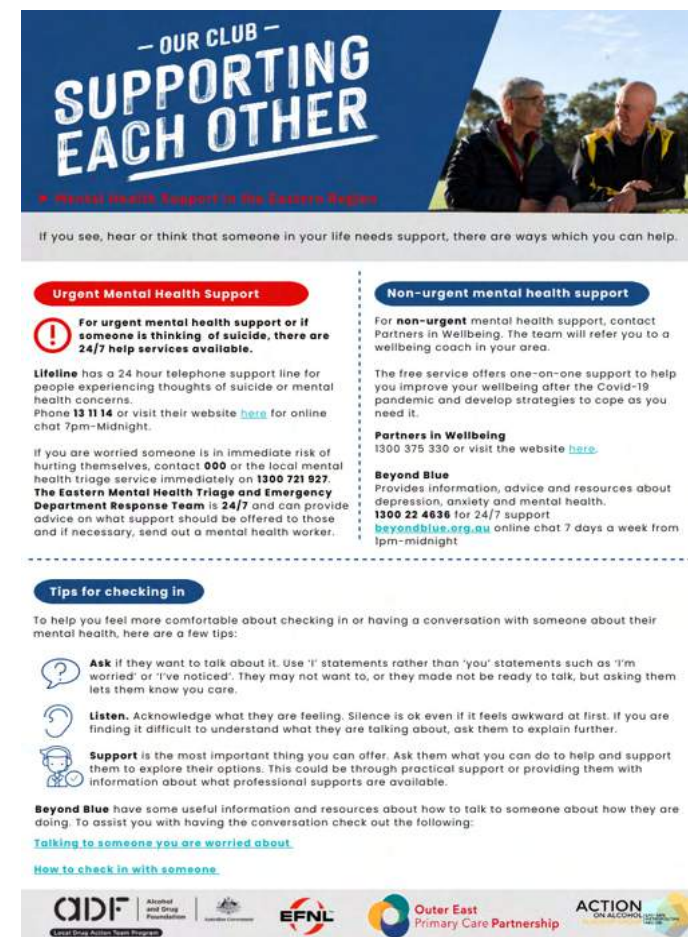
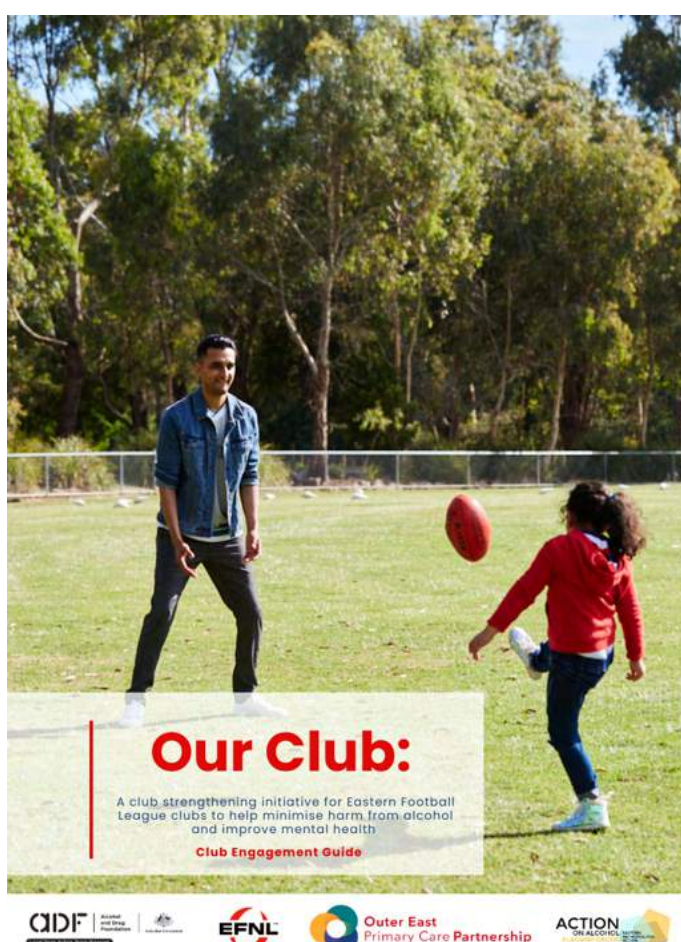


Figure 11. Club engagement guide



## Objective 3

### **Impact Measure 1: Increased awareness of messaging and increased credibility and believability of messaging among clubs**

At the conclusion of the campaign, there was an increased awareness of the messaging and increased credibility/believability of the messaging, amongst spectators, players, members and committee members.

To assess the impact of the values-based messaging among clubs, surveys and interviews were conducted with:

- Spectators, players and members (n=30)
- Club committee members (n=9)

When asked if the message "Our Club: A Place for Everyone" was relevant to their club, 83% of spectators, players and members and 100% of club committee members said yes.

*"100% it's definitely relevant. I can't speak for other clubs, but I've been at \*\*\*\* club for 10 years and \*\*\*\* is welcoming for all people from all walks of life. We don't turn anyone away"*  
- Player

When asked if the message "Our Club: Supporting Each Other" was relevant to their club, 90% of spectators, players and members and 100% of club committee respondents said it was relevant.

*"The message is definitely relevant- We are always there to help out a mate"- Player*

When asked what the Our Club messages were about, club committee members said the following:

*"Including everyone at the club. It's not just for the players and coaches, but for the whole family. I didn't feel the messages were specifically directed at alcohol, however I thought they were more around inclusion of the whole family and encouraging social behaviour"*

*"Its about creating a safe place, healthy culture and calling out bad behaviour. We are already really conscious of calling out bad behaviour but it's a good reminder"*

Players and spectators said the following:

*"It means that our club and all clubs are welcoming places in general. They are accepting places for everyone to enjoy".*

*"Encouraging a safe and inclusive place for all players, officials and spectators of all ages".*



## Impact Measure 2: Messaging leads to increased understanding / awareness of their role in reducing alcohol harm

It is unclear if the messaging of Our Club, led to an increased understanding and awareness of the clubs' role in reducing alcohol harm. All club committees were aware that they play a role in the alcohol culture at the club and had a range of strategies in place to reduce alcohol harm including; Good Sports policies, RSA training, licensing laws, restrictions at events and establishing a better culture around alcohol. Whilst the committees were aware of their role in reducing harm from alcohol, 71% of the committees said their awareness of the impact of alcohol misuse within the club did not increase, as a result of the campaign.

Club committees were not convinced that the messaging changed drinking behaviours, with 57% of respondents saying it was hard to tell if the campaign started behaviour change in their club. Some members thought the messaging alone was not enough to make people reflect on their behaviours and make changes.

*"The campaign didn't change anything for us. We are already an inclusive club and I don't think people took that much notice of the posters and banners"- Club Committee member*

Whilst agreeing that the messages did not make significant change, another committee member said that saturation of the messages was a good thing.

*"There's already so much happening at our club, as a result of the president and the culture we strive for here. I don't think the campaign helped that much, however, saturation is always good and it helps that people are seeing these messages everywhere"- Club committee member*

Others said it was difficult to know if there were changes, due to the nature of people seeking help.

*"Sharing messages like these can help people, but because you're asking them to change personal behaviours, you're never going to know if it has impacted someone. You think it would help one or two people, but hope for more"- Club Committee member*


While committee members were unsure if the messaging changed behaviour in relation to alcohol, parents reported that they made changes because of the campaign, including:

*"The campaign made me think about the presence of alcohol at footy clubs" - Parent*

*"I have been reminding parents, especially fathers, that they are children, not professional players"- Parent*

*"It's made me feel okay about asking for fundraisers other than alcohol"- Parent*

*"I've encouraged running a parent only night, so parents can enjoy a drink and not drink in front of their children" - Parent*



In relation to mental health, 70% of players, spectators and members surveyed thought there were more people offering help. In addition, 60% of respondents thought there were more people starting conversations about mental health. It was unclear if this was a direct result of the messaging, or if other factors such as covid or the club culture/structure had something to do with this.

*"We've had a club chaplain for many years, when he started, there were more conversations about mental health and drinking culture. So I'm not sure if the behaviour change is because of the messaging- it's hard to comment" - Player*

*"The chaplain is confidential so it's hard to know who is seeking help and whether it has increased, however there have been a few people seeking my help as the president this year so I would imagine it would be the same for him" - Committee member*

Spectators and parents additionally mentioned they had taken action to address mental health, as a direct result of the campaign.

*"I've done a mental health first aid course" - Spectator and Parent*

*"We are appointing a club welfare officer next season" - Parent*

## Objective 4

**"Create greater awareness and understanding of sporting club alcohol culture/practices and its impact on community who are a part of this social world"**

**Process Measure 1: Conduct facilitated culture change sporting club forum with outer east EFL clubs to explore issues identified from the test purchasing exercise and understand the situations clubs face in managing safe environments around alcohol.**

Due to the Covid-19 lockdowns in Melbourne, the forum did not take place. Whilst a virtual forum was considered, it was noted throughout the season, that the lockdowns were causing significant stress on clubs and engagement was decreasing. Additionally, given the cancellation of the season, clubs would not have had an opportunity to put strategies into place. In consideration of these factors, the forum did not proceed. If the campaign is reintroduced, it is recommended this forum takes place, to enable clubs to understand their test purchasing results and identify strategies to mitigate harm, together as a collective.

**Impact Measure 1: EFL clubs report a greater understanding of the influence and impact of alcohol misuse within their club and have strategies to mitigate harm.**

It was unclear if the campaign increased club committee's understanding of the impact of alcohol misuse and their role in developing strategies to mitigate harm. Many clubs reported that they understood the level of influence they had prior to the campaign and felt that they already had strategies in place, including RSA training, policies and zero tolerance for poor behaviour caused by alcohol.

Comments from parents such as, "Our club is good on conversations about mental health, but you would never suggest anyone drink less", are a sign that there has been a significant shift in club culture in relation to mental health, but there is still a way to go before the same shift is seen in alcohol culture. It is worth noting that while 67% of spectators, members and players said alcohol had never made them feel unsafe, 33% said it had, ranging from a little, to a great deal. This is still a large proportion of the AFL community, highlighting the need for further action to be taken to address this.

Club committee members and parents identified the need to address alcohol misuse within the club and suggested strategies to do so.

*"It would be good to see it continue but maybe needs something else with it. Dual workshops where parents attend because the kids are there, are beneficial" - Committee Member*

*"I'm not sure posters & social media posts have any great cut through. Maybe it needs to be a club driven initiative, with the backing of the committee. Player or parent information nights - Parent*

Parents thought it was particularly important for club committees to drive this culture change.

*"Make it a responsibility of the club presidents to set a standard and influence culture. Ours does a weekly video summary behind a bar. No clue!" - Parent*

It was clear that the campaign was useful in getting people to think about alcohol culture in their club and was much needed, with 80% of spectators, players and members and 86% of committee members saying they would like to see the campaign continue.

*"Would love to see it out there again. Saturation is good"- Committee Member*

*"I'm grateful that our club's values and code of conduct align and are reinforced by this campaign"- Parent*

# Strengths and Weaknesses

## Strengths of the campaign

Overall, the Our Club campaign was successful in delivering values-based messages in relation to club culture and mental health. The working group identified the following strengths of the campaign:

- 1) A regional campaign - *"It was great that the reach and awareness was potentially far reaching"*
- 2) Engagement of sporting clubs in the development of the values-based messaging
- 3) True collaboration of agencies - *"The support by local government representatives from leisure services using their natural relationships with clubs was crucial"*
- 4) Inclusive imagery - *"Images of real people in the resources were great"*

*"You portrayed people as ordinary community members. Hitting home with the photographs. That was done really well in my opinion" - Sport and Recreation Council Staff member*

- 5) Non-judgemental and clear language in messaging
- 6) Quality of the resources - *"The design and outputs of the resources were excellent" and "The mental health tips were great"*
- 7) Funding from the ADF and OEPCP
- 8) Project Management support from the OEPCP- *"The PCP administration of the LDAT was the linchpin to the project's success"*
- 9) The ability to use the AAFG platform - *"It allowed for regional organisations to support it"*
- 10) It is agile and adaptable - *"It has so much potential to be adapted to other health concerns"*

The EFNL also identified the strengths of the campaign as:

*"The messages were strong. The amount of content was great. There was lots to choose from and enough to cover the season without being repetitive" - EFNL Representative*

## Weaknesses of the campaign

Whilst the campaign had its strengths, there were also a number of weaknesses identified by the working group. These included:

- 1) Message intention- *"The messages weren't obvious enough for the audience and were somewhat ambiguous"*
- 2) Timing of implementation in Covid-19 lockdowns - *"The impacts of pandemic diluted messages around alcohol"*
- 3) Implementation processes - *"While we had very good guidelines, on reflection stronger implementation processes could have improved the meaningful implementation. e.g. A support person to provide help our with the campaign"*
- 4) Collaboration/commitment from local government - *"Some local governments provided support, but not all. We needed to involve them more so we could communicate with clubs about the importance of this project"*
- 5) Commitment/engagement from clubs - *"The level of interest from clubs makes me think that their engagement wasn't where we thought it was. We had strong interest when inviting registration, but that didn't necessarily translate into serious commitment from clubs" and "the fact that we had to incentivise action from the clubs highlighted there were low levels of engagement and was a weakness of the campaign".*

In addition to the working group, the EFNL identified the following weaknesses:

*"The lack of variety in terms of the type of content- I would look at reducing the number of graphics to 6 and then adding 6 short videos. They get better engagement online. Secondly, the lack of man power behind the campaign (within the clubs), makes it hard to drive it from within" - EFNL Representative*

# Challenges and Barriers

## Covid-19 Lockdowns and Restrictions

Not surprisingly, a global pandemic was not planned to occur right before the implementation of the campaign in 2020. The pandemic acted as both a barrier and enabler of the campaign.

Firstly, it delayed the campaign by 12 months. This halted the momentum built from the Common Cause workshops and the EFNL start of season forum, with many clubs forgetting that they signed up to the campaign and what it was about. There was also a turn over in club committee members during this time. This meant that some contact details were incorrect and new members were not aware of the campaign. The working group believe this significantly impacted engagement in the campaign.

*"I have personally thought, that the one gap year, felt like a five year gap because of covid. Because of the gap, you lost so much momentum, as football was not being played last year. This project was discussed 15 months ago but you are only implementing now. Clubs were lost in this sense"- Sports and Recreation Council Staff Member*

Furthermore, due to the pandemic, many clubs were struggling financially. This resulted in clubs needing to fundraise significantly more throughout the season. Fundraising was advertised on social media and over email. This was often the clubs main focus and they didn't want to shift the focus towards other posts or messaging.

*"Clubs wanted to promote their own events far more than social messaging. e.g. buy a pie on this night etc. Therefore the campaign messaging gets lost. There were also other campaigns they wanted to do that had financial incentive and they didn't want to take away prominence from their posts" - Sports and Recreation Council Staff Member*

Another barrier caused by the pandemic, was volunteer fatigue. Committees were stretched to the limit trying to keep up with all the new information about restrictions. They had many more jobs to complete this season and often didn't have enough people or the right people on the committee to take on the campaign.

*"Change of committees and volunteer fatigue were a barrier- volunteers are stretched to the limit, they have number of things they need to do. A lot of clubs don't even have a social media person" - Working Group Member*

*"Who the communications went to would've impacted the implementation- some clubs are active in that space and participate in extra campaigns. Relying on volunteers means that not everything gets done and you are relying on good intentions" - EFNL Representative*

Whilst the pandemic mostly acted as a barrier, it was also a catalyst for the expansion of the campaign. During the first lockdown, through consultation with clubs, the working group learned that mental health was the most significant concern for clubs. This prompted the working group to expand the campaign aim beyond alcohol consumption, to supporting mental health. The mental health component of the campaign had far greater reach and resulted in more behaviour change than the inclusion messaging. The addition of this messaging may have resulted in higher levels of engagement in the campaign overall, due to its relevance in the covid climate.

# Challenges and Barriers

## Collecting Evaluation Data

The evaluation of the Our Club campaign was planned to take place face to face. The plan was to conduct the following:

- 1) Surveys with players at the end of training sessions
- 2) Surveys with coaches at the end of training sessions
- 3) Surveys with spectators at multiple games
- 4) Interviews/focus groups with club committees during committee meetings

Whilst, the working group pivoted and developed alternate methods of data collection (phone interviews and online surveys), it was challenging to engage with the clubs to gain feedback. This resulted in a smaller evaluation than originally planned.

It is also worthwhile noting that the collection of evaluation data, was a significant component of this project, both in relation to time and funding. Without the funding of the OEPCP it would have been difficult to evaluate this project to the required standard. This is important to consider for future projects and grant applications.

# Learnings

## Social Media campaign

The world of social media is constantly changing; the algorithms, the way people interact and the platforms they use. The working group developed the social marketing campaign for use on social media. This included 16 tiles that were sized appropriately for Facebook or Instagram. The hashtag #OurClubEFNL was used for all EFNL clubs and #OurClubCulture for all other codes. One learning from previous social marketing campaigns was that communication guide was needed to guide the captions and know when to schedule posts. Developing a guide with pre-written captions was done to ensure the messaging was translated appropriately.

*"It was great for planning and knowing which posts go when. Whenever that level of support can be provided, its always helpful. Pre-written captions are helpful, as it reduces the risk of us taking a stab in the dark at the message. It (the communication guide) was really easy to use"*  
- EFNL Representative

The majority of clubs used the pre-written captions for their posts with some occasionally changing the messages. In one instance a club used the image and hashtag with a caption stating that "Everyone was welcome to come down for a beer". This highlighted that clubs needed more education about the campaign and why it was important.

A minor issue raised with the copying and pasting of captions from the guide, was that the URL would not become "live". After some investigation, it was found that in order for a URL to become live in a caption, you must type in www. prior to the URL. It can be shortened after this, however the www must be typed first to begin the process. This may have prevented some people following the link to the website and therefore interacting with the campaign in greater detail.

The content developed for the campaign was produced for the purpose of "posts". This allows the content to be more permanently housed on the social media page, however this method of reaching audiences is no longer the most popular way to engage audiences. Stories are now popular because they are more interactive by including features like polls, surveys and questions. Stories also often include videos which are more engaging for viewers. While many clubs themselves may not have used story content if it were developed, using story content for the larger stakeholders including the EFNL, may have driven more engagement for the campaign. It would be have been difficult to evaluate the reach of stories from stakeholders however wider research data indicates that more people view stories than see posts.

## Recommendations

- Develop short video content for future campaigns
- Utilise and promote the use of the "story" feature on Instagram and Facebook
- Launch the campaign and communication guide either at a virtual or live event, to ensure the clubs understand the intent of the messaging

# Learnings

## Club Engagement

Sports clubs are busy places with the primary business of coaching and developing players for weekly games. While clubs aim to provide a safe and welcoming setting for their players and members, many clubs don't have the staffing resources for extra activities. Feedback from clubs included, that they were struggling to organise themselves for the season and were too busy to take on another task. Other barriers to participating included:

- Club committees may not have the skills to use social media
- Volunteer burn out
- Lack of funding

Increasing club engagement, by addressing some of these factors, would improve the implementation and impact of the campaign.

## Recommendations

- Involve the clubs in the delivery of the message

*"A ten or thirty second message from the club president would go a long way. They could repeat the same messages used in the campaign. It would have a greater impact. Its a simple message, but it just needs to be reiterated. All the club members would listen to that, that would be strong" - Sports and Recreation Council Staff Member*

- Deliver workshops or presentations to clubs, to increase awareness of the messaging

*"I'm not sure if it's part of the campaign but a representative or something that our committee could present at a family night would be great"- Parent*

*"Workshops to clubs would help with engagement - Possibly by our sport & rec teams or engage someone like SALT to deliver education sessions. It wouldn't have worked this round though; right now the timing is very poor as clubs deal with the implosion of their season" - Sports and Recreation Council Staff Member*

*"In addition to the messaging, I would also be looking for engagement opportunities that are a bit more in depth; whether that's committee members sending out letters or talks about the (alcohol) culture that they want for their club more specifically. Some communication formats are better than others for those sensitive conversations and the more personal it is and the more in depth it is, the better" - Common Cause*

- Increase implementation support for clubs

*"The messages themselves are great but driving them home is the next step. If you want to do that, you need to consider how this could be done. We understand that there is only so much people can do though. You could look at getting five people across the region that look after a few clubs each. These people could be volunteers from the clubs or even paid a nominal fee. Some people really enjoy helping out clubs in these health areas. This would provide more support within the organisation and clubs" - EFNL Representative*

*"If EFNL get involved and councils get involved, then its not expensive to have more support for clubs. If you can embed it and make it habitual, then it becomes second nature" - Sports and Recreation Council Staff Member*

*"Clubs need ideas and supported to make money from opportunities other than alcohol sales" - Council Staff Member*



# Learnings

## Values-Based Messaging

The values-based messaging used in the campaign resonated strongly with club committees, spectators, players and parents. The majority of respondents identified that the messaging was about creating an inclusive environment within the club; welcoming and supporting everyone. Very few people surveyed recognised that the messaging was linked with alcohol harm reduction.

*"I didn't feel the messages were specifically directed at alcohol, I thought they were more around inclusion of whole family and encouraging social behaviour" - Club Committee Member*

Working group members felt a possible reason for this, was that the message was too indirect. Consultation with Common Cause identified that there was no way for the alcohol message to come through in the simple tagline "Our Club: A Place for Everyone".

*"It's interesting because we developed this whole message with the clubs and the vision is always meant to be audience centred, always meant to be something that resonates strongly. It sounds like that actually is happening, it's just that it needs to be combined with the barrier and action; and a simple slogan isn't going to do that" - Common Cause*

In order to strengthen the message, the full story needs to be presented, rather than the vision in isolation. Additionally, it was suggested that the call to action needed to be more obvious. This would allow the reader to understand the message straight away.

*"You want the audience to hear the message, which isn't necessarily people doing the wrong thing, it's also club members; you need them to feel ownership for the action. You're not going to have all these people being strong advocates for alcohol, but they are advocates for their club, so you have to make the connection between the vision, barrier and action, it's really important"- Common Cause*

One reason for the success of the mental health messaging was the tangible call to action, coupled with the tip sheets that allowed people to follow through with the action. It was identified that Partners in Prevention did observe an increase in people calling from the area and accessing the service. Furthermore, as the 'Supporting Each Other' tagline proved to connect with the audience, it was suggested that it could be extended to the alcohol messaging. This would create a message that asked members to call a person in, rather than calling them out.

*"There's a potential paradigm shift at the moment with the pandemic and the things that were too difficult might crack open a little bit. The idea of talking about mental health amongst men is probably more possible now than ever. Framing alcohol use and abuse in terms of mental health and an unhealthy way of coping with stress - theres a real possibility of linking it there" - Common Cause*

It was acknowledged that finding a balance between the vision and barrier/action was important in gaining acceptance of the message.

*"If you hit them with a strong message that is problem focused then they'll reject it and you'll get defensiveness, difficulty with uptake and spreading the message. I would keep the current vision because then you've got acceptance; people, go "yep that's what I want and that's important". However, you need to elevate the call to action and the specific nature of the problem, otherwise it just gets lost" - Common Cause*

Finally, the layout of the messaging on the posters was identified as an area of improvement. Placing the call to action in the centre of the poster where the current tagline is and moving the tagline to the corner, would make clearer that the message was about alcohol culture.

# Learnings



## Recommendations

- Add a call to action in a secondary tag line or hashtag
- Make the call to action/secondary tag line more prominent on the poster
- Keep the positive imagery to highlight the vision, however contrast with stronger messaging to indicate what is stopping the vision
- Ensure the following three elements are included in every communication; positive imagery, clear barrier (in prominent position) and call to action

# Conclusion

In conclusion, the Our Club campaign was delivered to 48 ENFL clubs and 3 clubs from other sporting codes across the region. The campaign was developed in consultation with clubs, councils, community health services, LightYears and Common Cause Australia.

A number of resources were developed for the campaign including boundary banners, posters, social media tiles, communication guides, mental health tip sheets and club engagement guides. The resources were widely utilised and had a significant reach on social media.

Overall, the messages resonated with clubs. However, it was unclear that one of the messages was directed at alcohol culture. Whilst club committees were unsure if the campaign resulted in any behaviour change, a significant proportion of spectators, players and parents noticed changes in others or personally made changes. Club committees felt they already understood their role in reducing alcohol harm and had strategies in place before the campaign. A number of parents felt this needed to be strengthened in clubs and fully supported by the committee.

Covid-19 lockdowns resulted in a number of implementation and evaluation challenges for the campaign. It is difficult to know the true impact the lockdowns had on the campaign.

Whilst there were challenges, there were many learnings from the project, including how to better use social media, improve club engagement and strengthen the values-based messaging. Many clubs, including parents and players, hoped to see the campaign continue. If it is to continue, it is recommended that the campaign be modified by strengthening the messaging and adding additional elements to reinforce the message in clubs.