



SportWest's True Sport Mental Health & Wellbeing Initiative: Delivery, Activities, & Short-term Outcomes

1: SUMMARY EVALUATION REPORT

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ACKNOWLEDGING COUNTRY

This report was prepared by health promotion researchers based at The University of Western Australia (UWA). We wish to begin this document with an acknowledgement that we are extremely fortunate to live and do our work on Whadjuk Noongar boodjar—the land of the Whadjuk people of the proud Noongar nation. We are also mindful that UWA's campus is situated on sacred and beautiful land—Goordandalup (Crawley Bay), between the Derbarl Yerrigan (Swan River), Boorloo (Perth), and Kaarta Gar-up (Kings Park). Whenever we walk our campus, and whenever we travel out across our breathtaking State, we are grateful for the reminder of the truly special Country upon which we live, play, and do our work.

We pay our deepest respects, and offer our thanks, to Noongar Elders past and present. We value their wisdom, generosity, and guidance in shaping the work that UWA and all health promoters do to connect and improve the lives of Western Australians. We extend that respect to all Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, and First Nations Peoples.

BACKGROUND, SCOPE & OBJECTIVES

This evaluation report focuses on the first stage (i.e., first 9-12 months) of the True Sport Mental Health & Wellbeing Initiative. This Initiative, formally launched in October 2023, is supported by the Western Australian Mental Health Commission and Healthway, and involves the development and delivery of a suite of resources to support the implementation of SportWest's [Mental Health and Wellbeing Community Sport Framework](#). The first stage of the Initiative focuses on providing State Sporting Association (SSA) employees with resources and training designed to support positive change in culture and environment, increased mental health literacy, closer links with local support services, and improved confidence and knowledge in responding to critical mental health incidents. Activities (e.g., education, resources, materials) delivered or made available as part of the Mental Health & Wellbeing Initiative include online learning (eLearning), workshops, an online resource hub, and a Mental Health Champions network.

A detailed measurement plan was developed, focused on: (i) obtaining insight into each of the Initiative's key activities and its overall (short-term) outcomes, and; (ii) understanding SSA members' experiences of the Initiative, identifying recommendations for ongoing implementation of this Initiative, and obtaining insight to guide the rollout of future initiatives. In addition to comprehensively reporting on each of these project elements, our other key aim was to synthesise all of the evidence above against relevant aspects of the Healthway Evaluation Framework (please see accompanying documents, *Detailed Evaluation Report* and *Healthway Framework Report*, for further detail).


This document provides a summary of the comprehensive independent evaluation of the True Sport Mental Health and Wellbeing Initiative during the period October 2023 to June 2024. We have utilised data collected by SportWest to perform quantitative analyses and have independently conducted a series of qualitative interviews to address the evaluation objectives outlined in the evaluation plan. In this Summary Evaluation Report we present key findings related to:

- Reach and delivery of the Initiative,
- Perceptions of effectiveness the eLearning modules and workshops,
- Overall program outcomes as reported by SSAs, the True Sport Advisory Group, and SportWest employees, and
- Qualitative data and conclusions derived from interviews with True Sport Advisory Group members and SSA Mental Health Champions to understand experiences with the Initiative and recommendations to support ongoing roll out into SSAs, clubs, and community.

REACH AND DELIVERY

Reach and delivery elements include the activities and resources delivered within the Initiative, and the number and type of participants who accessed or completed these elements (to June 2024). The data presented in this section were recorded by SportWest throughout the project. These findings are mapped to Healthway Framework outcomes regarding 'Participation and Engagement' and 'Promotional and Educational Activities' (see *Healthway Framework Report* for further detail).

KEY FINDINGS:

- 100 SSA employees representing 38 different organisations have completed (52%) or are completing (48%) the eLearning modules.
 - 61 participants from 35 organisations completed a workshop delivered between October 2023 and June 2024.
 - 19,467 event counts have been recorded for the Online Resource Hub between October 2023 – July 2024. The most interactions beyond the landing page included the e-Toolkits and Community Links webpages.
 - 38 Mental Health and Wellbeing resources downloaded from the Online Resource Hub in a 62-day monitoring period from April – June 2024. Almost half of all downloads were the *Where to Find Help for Mental Health* contact list.
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ELEARNING

The eLearning comprised an online training platform and series of modules designed to upskill SSA staff members' mental health literacy, and their capacity to address incidents and promote mental health and wellbeing in sport. Surveys assessed key perceptions of eLearning participants immediately before and immediately after the completion of the eLearning modules. Data were collected from 56 eLearning participants who accessed the platform between October 2023 and June 2024. These findings are mapped to Healthway Framework outcomes regarding 'Implementation, Adoption, & Fidelity' and 'Health, Knowledge and Attitudes' (see *Healthway Framework Report* for further detail).

KEY FINDINGS

- The eLearning was exceptionally well received by the large majority of respondents.
- 97% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the eLearning modules and 92% agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend the eLearning modules to others working in a similar role.
- Completion of the eLearning modules is associated with a statistically significant improvement in mental health literacy of individuals working in the WA sport sector.
- The eLearning demonstrated meaningful improvements in participants' knowledge and confidence, ability to recognise, respond to, and manage mental health issues and critical mental health incidents, awareness of mental health support and resources, and confidence and ability to communicate, share information, and support their own and others mental health.
- Key recommendations for the eLearning modules include:
 - Ensuring the eLearning modules remain easily accessible via SportWest.
 - Promoting access and participation to the broader WA sporting community (clubs, coaches, volunteers, parents, participants).
 - Implementation of strategies to maximise engagement and completion of the eLearning modules (see accompanying *Detailed Evaluation Report* for further detail).

WORKSHOPS

The workshops were focused on creating Mental Health Champions in SSAs and further developing the skills taught in the eLearning modules. A one-off post-workshop survey captured participants' perceptions of workshop effectiveness immediately after the completion of a half-day or full-day workshop. Data were collected from 27 participants between October 2023 and June 2024. These findings are mapped to Healthway Framework outcomes regarding 'Implementation, Adoption, & Fidelity' and 'Health, Knowledge and Attitudes' (see *Healthway Framework Report* for further detail).

KEY FINDINGS

- The workshops were exceptionally well received.
- 100% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the workshops, that they were a valuable learning experience, and that they would recommend them to others working in a similar role.
- Participants indicated that the workshop was responsible for meaningful improvements in their knowledge and confidence of mental health and their duty of care, their ability to recognise, respond to, and manage mental health issues and critical mental health incidents, their awareness of mental health support and resources, and confidence and ability to communicate, share information, connect, and support their own and others mental health.
- 81% agreed or strongly agreed that the workshop helped to build strong connections to other Mental Health Champions in the sector.
- Key elements of workshop effectiveness included their practical and interactive nature, and engaging and skilled facilitators who were subject matter experts.
- Participants indicated strong intentions to action and implement resources and strategies within organisations following the workshop (for specific actions, see *Detailed Evaluation Report*).
- Completing or providing information about the eLearning modules prior to the workshop may increase time in the workshop for additional activities or reflection.
- The workshop was equally effective and well received for those who completed a half day workshop as it was for those who completed the full day.

OVERALL PROGRAM OUTCOMES: SSAs

A one-off survey captured the perceptions of SSA employees about the overall delivery, effectiveness and mental health-related outcomes of the Initiative. Data were collected from 23 SSA end-users of the Initiative in May and June 2024. Findings are mapped to Healthway Framework outcomes regarding 'Implementation, Adoption, & Fidelity', 'Health, Knowledge and Attitudes', and 'Health Promotion Capacity' (see *Healthway Framework Report* for further detail).

KEY FINDINGS

- The True Sport Mental Health and Wellbeing resources were exceptionally well received.
- 96% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they were a valuable source of information for State Sporting Association employees, and that they intended to promote these to clubs, officials, and volunteers in WA sport.
- Participants reported positive ratings across all mental health knowledge and attitude and organisational outcomes. In particular, 96% agreed or strongly agreed the True Sport resources made organisations better at supporting mental health and wellbeing in the workplace and the sporting community. Confidence recognising and responding to mental health issues (78% agree / strongly agree) and critical mental health incidents (87% agree / strongly agree) also improved. 83% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the resources provided practical strategies to help support others' mental health and wellbeing.
- Mental Health Champions are of significant value to organisations (91% agree or strongly agree), and where embedded, are perceived to have enhanced organisational capacity and ability to manage and support mental health situations arising in SSAs and clubs.
- The volume and breadth of the resources were a concern for organisations with limitations around staffing and resource capacity (for specific recommendations, see *Detailed Evaluation Report*).

OVERALL PROGRAM OUTCOMES: TRUE SPORT ADVISORY GROUP

A one-off survey captured the perceptions of the True Sport Advisory Group about the overall delivery and effectiveness of the Initiative, including short-term organisational and sustainability outcomes. Data were collected from 6 True Sport Advisory Group members in June 2024. Findings are mapped to Healthway Framework outcomes regarding 'Implementation, Adoption, & Fidelity', 'Reach and Mission', 'Health Promotion Capacity', 'Maintenance and Capacity', 'Partnerships', 'Policy', and 'Structural reform' (see *Healthway Framework Report* for further detail).

KEY FINDINGS

- 100% of participants indicated they were satisfied or highly satisfied with the project overall.
- 100% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that SportWest was able to implement the project successfully, that project activities were suitable for SSAs, and that SportWest was able to make a significant portion of SSAs aware of the project.
- There is perceived to be high awareness of the initiative among SSAs, but limitations in SSA capacity have restricted adoption and delivery.
- Large increases in the health promotion capacity of SportWest were reported to have resulted from the initiative. These included increases in SportWest's (i) capacity to deliver effective mental health promotion initiatives, (ii) commitment to promoting health in the community, (iii) overall range and/or number of programs and services, and (iv) health promotion partnerships and collaborations.
- Reforms arising from the initiative have supported and promoted authentic industry collaboration, connection and engagement, increased support for SSAs, and unified mental health and wellbeing practices across the WA sport sector.
- To deliver the project going forward, respondents indicated SportWest required additional investment from external funders, contributions from outside of organisation staff, and significant volunteer support.
- Ongoing investment is critical for the sustainability, impact, and evaluation of the initiative.

OVERALL PROGRAM OUTCOMES: SPORTWEST

A one-off survey captured the perceptions of SportWest employees about the overall delivery and effectiveness of the Initiative, including short-term organisational and sustainability outcomes. Data were collected from 2 key representatives from SportWest in June 2024. Findings are mapped to Healthway Framework outcomes regarding 'Implementation, Adoption, & Fidelity', 'Reach and mission', 'Health promotion capacity', 'Maintenance and capacity', 'Partnerships', 'Policy', and 'Structural reform' (see *Healthway Framework Report* for further detail).

KEY FINDINGS

- The Mental Health and Wellbeing initiative was delivered mainly as intended and implemented successfully.
- A significant portion of SSAs are aware of the initiative, but there are some challenges with adoption and delivery.
- Moderate-to-large increases in the health promotion capacity of SportWest were reported to result from the initiative. These included increases in SportWest's (i) capacity to deliver effective mental health promotion initiatives, (ii) capacity to generate funding from external agencies, (iii) overall range and number of SportWest's programs and services, (iv) commitment to health promotion in the community, (v) ability to evaluate, (vi) health promotion partnerships, and (vii) staff knowledge of the delivery of health promotion activities.
- Most sustainability outcomes (maintenance, policy change, and structural reform) are yet to be fully realised. Although adequate sustainability planning and resources were reported, investment and support is required for ongoing delivery.
- SportWest is confident that partner organisations will provide the support necessary to sustain the initiative in the medium- to long-term.

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

In-depth qualitative interviews were conducted to obtain deeper insight into implementation and effectiveness, understand the reasons behind Initiative successes and challenges, and derive ongoing delivery recommendations. Interviews were conducted with 13 participants in May and June 2024. Participants included 5 SSA Mental Health Champions, and 8 members of the True Sport Advisory Group.

KEY FINDINGS

Our qualitative discussions provided insight into the experiences of Mental Health Champions and True Sport Advisory Group members involved in the Mental Health and Wellbeing Initiative to date. Ten overarching themes captured the meaning provided by participants, of which were split into three broad categories (for specific recommendations and deep insight, see *Detailed Evaluation Report*):

- *WORKING WELL*—themes in this category provide insight into the various elements that participants felt were working effectively and had supported positive experiences and outcomes with the Initiative. These included: (i) a coordinated industry approach; (ii) relevant, practical, and accessible resources; (iii) improving awareness, knowledge and confidence, and; (iv) activating organisational reform.
- *FACTORS INFLUENCING ENGAGEMENT*—themes in this category provide insight into features of the Initiative (and of SSAs) that had impacted engagement and implementation. These included: (i) volume of resources; (ii) capacity of SSAs and clubs, and; (iii) organisational support and advocacy.
- *RECOMMENDATIONS*—themes in this category provide strategies to support the ongoing implementation of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Initiative throughout community sport in WA. These included: (i) consolidation and continuity; (ii) strategic partnerships, and; (iii) guidance for action.

The vast majority of qualitative evidence derived from interviews supports the notion that the Initiative is highly valued, effective, and for most, ready to move into the next phase of implementation. Although several factors influenced the extent to which participants engaged with the Initiative, they all reinforced their appreciation of the Initiative and its importance to the industry. Participants were eager to receive more practical guidance to support the roll-out to clubs, and provided suggestions to support the expansion and sustainability of the Initiative across the sector.

CONCLUSIONS

SportWest's True Sport Mental Health and Wellbeing Initiative is supporting meaningful change in mental health knowledge and confidence across WA's SSA landscape. Activities have been delivered as planned and have been extremely well received. The Initiative is fully achieving many of its short-term objectives. The Initiative provides support for SSAs in WA that was previously unavailable, and if implemented downstream effectively (i.e., through SSAs to clubs and community), promises to bring about substantial benefits to mental health literacy and wellbeing in our sporting community. The positivity of the data presented within this report presents a strong case that the True Sport Mental Health and Wellbeing Initiative is a necessary and worthwhile investment for sport in WA.

As the Initiative has only been in place for a short period, further time and investment is required for reach, organisational, and sustainability outcomes to be fully realised. To help support the full range of impact, and the next phase of the Initiative, we recommend:

- Continued promotion, communication, and access to resources for ongoing awareness and use in sport in WA.
- Providing SSAs with practical resources and tailored engagement strategies to support the roll-out to clubs.
- Exploring partnerships (e.g., with local government, and across SSAs) to support the implementation of the Initiative for SSAs and clubs with limited capacity and resources.
- Planning and scheduling evaluation activity focused on medium- and longer-term objectives, to continue to provide strong evidence of the Initiative for SportWest and the sector.

OUR TEAM

Professor Michael Rosenberg

BAppSc (Nutrition and Human Biology), PGradDip (Secondary), PGradDip (Human Biology), MPH, PhD

Michael is the Head of School of the School of Human Sciences and former Director of the Health Promotion Evaluation Unit. Michael has over 20 years' experience in the area of health program evaluation and brings a blend of research and practical evaluation skills across a broad range of health areas. From 2002-2018, Michael was responsible for the management of the evaluation of Healthway services. During this period, he oversaw the delivery of all evaluation services and co-authored over 50 technical reports, including sponsorship monitors, special field studies, priorities reviews, and reviews of the Healthway evaluation framework.

Professor Ben Jackson

BSc Hons (Sport Science and Physiology), PhD

At UWA, Ben is a research and teaching academic in the School of Human Sciences, and at Telethon Kids Institute he is the Head of the 'Brain & Behaviour' Theme and member of the Institute's Science Leadership Committee. He created and leads the cross-institutional Psychology of Active, Healthy Living Group, has designed and provided quantitative and qualitative evaluation support for several local and national health promotion organisations, and has provided advisory or reference committee input for organisations including Football West, Healthway, Mental Health Commission, Exercise and Sport Science Australia, the Australian Research Council, National Health and Medical Research Council, UWA Sport, and International Olympic Committee. Ben is a Deputy Editor for the highly-ranked international journal, *Stress & Health*, and serves on the editorial board for 4 other prestigious journals. He has produced more than 180 peer-reviewed publications and has extensive experience in the development and evaluation of various health promotion activities.

Dr Claire Willis

BSc Hons (Sport Science, Exercise and Health), PhD

Claire is a Senior Research Fellow in the School of Human Sciences at UWA. Claire's research and community engagement is focused on developing and evaluating health promotion initiatives for diverse populations across the lifespan. This is supported by her international experience as an accredited exercise physiologist, and undertaken in partnership with young people, families, and the community. Claire led the implementation and evaluation of a National Health and Medical Research Council Partnership Project, and has directed and evaluated several health promotion initiatives for

children and young people with chronic and complex conditions in tertiary healthcare and community settings. She has consulted for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and has been a member of multiple advisory committees for Exercise and Sport Science Australia. The impact and outcomes of her work have been recognised by the Australasian Academy of Cerebral Palsy and Development Medicine, the State Government of Victoria, VicHealth, and Awards Australia.

Mr Aaron Simpson

BSc Hons (Sport Science and Exercise and Health)

Aaron recently submitted his PhD through UWA and Telethon Kids Institute, and conducts his research as part of the Psychology of Active, Healthy Living (PAHL) and the Mental Health and Exercise (MHEX) research groups. Aaron's research interests include health promotion, physical activity, and mental health. For his PhD research, he worked alongside community members to co-design a sport-based program for improved mental health outcomes in children in out-of-home care, and his PhD work has been endorsed by a number of government and not-for-profit organisations in the foster care sector. Aaron has also worked with several government and not-for-profit partners to support evaluation and consultation activity, as well as partnering with leading researchers to deliver health promotion evaluation and community implementation projects.