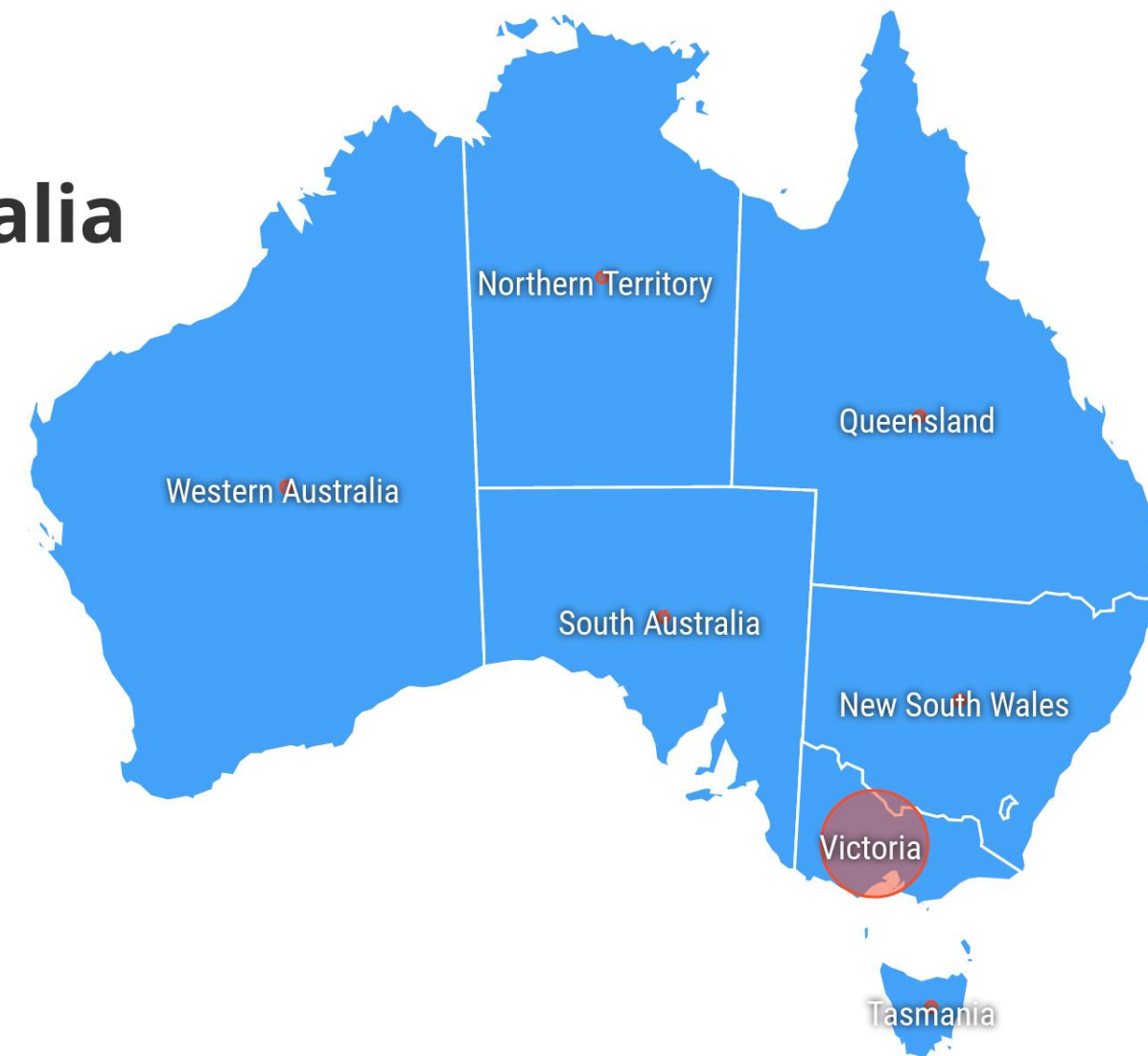


Inclusive Environments: Increasing Access to Sport and Recreation in Australia

Sarah Eicher
University of Michigan – School of Social Work

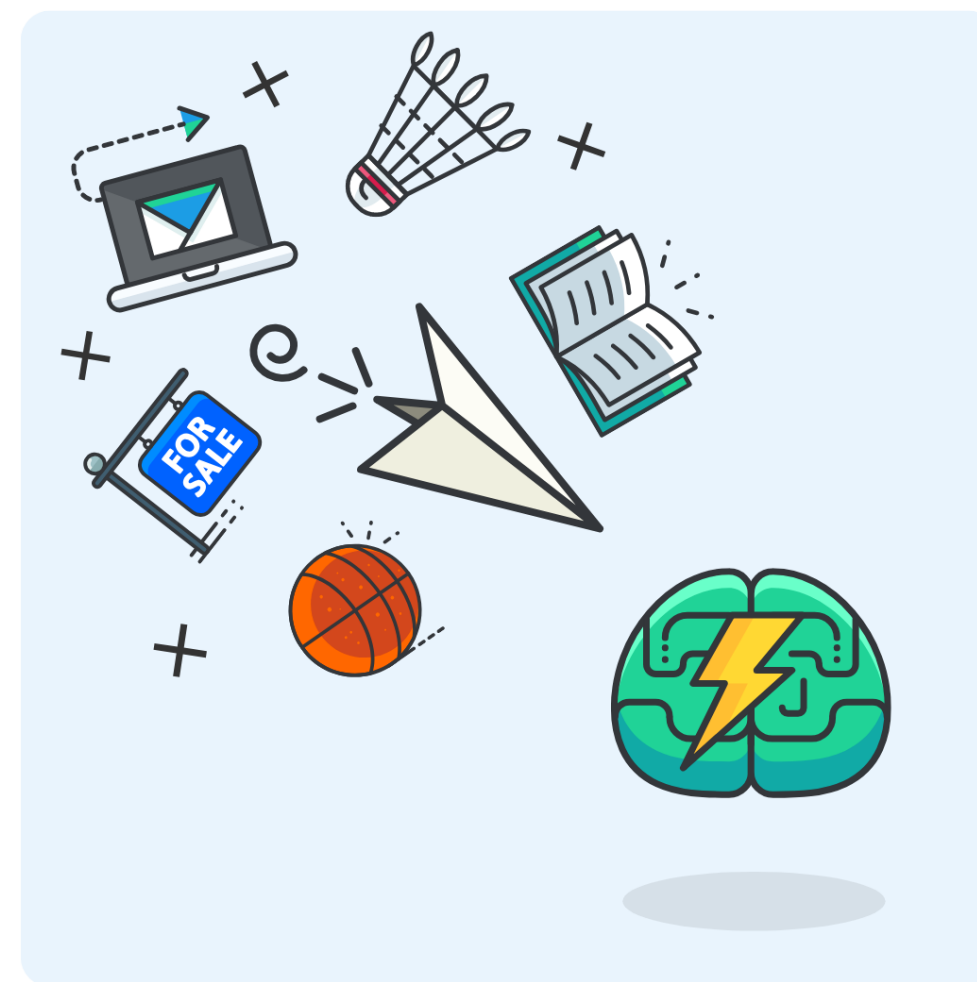
Melbourne Victoria, Australia

Melbourne is the coastal capital of the Australian state of Victoria. My field placement agency was located in West Footscray, an inner-western suburb of Melbourne.



Placement/Project Information

My global field placement was a community-based placement working on a social-change project with five other Master of Social Work students from the University of Melbourne. The project is possible through partnership between the University of Melbourne, the Hobsons Bay Community Fund, and local real estate agency- Compton Green. In previous years, the student cohorts focused on mapping the disability service landscape from social justice frameworks, the resource *Sports for Everyone: A Guide to 360° Inclusion for Young People in Sport*, capacity building and the facilitation of inter-organizational dialogue between sports and recreation clubs.



Skills Developed



Through this field placement I have enhanced my ability to:

- Develop action-driven products through participatory design processes
- Manage projects
- Produce and execute a strategic plan
- Build multi-objective consensus
- Coordinate events
- Present summative findings and recommendations
- Plan for sustainability and leadership succession
- Build community capacity

CURRENT EVENTS



In advance of leaving, make a habit of looking into the current events in the location of your global placement. It helps with conversations topics when you get there but also to form relevant considerations for your work.

Advice

ENGAGE



Take some time to interact with people outside of your placement if possible. This will give you the opportunity to learn diverse perspectives and opinions.

DOCUMENT



Document your experience! It will be helpful to look back and see what you have accomplished, mistakes made and reflections for professional and personal growth.

Outcomes



Engagement

- Held two networking events for clubs to share resources and partnerships
- Spoke at the Hobsons Bay Community Fund Business lunch about the project
- Co-created prototypes through participatory design processes
- Facilitated community meeting

Partnership

- Collaborated with sport clubs on sustainability efforts
- Advanced goal alignment between stakeholders
- Facilitated strategic goal development with stakeholder involvement
- Broadened diversity in club participation through geographical representation strategies

Sustainability

- Sport club ownership of continued work
- Knowledge transfer for next student cohort
- Responsive and action-driven deliverables to sport clubs
- Recommendations made to partners for continuity

Evaluation

- Qualitative interviews with sport clubs
- Asset mapping of community
- Gathered benchmark data
- Analysis of the National Disability Insurance Scheme

Connections

Classroom



SW 683 - Evaluation in Social Work

This course gave a foundational understanding of evaluation methodologies from various perspectives that promote social justice. Additionally, it reiterated the necessity for attention when it comes to the unique multidimensionality of programs and projects for transfer into a robust evaluation.



SW 697 - Social Work Practice with Community and Social Systems

This course developed my skills for engaging community systems, encouraging the participation of community members, and building linkages across systems. Within an international context, this course guided the entrance to the community by prompting the consideration of historical context, power relations, the socio-political landscape and contextual space for collaborative practice.

Career



This opportunity allowed me to strengthen my ability to work with a range of stakeholders, effectively plan inter-organizationally to create social change, build sustainable relationships as a community connector and how to embody transformational leadership. These qualities of community development are transferable to my future career aspirations of supporting, mobilizing and empowering communities.

* Lessons Learned



RELATIONSHIPS

Sometimes you want to just jump into a project but are met with ambiguity and no plan of action. By building relationships, you gain direction and achieve purposeful goals that are truly responsive to a community's stated needs.



PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

Participatory design helps to build relationships, but also enhances social capital and strengthens existing networks. Additionally, the cultivation of the collective knowledge and relationship building from the process can form a usable asset to continue the work within the community.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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To our unique and wonderful experience!

