



AUSTRALIAN SPORTS COMMISSION

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## **Australian Sports Commission hits home run with participation program**

The Australian Sports Commission in conjunction with the Australian Baseball Federation (ABF) and the Australian Softball Federation (ASF) today announced a new program to increase the participation of school-aged children in baseball and softball.

Funding for the program, known as *Play Ball*, comes from a four-way partnership between the Australian Sports Commission, the ABF, ASF, and corporate partner Major League Baseball (MLB).

The project is central to the Federal Government's sports policy, *Backing Australia's Sporting Ability – A More Active Australia*. The Government's sports policy aims to significantly increase the number of people participating in grass-roots sport throughout Australia.

*Play Ball* is a new initiative that encompasses modified games common to baseball and softball and will help increase participation and club membership numbers for both sports. The partnership is unique in its approach—uniting two sports to better promote *Play Ball*.

Australian Sports Commission CEO Mark Peters says *Play Ball* is a four-stage program targeted at children aged 6-12. 'It will incorporate strategies to convert participants from an in-school program to inter-school or community-based modified competitions, helping provide a clear pathway to baseball or softball,' Mr Peters said.

'Over a three-year period, the Australian Sports Commission will invest \$450,000 with the ABF and ASF to support *Play Ball*. Major League Baseball as corporate sponsor will contribute equipment and resources to the program valued at \$500,000 a year over three years.'

Mr Peters said the joint initiative with the ABF/ASF was one in a series of targeted participation growth programs identified by the Sports Commission.

'This is one of up to 20 sports programs that will partner with the Sports Commission under its Active Australia banner as part of their new Targeted Sports Participation Growth Program,' Mr Peters said.

'The partnership between the Australian Sports Commission, the ABF, ASF and MLB is an excellent example of the success of a cooperative approach and partnership between the Government and corporate sector to supporting grass-roots sport in Australia.'

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