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Sport Organizations and Reconciliation in Australia

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Abstract

Sport can be a driver of change, promoting social cohesion and inclusion. However, it can also create conflict and be arena of discrimination and divide. This paper explores the current mobilisation of Australian sport organisations in contributing to reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians. This study focuses on the formal commitment of sport organisations to the reconciliation process. Through a stakeholder theory perspective and a shared value lens, 22 Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) were examined using text analytics and visualisation software, Leximancer. It is concluded that, while continuing their regular business, sport organisations can be advocates of social justice and a RAP can contribute to the organisation's stakeholder ecosystem and guide its management processes and activities. However, questions remain as to how measurable and impactful the strategies and activities are, particularly in the mitigation of racism in Australian sport.

Keywords:

Reconciliation; Racism; Sport Organisations; Stakeholder Theory; Shared Value.

Introduction

Sport is undoubtedly big business, with the global sports market reaching a value of nearly US\$488.5 billion in 2018 (The Business Research Company 2019). However, sport is about more than financial profit, as it plays a significant role in society. Throughout history, sport has been used as a platform for political and social protest (Kilcline, 2017). Recently, the Black Lives Matter movement has gained voice and support from athletes and sport teams globally. Locally, in Australia, controversy around the licensing of the Aboriginal flag has seen professional sport teams supporting the Free the Flag campaign (see: www.clothingthegaps.com.au/pages/free-the-flag). The sport landscape, from the local to international level, presents the convergence of business and society. In this paper, we focus on how sport organisations are becoming involved in reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians.

It has been recognised that sport can play a significant role in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Bennie, Apoifis, Marlin and Caron 2019; Gorman 2004; Hallinan and Judd 2012). Research indicates that sport participation can contribute to physical and mental well-being (Evans, Wilson, Dalton and Georgakis 2015; Nelson, MacDonald and Abbott 2012; Rossi and Rynne 2014), and can strengthen social cohesion and develop group identity within communities (Mackinnon and Campbell 2012; Maxwell, Stronach, Adair and Pearce 2017). Moreover, as noted in the Australian Government report, *Sport – More Than Just a Game*, ‘...sport is a powerful vehicle for engaging Indigenous Australians in positive activities which lead to positive non-sport outcomes such as education, employment, health and wellbeing.’ (Commonwealth of Australia 2013, 10).

While there are multifarious benefits of sport at both the individual and community level, sport also presents a platform for discriminatory behaviour. Racial vilification and other

forms of exclusion have a long history in Australian sport. In response, many sport organisations have taken steps to stamp out racism and provide a respectful, inclusive environment. The Australian Football League (AFL) adopted anti-vilification laws in 1995, becoming the first professional sport body in Australia to officially address on-field racism. Subsequently, many Australian sport organisations have passed similar laws and instigated various multi-cultural initiatives. For example, two of the most prominent professional sport leagues in Australia, the AFL and the National Rugby League (NRL), annually celebrate their respective Indigenous Rounds. In a celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander players and culture, clubs wear themed jerseys and conduct a range of ceremonies. However, questions remain as to the true contribution of sport to confronting the issues in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In a news article, Hinds (2019, para. 5), posed that Indigenous Round is ‘...merely appropriating Indigenous culture for yet another orgy of feel-good celebration that does more to advance the corporate interests of Australia’s most predominant football codes than those it purports to honour’.

The notion that these celebrations are more of a corporate branding tool rather than contributing to the significant issues confronting Indigenous Peoples, relates to what Millington, Giles, Hayhurst, van Luijk, and McSweeney (2019) refer to as redwashing. These scholars, examined sport for development (SFD) programs in Canada and propose that ‘...extractives companies are funding SFD programs in Indigenous communities as a form of ‘redwashing’ to portray themselves as good corporate citizens and as members of the communities in which they operate, while obfuscating the harmful impacts of extractive practices and histories of colonialism.’ (Millington, et al. 2019, para 1). Despite the criticism of corporate intent, it is evident in Australia that an increasing number of private and public enterprises are engaging with the reconciliation process between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians. In recent years we have seen an increasing

number of organisations developing Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs). These documents provide a framework for entities to support the national reconciliation movement.

RAPs are developed under the auspices of Reconciliation Australia (RA). RA was established in 2001 and is the national expert body on reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians. RA define the concept of reconciliation as a holistic approach that encompasses rights and symbolic and practical actions (Reconciliation Australia [RA] 2020a). There are five dimensions of reconciliation as defined by RA: (1) race relations; (2) equality and equity; (3) institutional integrity; (4) unity; and, (5) historical acceptance.

In this paper we examine the content of Australian sport organisations' RAPs, in order to explore how this industry is engaging with the national process of reconciliation. To do this, we firstly provide an initial contextual overview of reconciliation. Secondly, the theoretical perspectives of stakeholder theory and shared value are considered. The empirical study is outlined and findings are discussed. The key implications from the research are presented and a future research agenda is set. This exploratory study provides valuable insight for sport business practitioners and researchers and instigates an important discussion for society more broadly.

The aim of this paper is to move away from reconciliation at a political level being about forgiveness and to a more actionable level, where private and public organisations can actively participate in the reconciliation process. Sport plays a key role in Australian society and culture and can perform an important bridging role between people across different socio-economic classes, generations and ethnic backgrounds (Tonts 2005). While it has been acknowledged that sport can act as a vehicle or opportunity for diverse community groups and individuals to come together and interact (e.g. Schulenkorf 2013) critical investigation of the

involvement of sport organisations in the process of reconciliation is lacking. Thus, this paper seeks to instigate dialogue on organisational involvement and accountability in reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians.

Inequalities and Racism

Colonisation by the Europeans in the late 1700s, had catastrophic impact on the lives and livelihoods of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Thousands were killed, many more lost their land and children were forcibly removed from their families. The long-term consequences of colonisation are clear in national measures of social and economic well-being, indicative of on-going disadvantage and inequalities (Hallinan and Judd 2012). Although it is recognised that reconciliation activity began in earnest in the 1980s (McIntosh 2014), it was not until 1991 that the Australian Government began a formal process of reconciliation.

In 2008, the Australian Government made a commitment to address the disadvantage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by launching the ‘Closing the Gap’ initiative. Closing the Gap seeks to deliver better health, education and employment outcomes and to eliminate the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians by 2030 (Commonwealth of Australia, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 2019). The 2013 Closing the Gap Report specifically acknowledged the importance of sports programs to Closing the Gap through its contribution to the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Commonwealth of Australia 2013).

In 2009, Australia gave its formal support to the United Nations’ Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations 2007). This Declaration is a ground-breaking document that seeks to reset relationships between Indigenous peoples and governments around the globe (Australian Human Rights Commission 2019a). Subsequently, there have been efforts made at constitutional and legislative levels regarding reconciliation and the rights

of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. However, as the UN's Declaration is not legally binding, the Australian Federal Government have not been held to account. The Australian Federal Government has been criticised for the failure to address issues, a lack of action and failed outcomes (Australian Human Rights Commission 2018; Oscar and Little 2018; Wahlquist 2018). While reconciliation has been on the political agenda since the 1990s, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples face a range of on-going health, social, educational and employment inequalities.

Despite Federal Government acknowledgement of discrimination issues and some improvements in recent years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples continue to be one of the most vulnerable groups in Australia. For example, life expectancy of those born between 2015-2017 is approximately ten years less than non-Indigenous Australians (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] 2018); Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children experience 1.7 times higher levels of malnutrition than non-Indigenous children (Close the Gap Campaign Steering Committee for Indigenous Health Equality 2017); the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide rate is double that of the non-Indigenous population (ABS 2016a); and the unemployment rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples aged 15-24 years is 31.8%, compared with 16.7% for non-Indigenous people (ABS 2016b). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples make up 2-3% of the Australian population, yet represent 28% of the total full-time adult prison population (ABS 2019).

The continuing inequalities experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is exacerbated by on-going racism within Australian society. In a 2020 study, 52% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples reported having experienced at least one form of racism in the previous six months, up from 43% in 2018 (RA, 2020b). Findings from a 2017 study of racial discrimination among Australian school students, found that more than a third of students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and ethnic minority backgrounds

reported experiences of racism (Priest et al. 2019). Close to 20% of students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds reported experiences of racial discrimination from their teachers (Priest et al. 2019).

A recent investigation into the association between racism, stress, and sense of personal control in a sample of South Australian Aboriginal women, concluded that ‘racism is one of the psychosocial causes of poor mental health among Aboriginal Australians’ (Macedo, Smithers, Roberts and Jamieson 2019, 336). It was found that 48.3% of participants had at least one experience of racism in the previous year and almost one third (31.8%) reported racism occurring in a public setting (Macedo et al. 2019). Similarly, Markwick, Ansari, Clinch and McNeil (2019), found that racism directed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Victoria continues to be significant problem and may be linked to lower education, lower socio-economic status and poorer health outcomes.

Racism in Australian Sport

Sport is recognised as a microcosm of society and race and everyday racism is central to society’s understanding of sport (Hylton 2020). While Hylton’s (2020) recent discussion paper focuses on Black Lives Matter and sport in the USA and UK, parallels are evident with on-going racism in Australian sport. Sport can provide a platform to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and peoples, however, is also an arena of extant racial discrimination.

Sport has played an important part in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs in Australia (Bennie et al. 2019). However, Tatz’s (1987, 90) observation that ‘they’re Australians when they’re winning, and Aborigines at other times’, sums up the institutional and historically entrenched discrimination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sportspeople. The practice of fans targeting players, and players targeting other players with discriminatory and racist

remarks have a long history in Australian sport. In discussing the early years of Australia's federation, McNamara (2000, 5) stated 'to the dominant culture racist abuse was normal and legitimate; it was simply a part of playing the game'.

In 1960, Lionel Morgan was the first Aboriginal man to play rugby league for Australia. Morgan faced racism throughout his career, regularly booed and pelted by objects from spectators and assaulted by opponents. Unfortunately, this sort of behaviour is an on-going issue in Australian sport. One of the most publicised, confronting and extended racist attacks in recent years was experienced by AFL player, Adam Goodes. In 2013, in a match during the AFL's Indigenous Round, a 13-year-old spectator called Goodes an "ape". This racial vilification sparked a series of race-related incidents that marred the end of Goodes' illustrious career. Opposition spectators began loud and repeated booing of Goodes and in 2015 this persistent racism pushed him to retire from the game. Racist comments and actions were not only coming from spectators, Eddie McGuire (President of Collingwood Football Club, radio and television presenter and AFL commentator), suggested live on air that Goodes be used to promote the musical King Kong. McGuire apologised for the comment, which he referred to as a 'slip of the tongue' (quoted in Heenan and Dunstan 2013). This incident shed light on the on-going existence of a culture where casual racism is accepted and used in humour. It was not until 2019, that the AFL and all clubs officially apologised to Goodes for their failure to protect him from persistent racial abuse.

Goodes' experience is not unique. In 2016, an AFL spectator threw a banana at player Eddie Betts and with the advent of social media, online racial attacks are regularly reported. In 2019-2020 there have been numerous publicised incidents of online racial abuse directed towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander athletes in a range of sports. For example, in response to racist social media comments, Australian cricketer Dan Christian recently noted that 'I think it's [racism] definitely there [in cricket], it's more of a casual racism, just little

throwaway lines here and there, made to be jokes and a lot of that for me personally has been around the colour of my skin and the fact that I don't look Aboriginal or whatever that means' (quoted in Wu 2020). These on-going cases highlight how the issue of racial vilification and abuse is still highly visible in Australian sport.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are well represented in some elite/professional sports in Australia. For example, 10% of elite AFL players (AFL Players Association 2019) and 12% of NRL contracted players identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (Blok 2018). So, while evidence of racism remains in sport, it appears that the sport industry is in a unique position in regards to the process of national reconciliation. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples contribute significantly to many of the sports at the centre of Australian culture and have deep connections to the lands on which sports are played. While sport organisations across Australia proclaim to be advocates of inclusion, it is not clear whether this is having any impact on racism or the social justice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Former Australian soccer player and passionate advocate for multiculturalism and social equality, Craig Foster, recently discussed the lack of diversity on Australian sport organisations' Board of Directors. Foster commented that 'Some sporting clubs are progressive, socially aware, but racial inequities exist over long periods of time for a reason. They're related to power structures and hierarchies' (quoted in Tate 2020). In a study of racism in the AFL, Burdsey and Gorman (2015), stipulate that it is the role of sport institutions to call out incidents of discrimination that are ignored by others and bring those agencies to account. Moreover, in a paper discussing the positioning of sport as a way of offsetting the losses Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have experienced, it is recommended 'that governments, NGOs [non-government organisations] and extractive industries stop viewing Aboriginal people as the problem and realize that sport can be used positively by engaging with

Aboriginal peoples who have the capacity to self-determine their own lives using sport.’ (Sheppard, Rynne and Willis 2019, 14). Very little research has looked at the role that businesses and other organisations play in the process of national reconciliation. In particular, examination of the commitment of sport organisations towards reconciliation has not been discussed.

Reconciliation in Australia

Reconciliation involves racing relations, equality and equity, institutional integrity, unity, and historical acceptance (RA, 2020a). As RA note, reconciliation has opened up a national debate on prejudice, discrimination and racism (RA, 2020a). Despite increased recognition of the importance of reconciliation, there remains much conceptual confusion surrounding the term and also the process in which to best achieve reconciliation outcomes. Moreover, we know little about the impact of varied reconciliation initiatives. As Gibson (2007, 258) writes, ‘With so much effort and so many resources being invested in creating reconciliation, one would think that social scientists would have devoted equivalent attention to problems of measurement and indicator construction. Unfortunately, that is not so. As noted by McIntosh (2014) one of the major hurdles is the view that reconciliation is intangible and therefore impossible to measure.

There also appears to be some ambiguity in defining whether reconciliation is a process or a destination (McIntosh 2014). In a recent report on reconciliation, McKone (2015, 5) notes that ‘A definition that permeates the academic literature and has largely been adopted into programmatic language is that reconciliation is managing either individual or collective identities’. It is recognised that definitions vary, however many incorporate overlapping concepts, for example: respect; trust; harmony; social cohesion; coexistence; justice; and, peace (McKone 2015). These components work together to trigger social changes in identities and

relationships (McIntosh 2014). The importance of truth telling and agreeing on a shared history have also been highlighted as critical to reconciliation (Corntassel, Chaw-win-is, and T'lakwadzi 2009). In an Australian context, it is suggested that telling the truth and embracing a similar historical narrative is the only way of developing into a reconciled nation (Attwood 2005). As noted by Boudreaux (2007, 6) 'The rationale for reconciliation is, of course, the desire to avoid future, costly conflict.'

It is noted when considering reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians that two terms are critical: visioning and backcasting (McIntosh 2014; Robinson 2011). Visioning is the mental process of making desired goals real and instigating action to reach them (McIntosh 2014). Backcasting is the process of reverse planning, which commences with defining a desirable future and then works backward to identify practices, programs and initiatives that will reach that desired future (Robinson 2011). McIntosh (2014, 58) summarises these two related concepts as '...one stands in the future— in 2030, for example—in a fully reconciled Australian nation and marvels at the way in which indigenous and nonindigenous Australians achieved a jointly held vision'.

A Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) documents strategic initiatives and actions that provides a practical guide to help organisations act on reconciliation. RAPs were set up to mark the 40th anniversary of the 1967 referendum and began with eight organisations (Armstrong 2016). The terms 'Reconciliation Action Plan' and 'RAP' are valued trademarks of RA and can only be used when RA has approved an organisation's application. There are four types of RAPs that can be applied for; Reflect, Innovate, Stretch or Elevate. Table 1 outlines the objectives and expectations of each category, as stipulated by RA. There is an evident increase in requirements at each level, from Reflect up to Elevate. The top category, Elevate, is only available to organisations who have proven effective RAP initiatives internally and are ready to take on a leadership position (RA 2020c). RA has unique requirements and expectations (not

publicly available) at this level and RA must be consulted if an Elevate RAP is sought. While there is variant focus across the four types, they should be strategic documents that align with an organisation's business plan and strategies. It should include practical actions that will contribute to reconciliation within the organisation and more broadly within the community. Similarly, to sustainability reports, RAPs provide organisations with a means to communicate legitimate behaviour (Böhling, Murguía, and Godfrid 2019).

Stakeholder Theory, Corporate Social Responsibility & Shared Value

Reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians is a process that requires commitment and action from multifarious sectors and areas of society. Given this plurality and considering the moral aspects of reconciliation, research in this space may be usefully informed by the stakeholder approach to corporate social responsibility (CSR). The central prescription of this approach is that organisations should consider the divergent needs of constituent groups that are impacted by or impact upon their decisions. Within international business research the importance of a stakeholder approach to strategic CSR implementation has been noted (Rhee, Park and Petersen 2018).

Stakeholder theory has attracted interest in various business and organisational disciplines. Freeman's (1984) seminal work connected stakeholder interests and corporate strategy, highlighting that organisational success was dependent on satisfying the needs of multiple stakeholders. Stakeholder theory articulates a shared sense of value between and organisation and their stakeholders and implies that a balance between the variant needs of interest groups and constituents is required (Freeman, Wicks and Parmar 2004). As the goals of stakeholders often conflict, it is management's responsibility to balance both financial and social requirements (Smith 2003). Thus, stakeholder theory is based on a social contract between the organisation and society and emphasises the accountability of the organisation and

the rights of stakeholders (Quazi 2003). It is not that organisations must act responsibly due to stakeholder pressure, but to contribute to a better society (Russo and Perrini 2010). This is evidenced in the growing importance of CSR activities in the contemporary business world. Organisational success is not solely profit driven, it is also based on stakeholder relationships which include various interests, chiefly, social and environmental issues (Russo and Perrini 2010). It has been discussed that some organisations adopt CSR due to public and political pressure, often implementing tokenistic CSR activities (Loosemore and Lim 2018).

Companies are increasingly searching for ways to create shared value by developing profitable business strategies that also deliver tangible social outcomes. The concept of shared value was popularised by Porter and Kramer, who state that it ‘involves creating economic value in a way that *also* creates value for society by addressing its needs and challenges’ (2011, 4). The reconceiving of the intersection between corporate success and society is evident across all industries globally. As noted by Porter and Kramer (2011, 6), shared value is the ‘policies and operating practices that enhance the competitiveness of a company while simultaneously advancing the economic and social conditions in the communities in which it operates’. There is a growing body of research on the conditions under which CSR and associated action can create value for an organisation (e.g. Husted, Allen and Kock 2015).

Sport organisations do not operate in isolation and as noted in sport business literature, stakeholder theory is useful in understanding and evaluating various aspects of the sport industry (Sotiriadou 2009; Tsiotsou 2011). Sport generates significant social capital and as historically noted, sport can drive social change. As noted by Spaaij, Farquharson, Magee, Jeanes, Lusher and Gorman (2013, 347) ‘sport is an important setting where people are socialized into societal norms around race, gender, and ability, with significant consequences for how they engage with people with diverse backgrounds’. The potential for sport to act as a form of ‘social builder’ and ‘cultural bridge’ is clear. However, a critical question that Höglund

and Sundberg (2008, 806) pose is, ‘can sports serve as a vehicle for reconciliation and integration? If so, how and why?’.

The focus of this study is on organisational involvement in the reconciliation process between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians. While reconciliation has been on the political agenda in Australia since the 1990s, we are now seeing much more interest from other industries. However, as previously noted there is cynicism in the media as to the intent and impact of this involvement. This study examines reconciliation in the sport industry considering stakeholder theory and through a shared value lens. To this end, the overall purpose of this paper is to explore the content of sport organisations’ RAPs. To address this broad purpose, the study is based on the following objectives.

1. Identify key themes across all analysed RAPs.
2. Compare content and focus across the four categories (Reflect, Innovate, Stretch, Elevate) of RAPs.
3. Identified key stakeholders critical to reconciliation activities and RAP implementation.

Methodology

Through an interpretative research design this study adopted a lexical, content analysis thematic approach to critically analyse RAPs of sport organisations in Australia. Content analysis is defined as ‘any qualitative and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings’ (Patton 2002, 453). Qualitative content analysis allows for identification and meaning of specific messages embedded in the texts (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen and Snelgrove 2016). Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (Bonhomme, Seanor, Schinke and Stambulova 2020; Braun and Clarke 2019) and such content analysis is used regularly in sport-

related studies (Hambrick, Simmons, Greenhalgh and Greenwell 2010) particularly in relation to communication and policies (e.g. Cunningham, Cornwell and Coote 2009).

In stage 1, the initial thematic analysis process was conducted manually in line with Bonhomme et al. (2020), in order for the researchers to become intimately familiar with the data. This involved actively engaging with the data (i.e. noticing patterns, asking questions, writing summary notes), and an initial broad coding of text within the RAPs, to identify emerging and recurring themes. The process of data analysis was iterative, and themes were derived from concepts and key areas of focus of the RAPs. This approach involved categorising data on the basis of emerging themes or concepts and examining relationships among concepts (Berg 2007) and assisted in obtaining a preliminary understanding of the data.

In stage 2, a computer-assisted, automated lexical analysis program – Leximancer – was used to ‘minimize researcher bias’ and provide a more objective ‘look’ into the data (Wilk, Harrigan and Soutar 2019). It needs to be acknowledged that the underpinning epistemological and ontological positions adopted in most inductive qualitative approaches carry some researcher-bias and subjectivity as it is the researcher who is responsible for the analysis, be it manual or computer assisted. The researchers of this study are allies and deep listeners to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We acknowledge that we are coming to the research as non-Indigenous proponents of national reconciliation.

The aim of the lexical analysis was to provide a visual representation of the emergent themes and to better understand any differences that may exist across the various RAP categories. Specifically, the nuances and localised interpretive effects in terms of planning, practice and evaluation, was at the core of our analysis. An iterative process of seeding word definitions from frequencies and co-occurrences of words within blocks of text is used by the program’s algorithm to identify key concepts and themes (Angus, Rintel and Wiles 2013;

Sotiriadou, Brouwers and Lee 2014). Concepts which are contextually similar are grouped into themes and visually represented in a Concept Map as well as given Prominence Scores (PS) through an Insight Dashboard report (Angus et al. 2013). A PS of 1 or more is considered sufficient to identify unique and important singular concepts and, for compound concepts, a PS of 3 or more can be satisfactory (Table 2 and 3; Wilk et al. 2019). Two separate analyses were performed in this study: the first included all RAPs and took an exploratory, ‘visual-first’ look at the data, to better understand the emergent themes and key concepts. The second analysis seeded tags for each RAP category with the aim to ascertain whether any differences existed across the various RAP categories.

Sample

All RAPs included in the analysis are publicly available through Reconciliation Australia’s website (see: <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/reconciliation-action-plans/who-has-a-rap/>). All sport organisations’ current RAPs were sourced on the 1st February 2019. In total, 22 Australian sport organisations had RAPs at the time of collection, and all are included in this research. An overview of these sport organisations is provided in Table 1 (as well as an outline of RAP category objectives and expectations, as stipulated by RA).

Insert Table 1 about here

Findings

Reconciliation Australia provides a framework to assist organisations in their RAP design. Our first research objective was to identify key themes across all sport organisations’ RAPs. We found that while RAPs are unique to each organisation, lexical analysis (Figure 1) revealed that all RAPs seem to be structured around the following key themes:

1. *People and Opportunities*: This is the most prominent and ‘hottest-red coloured’ theme featured in all of the RAPs, suggesting all RAPs are first and foremost about the people and the creation of opportunities. For example:
 - i. ‘Our work in metropolitan and remote communities to create academic and economic opportunities for young people.’
 - ii. ‘Providing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young peoples.’
 - iii. ‘WAFC is driving reconciliation through developing employment strategies and training opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.’
 - iv. ‘Queensland Reds Indigenous Program (QRIP), which has a focus on enhancing education and employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Queensland.’
2. *Community Respect*: This is the second most prominent theme and closely aligned with the theme of ‘People and Opportunities’. The broader community seems to be consulted and at the core of the RAP. For example:
 - i. ‘This RAP has been crafted through internal consultation with key club stakeholders, including our Reconciliation Action Committee, football department, board of directors, administration staff and the club’s broader community.’
 - ii. ‘Fulfilment and delivery of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs throughout our community is an integral part of our Clubs’ essence, and it further represents our commitment to be far “more than just a football club.’
 - iii. ‘We have developed a RAP to consolidate the great work our Club is doing particularly in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.’
3. *Staff Involvement and Education*: the Club’s staff are key to the development, implementation and monitoring of the RAP. Clubs express their commitment to raising awareness and educating staff in their RAP. For example:

- i. ‘Develop and implement a cultural awareness training strategy for our staff and players which defines cultural learning needs in all areas of our business and considers various ways cultural learning can be provided (online, face to face workshops or cultural immersion).’
 - ii. ‘Deliver annual training on cultural awareness to all new and existing staff and players.’
 - iii. ‘Port Adelaide will promote understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture through the work of our Aboriginal Programs team providing cultural awareness training to key stakeholders in the football club, including players and coaches, staff, volunteers, supporters and members.’
4. *Implementation Program(s) and Initiatives*: the particulars of the program(s) developed and implemented as part of the RAP are clearly stated. For example:
- i. ‘One such program is the Titans Deadly Futures Program which aims to influence Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander high school students to choose a pathway to lead them to success but to also help them deal with setbacks and empower them to find their feet and continue on their journey.’
 - ii. ‘The primary focus of the Queensland Reds Indigenous Program (QRIP) isn’t about rugby, but is designed to identify, support and grow our future leaders. It is not just about turning up to school, but going above and beyond to demonstrate excellence through participation in activities that encourage students to reach their true potential, whilst using role models and incentives for ongoing engagement.’
 - iii. ‘S2W is a holistic program that targets Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Years 11 and 12, which works to ensure that students not only graduate high school, but achieve post-school outcomes whether it be further study or employment.’

The Insight Dashboard report identified some prominent singular and compound concepts which are common across all RAPs (Table 2). These top concepts revealed that all RAPs seemed to highlight each organisation's commitment to the development and achievement of the set-out RAP initiatives ('achievement' and 'develop'; 'organisation' and 'develop'). Further, at the core of all RAPs is the 'organisation' and 'relationships', 'awareness' and 'opportunities'. At closer inspection, these concepts were mentioned in the context of the themes identified in the Concept Map (Figure 1), specifically, the people and opportunities involved, the specific actions, the deliverables required to achieve this action, a timeline for each deliverable and where the responsibility/accountability for this lies (staff).

Insert Figure 1 about here

Insert Table 2 about here

Each of the four types of RAP (Reflect, Innovate, Stretch and Elevate) is designed to suit an organisation at different stages of their reconciliation journey (RA 2019). In order to address our second research objective (to compare across RAP categories), we ran a second Leximancer-driven all-in-one with tags. It was evident that the various types of RAPs exhibit different characteristics and that some are clearly differentiated from others (Figure 2). An Insight Dashboard report revealed key singular and compound concepts particular to each of the RAP categories (Table 3). Notably, 'Reflect', 'Stretch' and 'Elevate' RAPs seemed to focus more on the 'club', 'staff' and 'players' in light of the 'program'. 'Innovate' RAPs were acknowledging 'past' and 'young' in light of 'responsibility' for what's happened and for what's ahead in the future; and included renewed focus on 'relationships' with 'communities' through initiatives around 'employment' and 'training' 'opportunities'.

Insert Figure 2 about here

Insert Table 3 about here

Reflect

It is evident that Reflect RAPs are predominantly focused on learning and building internal capacity to foster an inclusive sport environment. For example, as noted by NRL Club the Sydney Roosters, “[we] pride ourselves on Cultural Competency and offer a safe and inclusive working environment for all employees”. Raising awareness internally as to the importance of the RAP and the associated RAP working group was documented in all Reflect RAPs.

It is clear that these introductory level RAPs are based on understanding the context and process of reconciliation. For example, one of the deliverables for Brumbies Rugby is to “Explore who the Traditional Owners are of the lands and waters in our local area”. As well as internal capacity, scoping potential external relationships, mainly to assist with the development of future RAPs, was also regularly stipulated. In terms of core activities, a commonality across all Reflect RAPs was participation in National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week. The AFL and NRL clubs also highlight the importance of Indigenous Round in their respective football codes.

Innovate

A clear distinction between Reflect RAPs and Innovate RAPs was found. While there is still a focus on raising awareness in various ways, engagement comes to the fore in the examined Innovation RAPs. There is a clear shift from educating and encouraging participation in cultural awareness, to engagement. Engagement with various internal and external stakeholders is repeatedly mentioned. For example, engaging players and employees (e.g. Titans, Sharks, Netball SA); engagement through the supply chain (e.g. QLD Rugby Union, Crows); and engaging with umpires (e.g. Netball SA), partners, sponsors and supporters (e.g. Crows).

Moreover, as we step up from Reflect to Innovate, opportunities are much more detailed, and the identified deliverables are increasingly ambitious. The Innovate RAPs focus more heavily on the role of the sport organisation within the broader community, particularly in terms of providing support for education and employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The sport industry is in a unique situation where they are able to connect with internal and external stakeholders. As noted by the South Sydney Rabbitohs, ‘Our vision for reconciliation is for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to achieve equality within education, employment and health. Our vision involves a greater understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures throughout the broader Australian community.’ The sport of rugby league is not mentioned in this aim and instead the Rabbitohs highlight education, employment and health.

While some Reflect RAPs did mention employment opportunities (e.g. Sydney Roosters), they are based on *identifying* and *investigating*. Whereas, the Innovate RAPs are more specific in language, for example Melbourne FC recognise the need for “alternate pathways to employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples”.

There are differences between sport organisations based on their position in the sport system and associated remit. The most notable are seen between Cricket Australia’s RAP (the national governing body of cricket) and club-based RAPs (e.g. Titans, Sharks and Crows). Unsurprisingly the sport clubs are focused at a more local level. That is, their own organisation and what they are doing and what aspects they can improve on. Whereas Cricket Australia are much more focused on the broader network of cricket and providing support throughout the sport network – so attention is given not only to their functioning but the functioning of State

and Local clubs in their respective sport: ‘Provide tailored support for cricket clubs to deliver the various elements of the National Indigenous Cricket Strategy’ (Cricket Australia).

Upon review of all RAPs in the sport industry, it is evident that Innovate RAPs vary most noticeably. Some organisations with Innovate RAPs have extensive histories in Indigenous engagement and cultural awareness (e.g. WAFC and Rabbitohs). While others seem early in their journey. The WAFC provide a very thorough document. They detail specific Aboriginal Football Program Strategic Objectives and align the areas of the RAP framework to their organisation’s objectives. This provides a good example of integrating reconciliation initiatives in a strategic manner throughout organisational function and in line with broader organisational direction.

Stretch

In comparison to the Reflect and Innovate RAPs, the Stretch RAPs provide much more detail and show a clear integration of reconciliation-based initiatives throughout their organisations. The focus is longer-term, and it is evident that reconciliation is becoming embedded into organisational strategy and functioning. Furthermore, role modelling is emphasised. For example, Port Adelaide profile all their Indigenous players and then outline how they will increase and expand their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural initiatives.

A dominant theme within Stretch RAPs is accountability. There is a clear shift from awareness to accountability, with significantly more measurable targets identified (see for example Brisbane Broncos’ RAP). The West Coast Eagles’ RAP is incredibly detailed, and they align all areas of their RAP with their organisational strategic priorities.

Within the Stretch RAPs, the focus on furthering cultural understanding and reconciliation more broadly in society was continued. For example, the Sydney Swans stated that they will, ‘investigate opportunities to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

peoples to pursue careers in the sporting industry’. Moreover, a number of the sport organisations have partnered with an indigenous-based group – for example, the Sydney Swans and the GO Foundation, and the West Coast Eagles and the Wirrpanda Foundation. Overall, Stretch RAPs move beyond understanding and look to create and celebrate a connected or network approach to reconciliation.

Elevate

RA (2020a) stipulate that an Elevate RAP is only for organisations who are ready to take on a leadership position to advance national reconciliation. At the time of data collection, the Richmond Football Club was the only sport organisation in Australia to have an Elevate RAP and one of only 16 organisations across all industries in Australia to achieve this level. Upon review of this document, it is evident that the language is quite different from the other RAPs. It is based on leading and instigating change, not just following what is recommended. As noted, ‘As we continue to deliver on the key reconciliation initiatives as listed below, we will seek and create new opportunities to encourage and motivate the broader vision of reconciliation – within our industry, and beyond it.’ (Richmond FC).

Richmond FC seek to instigate social change and be a key organisational player in the process of reconciliation. However, it is noteworthy that while this Elevate RAP is more visionary, it is still focused on actionable items. It is not aspirational in a strategic management sense; it presents realistic actions to which the club can be held to account.

Discussion

Upon analysis of the 22 RAPs, it is evident that these sport organisations are committing to various initiatives to ‘close the gap’ between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians. All RAPs highlighted each organisation’s commitment to the

development and achievement of the set-out RAP initiatives, with concepts such as ‘achievement’ and ‘develop’ prominently featured throughout the plans. Further, at the core of all RAPs were the ‘organisation’ and ‘relationships’, and ‘awareness’ and ‘opportunities’. However, while the reviewed RAPs pave the way for reconciliation through sport, there remain several areas that deserve discussion. In particular, as racism continues to infiltrate Australian sport (Oliver 2020), questions regarding acknowledgement of responsibility and accountability are raised.

It is evident that the main premise of all the reviewed RAPs is commitment, specifically, commitment to a certain level of action regarding inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. In relation to ‘visioning’ (i.e. instigating action to reach desired goals) and ‘backcasting’ (i.e. defining a desirable future and then working backward to identify relevant initiatives), as discussed by McIntosh (2014) and Robinson (2011), it is evident that RAPs provide a visioning tool. That is, RAPs establish desired goals and instigate action to reach them (McIntosh 2014), by mobilising stakeholders within the organisation’s ecosystem, that is within and outside of the organisation. From a shared value perspective (Porter and Kramer, 2011), it is evident that the studied organisations have identified initiatives that provide value to the communities in which they operate.

Regarding our research objectives, there are dominant areas of foci identifiable within each of the four categories of RAPs. Within the Reflect documents, *awareness* is the prevalent focus. The emergent ‘awareness’ is in terms of promoting the RAP within the organisation and awareness regarding increasing understanding of culture. In relation to awareness, a key component of the Reflect RAPs, was the importance of learning and embedding reconciliation internally within the organisation (i.e. among employees). Notably, to focus the lens inwards and review the current culture, programs and understanding within the organisation, is critical. As highlighted by Mirvis (2012), investing in socially responsible causes can increase

employee engagement, if they are informed of the strategy and understand the benefits for society and the business (i.e. the premise of shared value). Davis and Crane (2010) contend that keeping employees informed is not enough and that true stakeholder buy-in (such as employees) is critical to the success of CSR-based programs. Thus, Reflect RAPs focusing on internal organisational learning and education, is an important early step.

If organisations seek to assist in confronting the issues facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, then strategies need to involve both internal and external stakeholders. This became more visible in the Innovate RAPs, where the prevailing common focus was stakeholder *engagement*. Firstly, engagement with internal employees was paramount. The language however changes from general awareness among staff, to engagement and understanding of cultural protocols to ensure that there is shared meaning. Whilst the importance of internal awareness is still emphasised, attention clearly shifts to forming relationships with external stakeholders. Engaging sponsors, supporters and other business partners in the reconciliation discourse is highlighted.

Throughout the Stretch RAPs, the dominant focus identified was *accountability*. Sport organisations at this stage, are holding themselves to account and binding themselves to specific targets. Transparency via reporting and reviewing of progress, are key to accountability, and were highlighted in the Stretch RAPs. For inequalities facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to be mitigated, it is critical that organisational commitment (i.e. RAPs), is not a ‘tick box’ activity or a form of ‘redwashing’, as discussed by Millington et al. (2019). In relation to racism in Australian sport, former Australian soccer player, Bruce Djite, recently stated that “It’s time for platitudes to stop and action to be taken, and for organisations to be judged on the actions they take, not the words that they speak.” (Australian Broadcast Corporation [ABC] 2020).

As with any strategic plan/document, evaluation is imperative. McIntosh (2014) notes that one of the major hurdles for reconciliation is the view that it is intangible and therefore impossible to measure. In the analysed RAPs, we found some general statements, for example about supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 'leadership' in the community, quite ambiguous and it is not clear how measurement will be conducted. However, generally the RAPs illustrate that setting measurable objectives in the reconciliation effort is indeed possible. This is particularly ostensibly through the examined Stretch and Elevate RAPs.

The main focal point through the one (Richmond Tigers) Elevate RAP was *leadership*. The dialogue through this RAP is based on leading and supporting external stakeholders and other organisations in the path towards national reconciliation. A dominant discussion point in this RAP was the Club's sphere of influence. They recognise that their digital footprint and levels of digital engagement places them in an important position, where, as they state in their RAP, they 'have a great capacity to engage an audience with important messages'. This is where racism in Australian society may be best tackled. The initiatives and programs outlined in all the RAPs are important for inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and for celebrating their culture. However, despite these activities, racism continues among Australian sport spectators, in the stands and online.

Given that experiencing racism has been associated with lower education and employment outcomes, and poorer health (Markwick et al. 2019), mitigating racism should be a focus moving forward. It took four years for the AFL to apologise to Adam Goodes for the racial abuse he faced (ABC 2020). Promoting positive messages and achievements is important, however ignoring that racism exists in Australian sport is crippling the reconciliation movement. Further explicit action by the sport organisations to address on-going racism is needed. Relating to the ideas of truth telling and shared histories (Attwood 2005; Cornassel et al. 2009), organisations need to acknowledge past and present issues of systemic racism.

Within the analysed RAPs there was an ostensible lack of recognition as to the historic and contemporary inequalities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It is a positive step that these organisations are committing to the reconciliation process, and the value of this positive work should not be diminished. However, given that sport organisations have historically ignored racism in sport, acknowledgement of past errors and on-going issues is needed. As stated in a recent Australian Human Rights Commission (2019b, 5) report, ‘talking about racism can be difficult. Many organisations do not discuss racism until they are faced with an incident of racism ... A new approach is needed. Australian organisations would benefit from dealing with racism in a proactive, rather than a reactive, way’. The role of sport organisations in addressing racism in Australia was also discussed on a current affairs television show (for full transcript, see: <https://www.abc.net.au/qanda/2020-15-06/12338780>). During this discussion, female AFL player, Sharni Layton, called on AFL clubs to apologise to players such as Adam Goodes, saying it was their “ego” preventing them from admitting past errors (ABC 2020).

Another critical area that sport organisations need to consider is their own leadership. Pathways are discussed throughout the RAPs; however, focus is heavily skewed to on-field pathways, e.g. school programs and talent pathways in regional areas. Pathways and opportunities for developing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders in sport administration is lacking. There is mention of apprenticeship type programs to provide initial employment opportunities and advertising positions through specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media. However, there is a lack of articulated focus on positions of power and decision-making (i.e. top tier management and board of directors) and ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices are heard in the leadership ranks. This should be considered by all sport organisations, as increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in leadership positions, could positively influence public perceptions and breakdown some negative biases

and stereotypes (Bennie et al. 2019). Bruce Djite recently commented that, “I tell you now – if there was an Indigenous person on the AFL commission or as AFL CEO during the time where Adam Goodes was getting racially vilified, it would have had a different reaction” (ABC 2020). For organisations to move along the RAP pathway (i.e. from a ‘Reflect’ up to an ‘Elevate’ RAP), they can’t only focus on grassroots programs and statements of support, they need to instigate meaningful action regarding their own leadership.

For a private or public organisation to truly partake in a movement as significant as reconciliation, it is important to articulate what they want to achieve and with which stakeholders they will engage. This was the basis of our third research objective, to distinguish key stakeholders identified in the examined RAPs. As discussed in the Findings section above, numerous internal and external stakeholders were key in these documents. While multifarious stakeholders were mentioned in each RAP, it was found that across the four categories, certain stakeholder groups were more ostensibly in focus. The core stakeholders of Reflect RAPs were employees. The primary aim was to raise awareness and educate these internal stakeholders. Within Innovate RAPs, attention shifted to external stakeholders. Namely, sponsors, suppliers and supporters. It was also found within Innovate RAPs that organisations sort to provide ostensible support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, regarding education, employment and health. Interestingly, within the next category of RAPs, Stretch, focus shifted back to internal stakeholders. However, here the focus was on role modelling their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander athletes. Formalised relationships were also established with advocacy groups (external stakeholders), such as the GO Foundation and Wirrpanda Foundation.

The stakeholder perspective can benefit both practitioners and researchers in recognising all stakeholders critical to achieving RAP objectives. It is important to not only identify stakeholders, but to understand their behaviour and reactions to various strategies and

initiatives. The process of stakeholder mapping in this context will assist with prioritising those most critical to delivering a positive contribution to national reconciliation. However, a stakeholder perspective is not only of benefit during evaluation, but also in the initial stage of RAP planning and design. It would be beneficial for future reconciliation-based research to further delve into the impact of and impact upon a range of internal and external stakeholders (e.g. staff, communities, sponsors/commercial partners, competitors).

We found that Australian sport organisations are investing in programs that reach beyond their respective sports. There were multiple programs noted in the RAPs that use sport as the tool to drive health, education and employment outcomes. In concurrence with Schulenkorf (2013), we conclude that sport organisations can be advocates of social justice beyond the parameters of sport delivery and sport business. Such advocacy of social justice includes all facets of stakeholder interactions, on and off the field, online and offline; these aspects need to be considered and included in organisational RAPs.

It is important that RAPs are supported by substance and are not used for public relations purposes or as tokenistic symbolism. Hinds (2019) recently noted, it could be argued ‘...that the symbolism of Indigenous Round is being used to absolve the league from confronting the hardcore issues in the communities from which many of its Indigenous players emerge.’ For organisations seeking to contribute to the national reconciliation process, it is suggested that they look to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations 2007). Notably, organisations beyond the sport industry may also learn from these findings and recommendations.

As RAPs become more widely adopted in the public and private sectors, it is not only important for organisations to embrace a stakeholder perspective but also to develop an understanding of shared value. As opposed to being exploited as a brand marketing tool or in

effort to keep up with competitors. It is not just about looking good, but it is about being good. It is important that organisations are not purely adopting a philanthropic perspective, but rather committing to longer term sustainable activities, which are measurable, and outcome focused and benefit the community and the company in several ways. It is here that we see the potential for organisations to approach their involvement with reconciliation through the lens of shared value. However, it is challenging for organisations to truly embracing the premise of shared value (Porter and Kramer 2011). If organisations do not fully understand the value of benefitting the community for their organisation, then we risk focus remaining on key performance indicators and not broader societal issues.

A topical area to discuss is the auditing, or lack thereof, of RAPs. It is concluded that RAPs should be audited to assess their outcomes. This supports the perspective of McKone (2015), who emphasises the importance of measuring impact. At this stage, it is not clear if auditing of RAPs is done internally or by RA, but it appears imperative for the future progression of reconciliation. In relation to ‘visioning’ and ‘backcasting’ (Robinson, 2011), auditing and evaluation are critical. That is, how can we determine the impact of different actions and initiatives if accurate measurement is not conducted. For organisations seeking to move along the reconciliation path, understanding the effectiveness and actual impact of activities is essential.

An important question to ask across of RAPs is, are the goals aspirational or achievable? In this regard, it is suggested that developing external relationships is pivotal. It is evident through analysis of all sport organisations’ RAPs that it is critical to build fundamental trust and relationships. For private and public firms looking to develop a RAP, this should be an opportunity to share power, not lose power in any sense. Collaboration is critical if we are to mitigate inequalities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and move towards a reconciled nation.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to look at those sport organisations that have formally committed to the reconciliation process and analyse the content of their respective RAPs. The aim was to provide stimulus for further discussion and further commitment from both the public and private sectors. While we have focused on the content of RAP documents, there are various avenues for future research, for example assessing intra-organisational dynamics and communication of RAP activities. As recently noted by CSR-based researchers, there is a dearth of research presenting a micro level critique of the role organisational members play in transforming business practices from the inside out (Girschik 2020). It would be value for future research to investigate the impact of RAPs on the attitudes and behaviour of employees and to determine whether the RAP and associated initiatives have increased cultural competence and respect toward Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and culture. This is also an important internal evaluation for organisations with RAPs to consider.

While the Australian Federal Government has indicated intent to reduce disadvantage for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, there is on-going criticism for the lack of action and failed outcomes (e.g. Wahlquist 2018). The Closing the Gap Strategy has not succeeded in addressing the majority of initial targets, and offered ‘great promise, but failed to deliver’ (Australian Human Rights Commission 2018, para 3). It is evident at a national policy level that progress towards closing the gap is slow. Based on review of RAPs in the sport industry, it is suggested that organisations (private and public) can play a role in national reconciliation and perhaps this will create the change promised by the Government, over a decade ago. However, many of the elements of RAPs take time to implement and for results to materialise. Therefore, longitudinal research would be of value.

Developing a RAP crystallises what has been done and how to address discrimination and associated issues going forward. Upon review of RAPs in the Australian sport industry, it is concluded that sport is a suitable vehicle to be used for wider discussion and debate on social issues and whether this knowledge could be incorporated into policy and strategic development for sport organisations. However, as discussed above, consideration needs to be given to ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices are heard within leadership positions in the sport industry.

As with all research, this study is bound by limitations. As very little research has been done in the space of sport and reconciliation the aim of this study was to generate dialogue. This study was based on a document analysis. While this provides insight into the strategic priorities and commitment of organisations, it is limited. It is suggested that future research expand this investigation both internally and externally to organisations. Internally, insight into the perceptions of those working in organisations with RAPs is of interest. Examining the impact of RAPs on employees would allow for further understanding of outcomes. Externally, it is critical that the impacts of programs, activities and initiatives are evaluated. Thus, it is recommended that future research also investigate the review and evaluation process of RAPs.

It would be valuable for future research to examine the hurdles/barriers organisations face in their efforts to contribute to reconciliation. Reconciliation cannot be achieved by one individual or by one organisation. A whole community or network approach is required. Further understanding of inter-organisational relationships and networks would potentially benefit those stakeholders unsure of how they can play an active role in the process of national reconciliation. Further, the stakeholder perspective considered within this paper, can benefit both practitioners and researchers, in identifying and recognising all stakeholders critical to achieving RAP objectives. Future research is encouraged to explore the role of different

stakeholders in further detail, particularly considering the actual impact of involvement. While it was beyond the scope of this study, analysing the existence of redwashing would be valuable.

Sport presents an interesting context in which to explore the role an industry sector can play in a social movement or positive social cause. As we consider the complexities of reconciliation and the position of sport, one thing is certain – sport presents us with intricate social and moral paradoxes. The sporting field and spectator stands, expose the best and worst in society. On the one hand, sport presents a platform for addressing social issues, however on the other it presents an environment where systemic and casual racism continues to exist. Sport manifests both bravery and cowardice; it elicits both hope and despair; it is the kind and the cruel, and simultaneously embraces and expels. It is arguable that these polar opposites, in fact, characterise the sport industry. While sport business is an incredibly wealthy industry, sport continues to permeate society and sport organisations are in a powerful position of influence where they can be the impetus for social change. However, social issues and inequalities confronting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will only be addressed when meaningful engagement with reconciliation is evidenced and systemic issues of racism are acknowledged and addressed.

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