



## **Evaluation of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program: The Ubuntu philosophy perspective**

Gerald Onsando, Diana Johns, Kofi Bediako, and Patience Onuogu



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## Acknowledgements

This evaluation project was a collaboration between the Afri-Aus Care, the University of Melbourne, and the Department of Justice and Community Safety. The authors acknowledge the valuable contribution of the young African Australians participating in the Black Rhinos Basketball Program, their families, African Australian community members in southeast Melbourne, staff and associates of Afri-Aus Care, Anika Dell (Department of Justice and Community Safety), and Selba Luka (CEO and Founder, Afri-Aus Care).

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The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of Afri-Aus Care, the University of Melbourne, or the Department of Justice and Community Safety.

We acknowledge the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of this nation. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands on which our University is located and where we conduct our research and teaching. We pay our respects to Ancestors and Elders, past, present, and future.

This evaluation project was funded by the Department of Justice and Community Safety. Cover picture courtesy of Afri-Aus Care.

Suggested citation:

Onsando, G., Johns, D., Bediako, K., & Onuogu, P. (2021). *Evaluation of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program: The Ubuntu philosophy perspective*. Melbourne, VIC: School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne.

The co-founders of Black Rhinos Basketball Program are Selba Luka (CEO and Founder, Afri-Aus Care) and Jamy Alex.

Key words:

Young African Australians, African philosophy of Ubuntu, Black Rhinos Basketball Program, community safety, culturally responsive environments, perspective transformation, Ubuntu conceptual framework, Ubuntu framework of support, Ubuntu transformative methodology

Evaluation lead and corresponding author:

Dr Gerald Onsando | [g.onsando@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:g.onsando@unimelb.edu.au)

## **Executive summary**

The Black Rhinos Basketball Program is a grassroots community crime prevention initiative managed by Afri-Aus Care whose components include, the basketball training, counselling support, legal support, and food distribution to communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The program supports young African Australians living in and around the south-eastern suburbs of metropolitan Melbourne. The Black Rhinos Basketball Program embodies a culturally responsive approach of engaging young people through sport, informed by the African philosophy of Ubuntu, which emphasises interconnectedness, collective belonging, and mutual responsibility. This report documents the evaluation of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program conducted between June 2020 and August 2021. A formative evaluation of the program focused on the need, resourcing, processes, and delivery of the program. The summative evaluation of the program focused on the young African Australian participants, their family connectedness, community engagement, and socioeconomic participation.

### **Formative evaluation findings**

The Black Rhinos Basketball Program was, to a large extent, developed and implemented as intended, premised on the African philosophy of Ubuntu. In summary, the Black Rhinos Basketball Program:

- Was founded as a response to an increased community need for culturally responsive approaches to support young African Australians
- Needed adequate funding and resourcing to ensure that culturally responsive tailored professional support was continually availed to young African Australians
- Provided intake and referral processes within culturally responsive environments that enabled young African Australians to contribute to addressing their challenges
- Offered young African Australian participants culturally responsive services, which included basketball training, counselling support, legal support, and food distribution during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Summative evaluation findings**

The Black Rhinos Basketball Program contributed to reducing young African Australian program participants' likelihood of offending or reoffending. In summary, the Black Rhinos Basketball Program provided young African Australian participants with:

- Culturally responsive support services, which improved their health and well-being, transformed their perspectives, and improved their prosocial skills
- Encouragement and practical opportunities to better connect with family
- Various opportunities, which improved their community contribution and engagement

- Assistance towards improving their socioeconomic opportunities and participation in society.

These formative and summative findings were an indication that the Black Rhinos Basketball Program contributed towards improving the health and wellbeing of young African Australians participating in the program and reducing their offending or reoffending risks.

## **Policy and practice recommendations**

The following are policy and practice summary recommendations from the evaluation of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program:

1. The Black Rhinos Basketball Program should be adequately resourced and expanded to address the increasing community need for culturally responsive approaches to support young African Australians.
2. The Ubuntu knowledge and skills capacity of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program staff and service providers should be enhanced through regular professional development opportunities.
3. With appropriate resourcing and collaborative efforts, the range of services offered by the Black Rhinos Basketball Program should be increased to include other culturally responsive activities attractive to young African Australians.
4. The Black Rhinos Basketball Program should be adequately funded to increase its human resource capacity to engage more with the family and community of the young African Australians participating in the program.
5. With the onset of COVID-19, African Australian communities should be appropriately supported by governments and other stakeholders to play a greater active role in engaging and supporting young African Australians.
6. Governments, the private sector, communities, and other stakeholders must work, both independently and collaboratively to counter racism and discrimination in the community, to offer inclusive socioeconomic and employment opportunities for young African Australians, thereby contributing towards their offending or reoffending risks.

These policy and practice recommendations, if implemented, will significantly contribute to improve the health and wellbeing of young African Australians, reduce their offending or reoffending risks, and consequently increase community safety.

# Evaluation of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program

The Black Rhinos Basketball Program is a grassroots community crime prevention initiative that supports young African Australians living in and around the south-eastern suburbs of metropolitan Melbourne. The program is primarily funded by the Department of Premier and Cabinet (Victoria) and managed by Afri-Aus Care, an African-led grassroots community organisation that provides reintegration and resettlement support services to culturally diverse communities, including African Australians. Afri-Aus Care uses a Positive Change Model informed by the African philosophy of Ubuntu to support community members. Since inception in 2016, the Black Rhinos Basketball Program has thus developed as a culturally responsive program that incorporated much more than sport. Some of the key components of the program include:

- the basketball training
- counselling support services
- legal support services
- food distribution during COVID-19 pandemic to African Australian community members.

This report outlines findings of the evaluation of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program, conducted between June 2020 and August 2021, which explains how the program works and what it has achieved for its participants, community, and society. The yearly attendance statistics of the young people who attended the Black Rhinos Basketball Program are provided in Appendix A. Ethics approval was granted by Humanities Law and Social Sciences Human Ethics Sub-Committee of the University of Melbourne (Ethics ID: 2057487.1).

## Purpose of the evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation project was to assess the operational effectiveness and social impact of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program. African Australians are overrepresented in the Victorian justice system (Shepherd et al., 2018), and State Government data indicated that the number of African-born prisoners was increasing (Corrections Victoria, 2020). The issue of African Australians increasingly being in contact with the justice system was a concern for Victoria's growing African Australian communities (Department of Premier & Cabinet, 2018). Yet, there is inadequate empirical knowledge and evidence-based information about the effectiveness of programs intended to support African Australians in or at risk of being in contact with the justice system. The evaluation of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program therefore sought to assess and better understand how the program supports young African Australians at risk of offending or reoffending.

## Scope of the evaluation

The evaluation of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program included both formative and summative evaluation. Formative evaluation is conducted for the purpose of finding areas

for improvement in a program, while summative evaluation primarily judges the overall merit and worth of a program (Davidson, 2005; Department of Health & Human Services, 2017; Scriven, 1991). This means that results from the evaluation of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program may be used to inform improvement of the program as well as assess its social impact.

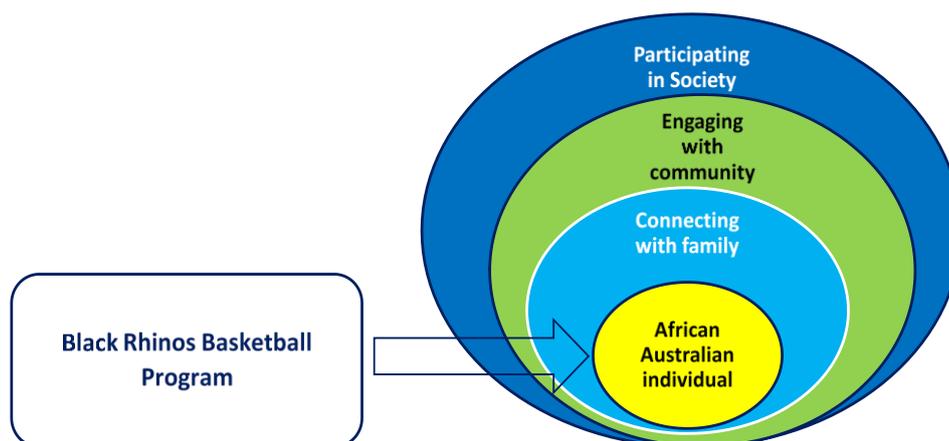
## Conceptual framework of the evaluation

The conceptual framework of the evaluation project was informed by the Ubuntu framework of support (Onsando et al., 2020). According to Camp (2001) and Imenda (2014), a conceptual framework consists of a formulation of structures with related concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that give a broader understanding of the evaluation or research problem.

### The Ubuntu framework of support

The Ubuntu framework of support is a set of culturally responsive mechanisms of symbiotic interrelationships drawn from the African philosophy of Ubuntu that emphasise a person's family connectedness, community engagement, and participation in society (Onsando et al., 2020). As shown in Figure 1, using the Ubuntu framework of support, the Black Rhinos Basketball Program provided support to young African Australians with a focus on their personal health and wellbeing, family connectedness, community engagement, and socioeconomic participation.

Figure 1: The Black Rhinos Basketball Program applying Ubuntu framework of support



The evaluation of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program was therefore focused on how Ubuntu had been applied in the program and how the Ubuntu framework of support highlighted the social changes experienced by the program's participants. Just as the program provided culturally responsive support to young African Australians, it was equally important that this evaluation was shaped by and adhered to the same principles: cultural responsiveness, the underpinning philosophy of Ubuntu, and the Ubuntu framework of support.

### Cultural responsiveness

Cultural responsiveness incorporates mechanisms and activities that are respectful of and relevant to, the beliefs, sociocultural practices, and linguistic needs of culturally diverse

communities (Department of Health, 2009; Giovanangeli & Oguro, 2016). The Black Rhinos Basketball Program is a community crime prevention initiative that supports young African Australians. According to Chilisa et al. (2016), evaluations involving people of an African heritage should be culturally relevant and responsive to their worldviews, paradigms, and philosophies. Conceptual frameworks for evaluating community-based programs must therefore be culturally responsive and emphasise the “importance of relationships, family and friends, the meaning of community” (Preskill & Russ-Eft, 2016, p. 73). The cultural responsiveness of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program was in the practice of the African philosophy of Ubuntu in the program.

## **The African philosophy of Ubuntu**

The African philosophy of Ubuntu is an understanding that humanity of the self is promoted and embedded through the humanity and ethical relationships with others (Chisale, 2018; Cornell & Muvangua, 2012; Venter, 2004). Ubuntu is often articulated by the maxim “I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am” (Mbiti, 1969, p. 214), meaning it is a *relational* philosophy, rather than individualistic. As Ewuoso and Hall (2019) explained:

*[U]buntu is an essentially relational ethics, which prizes relationships of interdependence, fellowship, reconciliation, relationality, community friendliness, harmonious relationships and other-regarding actions such as compassion and actions that are likely to be good for others, in which actions are morally right to the extent that they honour the capacity to relate communally, reduce discord or promote friendly relationships with others, and in which the physical world and the spiritual world are fundamentally united. (Ewuoso & Hall, 2019, p. 93)*

According to Letseka (2013), the humanity and ethical relationships in Ubuntu acknowledged the symbiotic relationships between personhood, family, and community. It is from this understanding of Ubuntu philosophy that the Ubuntu framework of support (Onsando et al., 2020) was used to make meaning of the outcomes of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program.

## **Program theory**

A program theory (or a theory of change) is a description that articulates causal mechanisms and assumptions by which a program is expected to make changes and achieve its effects (Davidson, 2005; Department of Health & Human Services, 2017; Funnell & Rogers, 2011). The program theory that described the Black Rhinos Basketball Program therefore focused on both the formative and summative phases of the evaluation. A visual representation of how the Black Rhinos Basketball Program worked to achieve the program objectives (program logic) is shown in Figure 2.

## **Formative evaluation**

In this evaluation project, the formative evaluation focused on the program need, inputs, activities, and outputs of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program.

### **Program need**

Establishing whether a program is necessary can be achieved through needs assessment, i.e., a process that “evaluates the perceived want or need among the target community, to judge whether a program is necessary in a specific context” (Department of Health & Human Services, 2017, p. 6). In the Black Rhinos Basketball Program evaluation, the needs assessment focused on community concerns about young African Australians’ increased contact with the justice system.

### **Inputs**

Program inputs are resources used for implementing program activities aimed at achieving the desired program objectives (Department of Health & Human Services, 2017; World Health Organization, 2013). In the Black Rhinos Basketball Program evaluation, the inputs included program resources, target cohort, the Ubuntu conceptual framework, and key stakeholders.

### **Activities**

Program activities are actions and processes through which program inputs are used to produce specific outputs (Rogers, 2014; World Health Organization, 2013). In the Black Rhinos Basketball Program evaluation, the activities involved Ubuntu processes, which included the intake assessment, case management, and the referral process.

### **Outputs**

Program outputs are specific products, services, or goods delivered by the program activities (Wholey, 2004; World Health Organization, 2013). The outputs delivered to the Black Rhinos Basketball Program participants included the basketball training, counselling support, legal support, and food distribution to communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Summative evaluation**

In this evaluation project, the summative evaluation was guided by the Ubuntu framework of support (Onsando et al., 2020) to focus on individual participants (short-term outcomes), family (mid-term outcomes), communities (long-term outcomes), and society (impact) of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program.

### **Short-term outcomes**

Short-term outcomes are specific changes that are expected or caused by the program's outputs (Department of Health & Human Services, 2017; McLaughlin & Jordan, 2004). The short-term outcomes for the Black Rhinos Basketball Program focused on the young African Australian participants as individuals. A case study of a young African Australian participating in the Black Rhinos Basketball Program is provided in Appendix B.

### **Mid-term outcomes**

Mid-term or intermediate outcomes are broader intended effects resulting from a program's short-term outcomes (McLaughlin & Jordan, 2004). The mid-term outcomes for the Black Rhinos Basketball Program focused on participants' connectedness with family.

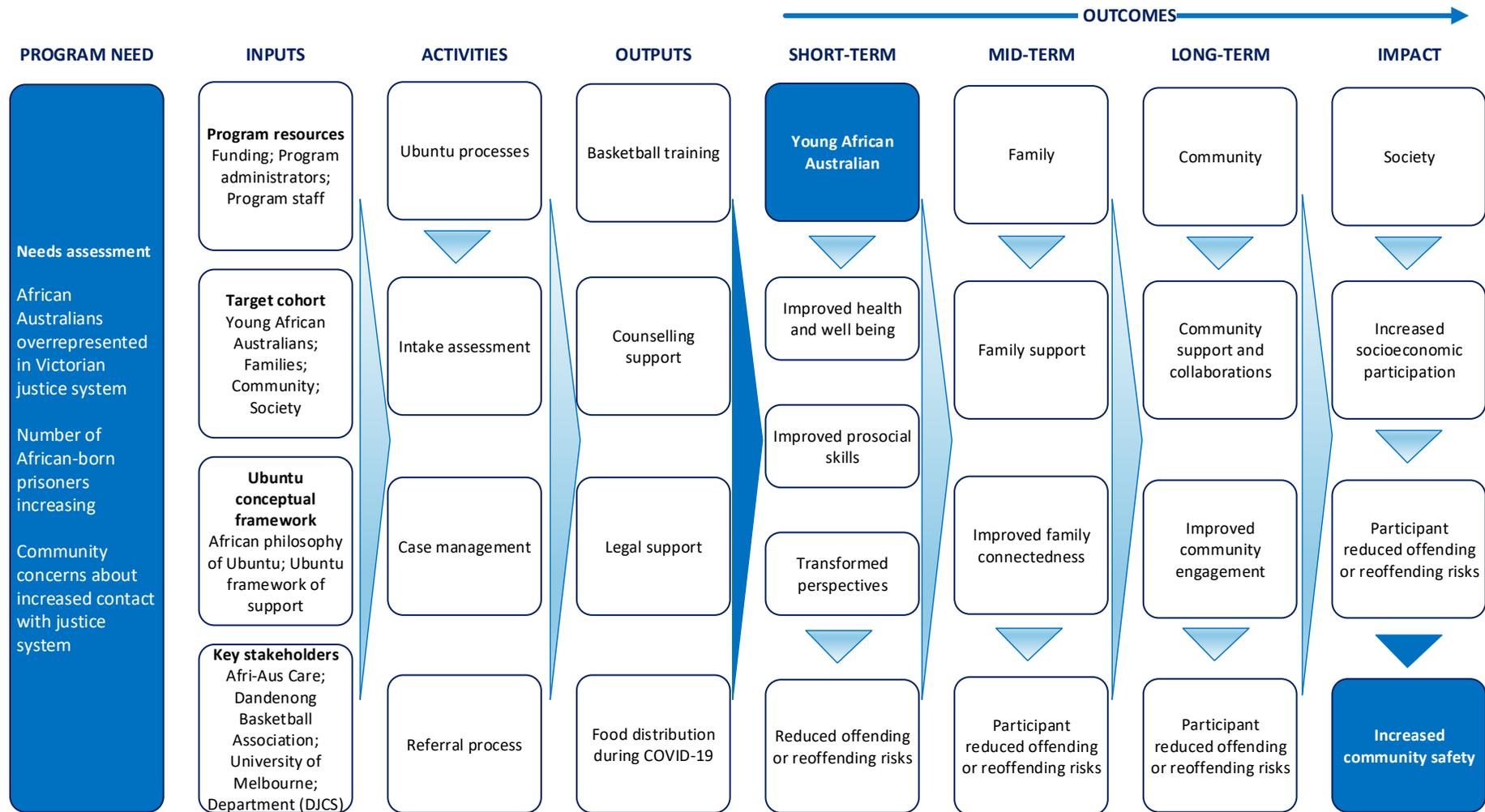
### **Long-term outcomes**

Long-term outcomes are aspirational changes from the benefits accrued through the intermediate mid-term outcomes that have an impact on society (McLaughlin & Jordan, 2004). The long-term outcomes for the Black Rhinos Basketball Program focused on participants' engagement with community.

### **Impact**

The social impact to society examines the extent to which a given program has achieved sustained impact (Department of Health & Human Services, 2017). The impact for the Black Rhinos Basketball Program focused on participants' socioeconomic participation in Australia.

Figure 2: The program logic for the Black Rhinos Basketball Program



## **Key evaluation questions**

The key evaluation questions addressed both the formative and summative aspects of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program. The formative evaluation of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program focused on assessing the continued community need for the program, resources required for it, its culturally responsive procedures, and its delivery to young African Australians. The key formative evaluation question therefore sought to investigate whether the Black Rhinos Basketball Program was being effectively implemented:

- How effective was the implementation of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program in practising the African philosophy of Ubuntu to support young African Australian participants of the program?

The summative phase of this evaluation sought to assess the extent to which the Black Rhinos Basketball Program contributed to young African Australian participants' health and wellbeing, family connectedness, community engagement, participation in society, and hence reduced likelihood of offending or reoffending. The key summative evaluation question therefore sought to investigate the extent of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program social impact:

- How effective was the Black Rhinos Basketball Program in using the Ubuntu framework of support to improve young African Australians' health and wellbeing, family connectedness, community engagement, and participation in society, hence reducing program participants' likelihood of offending or reoffending?

The key evaluation questions were used to select an appropriate evaluation methodology and to develop interview and focus group schedules that informed the data collection and analysis processes of the evaluation of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program.

## Evaluation methodology

The evaluation project adapted the Ubuntu transformative methodology. The “Ubuntu” in Ubuntu transformative methodology represented the important need for evaluation methodologies involving African people to be culturally responsive and relevant. This means that:

*... contextualized and culturally appropriate evaluation should be African-people centred, and should value culturally relevant and indigenized evaluation processes and methodologies that are predominantly informed by African world views and paradigms. (Chilisa et al., 2016, p. 316)*

Ubuntu, as an African worldview and paradigm, was therefore culturally appropriate for the young African Australian participants of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program. Furthermore, according to Seehawer (2018), Ubuntu methodologies are rooted in Ubuntu epistemologies (ways of knowing) and practices (ways of doing) that involved highlighting processes of being and becoming human. These methodologies are culturally responsive to people of an African heritage, including African Australians.

The “transformative” in Ubuntu transformative methodology represented the critical need for a social justice approach towards participants of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program. Transformative approaches of conducting scientific inquiries involved the use of social justice belief systems to engage culturally diverse and marginalised members of society (Mertens, 2009, 2010). A few studies (e.g., Benier et al., 2018; Majavu, 2017; and Shepherd et al., 2018) pointed to the possibility of the young African Australian participants of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program being described as culturally diverse and likely to be marginalised in and by wider Australian society.

For these reasons, the Ubuntu transformative methodological approach provided a culturally responsive platform for evaluating the Black Rhinos Basketball Program. This included the recruitment process, data collection methods, data analysis processes, and how the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions were navigated throughout the evaluation.

### **Participant recruitment process**

Thirty-one participants were recruited to participate in the evaluation; 13 participants who primarily addressed the key formative evaluation questions and 18 participants who primarily addressed the key summative evaluation questions. Recruitment of the evaluation participants was facilitated by Afri-Aus Care, the grassroots organisation that manages the Black Rhinos Basketball Program. During recruitment, and in preparation for consent to participate in the evaluation, potential participants were issued with a succinct *Plain Language Statement* that outlined the evaluation process. After prospective participants had indicated full understanding of the contents in the *Participant Consent Information*

*Statement*, they were then requested to sign an *Informed Consent Form*. Hereafter, potential participants became full participants of the evaluation study, with full knowledge of their right to withdraw from the evaluation at any stage.

## **Data collection and analysis**

Evaluation data from the 31 participants was collected using semi-structured interviews as well as a focus group session with a section of the young African Australian participants of the program. Data collected to primarily address key formative evaluation questions were sourced from 13 participants; three program administrators, five program staff, and five program practitioners, i.e., the basketball coach, the program counsellor, two program lawyers and the COVID-19 food coordinator. Data collected to primarily address key summative evaluation questions were sourced from 18 participants; 13 program participants, two family members of the participants, two community and religious leaders and a program supporter, i.e., an individual who was neither a family nor community member. The interviews and focus group sessions were recorded and professionally transcribed, then the transcripts were analysed using a thematic approach to qualitative content analysis using QSR NVivo software.

## **Limitations**

The main limitation of the conduct of this evaluation was associated with the impact of COVID-19 pandemic. From early 2020, as the global COVID-19 pandemic took hold and in efforts to slow the spread of the virus, the Victorian Government directed residents of Victoria to observe restricted social, sporting, cultural, recreational, and commercial activities (Department of Health & Human Services, 2020). The Black Rhinos Basketball Program's activities, including the conduct of this evaluation project, were also severely curtailed by the lockdown restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, the Black Rhinos Basketball Program's basketball training, as well as the data collection activities for this evaluation, were temporarily discontinued due to the pandemic. Yet, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic challenges and movement restrictions, the program started a community food distribution to members of the African Australian communities who needed groceries.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic had a major impact on operations of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program, disrupting or stalling most of the program activities due to lockdowns and movement restrictions. Due to the physical distancing requirements and restrictions on face-to-face interactions, some of the data collection activities were conducted through secure online technology. For example, some semi-structured interviews and the focus group session were undertaken using the Zoom video platform. The change from face-to-face to online data collection was largely successful because many of the participants were already using online platforms for interaction with Afri-Aus Care staff during the COVID-19

pandemic restrictions. Participants who felt uncomfortable or unable to participate on online platforms were offered the option of a telephone interview.

## Formative evaluation of the program

The Black Rhinos Basketball Program was to a large extent developed and implemented as intended, albeit with significant shifts in practices and activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings from the formative evaluation semi-structured interviews primarily with the program administrators, program staff, and program practitioners provided insights into how the Black Rhinos Basketball Program had developed in terms of its need, resourcing issues, its processes, and how it was delivered according to and reflecting the principles and philosophy of Ubuntu.

### Need for the program

According to the program administrators, the Black Rhinos Basketball Program was founded by Afri-Aus Care, as an African Australian grassroots community organisation, in response to the increased community need for culturally responsive approaches to support young African Australians at risk of offending or reoffending. A program administrator at Afri-Aus Care explained that the program was initiated in response to addressing the increasing numbers of young African Australians in contact with the justice system:

*It was back in 2015 when we started Afri-Aus Care, which is an organisation that mainly cares for at-risk youth and their family, and around that time, we were mainly focusing on kids' management, assisting young people who were finding themselves in the justice system. (Program Administrator A)*

The idea of having the game of basketball as a platform for supporting young African Australians who were at risk of offending or reoffending was envisioned by a young person who was being supported by Afri-Aus Care. A program administrator said that the young person suggested that more young African Australians in need of support could be reached through the game of basketball, a sport that many young people were already playing.

*[They] said, "The assistance you have given me, the support you have given many people in my community, you can do the same, but to access them we need a platform". ... So, some had offending history, some were going to court, but some were good boys. So, we started the basketball. (Program Administrator A)*

Another program administrator described how, before the formation of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program, many young African Australians were meeting in public places in Southeast Melbourne to play basketball.

*So, some of them were playing basketball anyway down in the pop-up basketball court down at the Dandenong Station. So many of them were gathering down there and playing a bit of basketball, but it was very casual sort of basketball. (Program Administrator C)*

With the support of young people and inspired by Ubuntu, the idea of transforming a popular game of basketball into an organised scheduled event that young African Australians could regularly attend marked the inception of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program.

*They were practising basketball every Monday, but for no apparent reason, they were just practising basketball, that's it. So ... with Ubuntu in my head, I got pizzas. So, wherever there's food with African people, it's great. So, we shared the pizza. The following week, I did the same. (Program Administrator A)*

In addition to engaging and supporting young African Australians at risk of offending or reoffending, a program administrator underscored that Black Rhinos Basketball Program was also initiated to ensure that young people facing socioeconomic disadvantages were given opportunities to participate in society, using the sport of basketball as the engagement and participation mechanism:

*I think what we wanted to do was ensure that some of these young people who are were disconnected from society or facing a number of complex social challenges would be able to [be], sort of, brought back into the mainstream fold and give them an opportunity to thrive and identify some of their goals, aspirations and needs. The organisation would assist in supporting them do that. (Program Administrator B)*

Many young African Australians facing socioeconomic disadvantages were disconnected and did not trust mainstream service providers; hence, a key feature of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program was to offer a trusting, culturally responsive environment where they could feel comfortable receiving support, in a setting that felt non-threatening, welcoming and accepting:

*A lot of cultural and linguistically diverse young people have a mistrust of mainstream institutions for a variety of reasons. So, that barrier needs to be broken down. So, I always consider that an important part of cultural responsivity that we have our young African Australians feel comfortable approaching the service. (Program Administrator B)*

Ubuntu was practised at the Black Rhinos Basketball Program to address the urgent need of providing safe, culturally responsive environments that supported young African Australians. One program administrator said that the practice of Ubuntu at Black Rhinos Basketball Program provided the young African Australian program participants with a sense of identity and belonging to a community:

*The Ubuntu is really an overarching community perception that they are a community. ... Ubuntu isn't just about sport; Ubuntu is about engaging your community in things that benefit the community as a whole. ... it's a gelling*

*together of this sense of community, sense of communal identity in combination with something that suits young people. (Program Administrator C)*

These findings indicate that the Black Rhinos Basketball Program was founded by an African Australian grassroots community organisation as a response to the increased community need for culturally responsive approaches to support young African Australians at risk of offending or reoffending. The themes in these findings emphasise conceptualising the Ubuntu principles of feeling connected, rather than isolated or excluded, which is ultimately what the Black Rhinos Basketball Program aimed to bring about.

## **Resourcing the program**

Program administrators and practitioners reported that adequate funding and resourcing of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program was critical to ensure that culturally responsive and tailored professional support was continually available to the young African Australian program participants. A program administrator disclosed that the Victorian Government, through the Department of Premier and Cabinet, provided initial funding for implementing the program activities, however, this funding was provided under auspice supervisory arrangements with another organisation:

*We were told that there was funding, but the funding could not be given to a small organisation, but we needed big organisation so that they could be our auspice. ... It was so hard to trust a small organisation, but what we have done over the years, we have worked really well. (Program Administrator A)*

Despite additional small funding from other community and business sources, securing adequate steady funding was one of the key challenges of managing and operating the Black Rhinos Basketball Program. Due to limited availability of funds, grassroots community organisations often deployed and depended on volunteers to assist in running program activities. A program administrator stated that overdependency on volunteers and other non-sustainable funding arrangements made it difficult to deliver the Black Rhinos Basketball Program activities in a consistent and sustainable way:

*So, resources would be the biggest problem. It's hard to stay completely operationally stable when you have very little resources. You've got a lot of people volunteering ... We know that the community need our services and support particularly in the south-east region, so more funding, regular funding would assist us greatly. (Program Administrator B)*

The Black Rhinos Basketball Program required adequate funding to recruit and keep qualified staff to continue offering tailored, culturally responsive support to young African Australians who were at risk of offending or reoffending:

*But more funding would ensure that we could carry out our services to the full extent. ... I think more funding would certainly ensure that we can sustain high*

*quality staff over a long period of time. And our consumers, they need that certainty and flexibility as well, and reliability. (Program Administrator B)*

One of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program lawyers noted that a large proportion of funding was channelled to mainstream service providers that inherently did not have the capability to provide culturally responsive support to the young African Australians:

*So, they get the funds, these organisations get the funds to provide that support, but then the positive impacts of that don't get received by those who actually need it. Because they are dealing with ... those people who really need it but dealing with them in an inappropriate way that doesn't take into account their cultures and their backgrounds. (Program Lawyer A)*

The Black Rhinos Basketball Program basketball coach indicated that, despite the limited availability of funds, the program attracted a growing number of young African Australians. This meant that some young people may lose the opportunity to be supported because there was limited sustainable funding and a limited capacity to cater for such a growing community need:

*Look, one of our big things at the moment is we have got more players than what we have the capacity to field, which in one sense is very good. But what I think can happen is that we'll lose some ... [We are] very thankful for the funding and that that we have received, but that has an end date. (Basketball Coach)*

The provision of culturally responsive support to the growing numbers of young African Australians required gathering various professionals to address the young people's personal challenges. For example, a program administrator emphasised the importance of engaging professionals in supporting young African Australian program participants to address their trauma issues:

*So, young people when they have trauma, to unpack that trauma it requires people from different professions. So, it requires a counsellor, it requires a psychologist, it requires a GP, it requires a mental health clinician. (Program Administrator A)*

Indeed, as informed by Ubuntu, the Black Rhinos Basketball Program required a variety of resources to provide culturally responsive support to the young African Australians, some of whom presented to the program with complex psychosocial needs. Here, a program administrator illustrates how Ubuntu is embedded in every interaction with the young people participating in the Black Rhinos Basketball Program:

*We practice Ubuntu. We accept these boys the way they are. They come with lots and lots of trauma history. They come with issues that they are going to court, they are not accepted at home, some couch surfing, all problems. ... So,*

*when they come, we see an individual, we don't see the history. (Program Administrator A)*

Overall, it was evident that adequate funding and resourcing of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program was critical to ensure that culturally responsive and tailored professional support was continually available to the young African Australian program participants.

## **Recommendation 1**

*Table 1: Policy and practice recommendations drawn from 'need for the program' and 'resourcing the program'*

### **Recommendation 1**

The Black Rhinos Basketball Program should be adequately resourced and expanded to address the increasing community need for culturally responsive approaches to supporting young African Australians. This expansion could mean the program venturing into new jurisdictions in metropolitan and regional Victoria, particularly where large proportions of African Australians reside.

## **Ubuntu processes of the program**

The program staff indicated that the Black Rhinos Basketball Program intake, case management, and referral processes provided the young African Australian participants with culturally responsive environments that enabled them to share personal stories and actively contribute to addressing their challenges. A program staff member described how the program used strength-based approaches, informed by Ubuntu, to better understand and provide bespoke support to the young African Australian participants:

*So, from the Ubuntu perspective, we help understand a person as a person, and it helps us to separate the problem from the person and see the person as a person and see a problem as a problem. And when we are navigating through those issues, and then we're using the positive change model, which helps us to see where and why the problem exists. (Program Staff A)*

The Black Rhinos Basketball Program has a flexible intake process of receiving eligible young African Australians through different methods. One of the program staff members indicated that participants enrolled in the Black Rhinos Basketball Program through referrals from courts, themselves, family, and community, or from existing program participants:

*So, one would come directly from court. ... So, they would hear from a friend and be like, oh there's basketball, I'm interested. And then they would sign in. ... So, there would probably be like a leader, who maybe heard about a young man who's going through some difficulties. And so, it was just a matter of a phone call. (Program Staff D)*

The Black Rhinos Basketball Program ensured that the young African Australian participants were comfortable being referred to external professional service providers. For example, for the young African Australian participants in contact with the justice system, it was particularly important to adequately afford a safe environment that would enable them to articulate personal justice matters when referred to engage with the program lawyer:

*One [challenge] is, if they are in contact with the justice system, then we need to assist the referral process, we need to make them comfortable to speak with a lawyer, we need to write support letters or maybe appearing in front the judge during the court hearing and to facilitate the rehabilitation process, as well.*  
(Program Staff C)

A key engagement strategy used in Black Rhinos Basketball Program was to make program participants feel safe and at home, hence creating a conducive environment that enabled participants to share their personal stories and contribute to generating solutions to their challenges:

*What I like about the system here ... it is very homely; people feel comfortable with just how we do things. ... So, most of the time it is about building the rapport with them so that they feel comfortable to open up to you. ... We make sure we always involve them in decision making. ... We always let them know what is happening before it happens. They are part of the whole process.*  
(Program Staff B)

In the Black Rhinos Basketball Program, the separation of ‘the problem from the person’ was particularly important when engaging with young African Australians who were in contact with the justice system. In this arrangement, the program participant was placed at the epicentre of addressing the given challenges:

*So, when we are interacting with a young adult who has been in the justice system, we don't put the whole picture of their past or what happened in front of them. We look at it, see what their goals are, see what are their interests, see what other opportunities that are available. ... But they are at the centre of getting through those issues.* (Program Staff A)

Ubuntu acknowledges storytelling as part of the healing process. Accordingly, a program staff member described how storytelling was applied when assessing the needs of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program participants during the intake process:

*We have intake or assessment forms ... But it is very important to be with the forms first because it is about storytelling; Ubuntu is all about storytelling as well ... so, that is how we identify their needs together with them. We are not imposing things we have to do on them. ... and I tell them how we can support them along the way.* (Program Staff C)

Ubuntu promotes the creation of welcoming environments that foster social connections; consequently, a program staff member described how the concept of Ubuntu was applied by workers to welcome young African Australians to the Black Rhinos Basketball Program and to make them feel at home:

*When we bring a new client to the centre, it's always like, this is home, feel welcome, feel free. We show them around, introduce them to everybody. ... You get to connect with individuals, feel comfortable and then we go through the process of the intake form ... And that's the process – that's the character and the way we carry ourselves even when conducting the interviews, which is why I would say that there is the Ubuntu in it. (Program Staff E)*

Overall, the Ubuntu processes of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program, informed by the African philosophy of Ubuntu, included the intake, case management, and referral processes that provided the young African Australian participants with culturally responsive environments that enabled them to share personal stories and actively contribute to addressing their challenges.

## **Recommendation 2**

*Table 2: Policy and practice recommendations drawn from 'Ubuntu processes of the program'*

### **Recommendation 2**

The Black Rhinos Basketball Program should be adequately funded to increase its human resource capacity. The Ubuntu knowledge and skills capacity of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program staff and service providers should be enhanced through regular professional development opportunities to continue providing the critical culturally responsive services that support young African Australians.

## **Delivering the program**

The Black Rhinos Basketball Program offered young African Australian participants culturally responsive services, which included the basketball training, counselling support, legal support, and food distribution to communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the program practitioners, these services and programs consequently contributed to improving the program participants' health and well-being.

### **Basketball training**

Weekly basketball training was an integral part of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program. The yearly attendance statistics for the program are provided in Appendix A. Subject to the then existing COVID-19 restrictions, young African Australian participants of the program regularly participated in culturally responsive basketball training that improved their social,

physical and mental health, and wellbeing. The basketball coach stated that sport has had a positive impact on young people:

*Maybe I'm a little bit biased, because it is the area that I am involved in, but I do feel that without the connection to sport – it doesn't matter what sport it is – without the connection to sport, the program won't have the impact for the young people. (Basketball Coach)*

The basketball training offered the Black Rhinos Basketball Program participants a conducive environment where they had opportunities to learn and to make positive psychosocial changes in their lives. The training offered program participants with a supportive team environment that provided opportunities to learn about themselves, each other, others in the community, and sportsmanship more generally. As the basketball coach observed, this happens on different levels, over time:

*I've always said sport is a great revealer of character. And we have the ability to make positive change on some character anomalies, I guess, in a sense through sport. ... I think you can learn lessons in a very obvious ways and you can learn lessons in a very subtle way. And I think that the basketball training specifically offers both. (Basketball Coach)*

Apart from the benefits of physical training and enjoying the game, the basketball coach reported that the training sessions contributed to the young African Australian participants' positive mental health and wellbeing as well as enhancing their prosocial skills:

*We talk about physical activity should be prescribed for people suffering from stress and anxiety and depression, because of the impact that it has on your biochemistry. What that does for us academically. You know, it allows our neuroplasticity to really sort of grow and so on, especially when you've got people who are perhaps relearning social skills. (Basketball Coach)*

In line with the Ubuntu notion of community engagement, the Black Rhinos Basketball Program thus created a culturally responsive environment each week at training, but also a sense of community solidarity amongst the team in the longer term, at basketball training and beyond, on and off the court:

*But what that [Ubuntu] directly translates to for me is just that community support, that community involvement. But also, that community accountability, you know, that if someone is struggling for whatever reason, then we are there to help. ... That we're all growing together. You know, that's that strength of community. That's irrespective of whether it's on the court [or] off the court. (Basketball Coach)*

There was a critical need for the Black Rhinos Basketball Program to continue driving and offering ongoing support to the young African Australian participants to improve their life outcomes. For example, comparing former and current participants of the program, the

basketball coach observed that some young people had left the program and were lacking support had apparently “regressed” in their behaviour:

*It’s probably been more noticeable for me to have a look at those who are in the program to those who are no longer in the program. And I’ve seen that in those who are no longer [in the program], their behaviour socially has regressed ... But they’re certainly not getting the best out of themselves. They don’t have that sort of thing driving them. (Basketball Coach)*

These findings indicate that the basketball training sessions gave participating young people regular opportunities to build and practice their social skills, increase their physical wellbeing, and improve their social, mental, and emotional health through a sense of connectedness and being part of the team.

### **Counselling support**

Regular counselling support was an essential service offered at the Black Rhinos Basketball Program. The young African Australian participants of the program were offered regular culturally responsive counselling support to address issues as they arose, whether short-term crises or longer-term challenges. A program administrator explained how participants were offered regular counselling support while either on the basketball court, online, over the phone, or through scheduled appointments:

*So, the boys will be playing basketball, one by one according to our assessment, they will meet the counsellor in the room. Maybe for 30 minutes, maybe for one hour, depending on the severity of the issues that the young person has. The counsellor is always available online as well, like via the phone. (Program Administrator A)*

The Black Rhinos Basketball Program counsellors were trained to offer culturally responsive counselling support to the program participants, for example, by creating settings where the young people felt comfortable, safe, and trusted. Here, participants were seen as young people, first and foremost, with strengths and good qualities, rather than being judged for past behaviours. A program administrator described how the Black Rhinos Basketball Program counsellors were trained to understand and practice Ubuntu thereby ensuring that the counselling support provided to the young African Australian program participants was culturally appropriate:

*I train them in the way that they need to understand what Ubuntu is, and I also encourage them to go and do some reading or research about it. And when they are counselling the young person, they don’t judge them according to what the Australian way of counselling is. (Program Administrator A)*

For program participants to receive full health and wellbeing benefits, it was important for counsellors to offer culturally responsive services. A program counsellor described the

significance of understanding African culture and values to offer the young African Australian program participants more meaningful, culturally appropriate professional counselling support:

*I have been educated about African culture and values, and this has made work easy. I understand that most of my patients have gone through deep traumatic issues in their reintegration journeys. I therefore combine this background knowledge with my professional practice when treating the boys, and from what I hear, they are doing well. (Program Counsellor)*

The Black Rhinos Basketball Program enabled young African Australian participants to improve their health and wellbeing, leading to positive behaviour change involving a reduction of offending and reoffending risks. The program counsellor explained the connection between the program participants' improved health and wellbeing, reduced substance abuse, improved relations with family, and reduced likelihood of offending or reoffending:

*Great improvement in the young people's health, there is reduction in offending and reoffending, reduction in substance misuse. Some have gotten jobs, reconnected with their families and form positive relationships with others. (Program Counsellor)*

Ubuntu philosophy encouraged a collective approach to engagement, therefore, useful counselling support for the Black Rhinos Basketball Program required the counsellor to adopt collaborative working approaches. The program counsellor emphasised the importance of working collaboratively with the Black Rhinos Basketball Program to better understand participants' backgrounds and therefore provide quality mental health care:

*[Afri-Aus Care] escorts them to my office and explains the complex issues the boys go through. This enables me to approach the cases with deeper understanding of the background issues and emphasise the provision of support. (Program Counsellor)*

Young African Australian participants of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program were offered regular culturally responsive counselling support that improved their mental health and wellbeing, informed by the African philosophy of Ubuntu.

## **Legal support**

Afri-Aus Care has developed strong collaborative working relationships with local legal service providers with capacity to offer culturally responsive services to African Australian community members. In this way, the Black Rhinos Basketball Program was also able to offer tailored and culturally appropriate legal support to participants who required legal assistance. Many young people in the program who had experienced significant contact with the justice system were supported in ways that improved their legal outcomes. A

program administrator described how having an African Australian lawyer who inherently understood the young African Australian participants' sociocultural backgrounds was particularly helpful in offering culturally responsive legal support:

*When a young person comes, and if they have got court pending, I always ask for their brief because that will tell me exactly what they did. So, in most cases, I quickly ask when the court date is. ... I shall say, luckily enough, we are now partnering with ... criminal lawyers; they're African young people. (Program Administrator A)*

Having an African Australian lawyer represent the young program participants meant they quickly built rapport and easily identified with the lawyer's African identity, which enabled genuine trust to develop that ultimately led to improved legal support outcomes. As one of the program lawyers explained:

*My role is to get the best outcome for them, and as their lawyer, I've got to act in their interests. I guess, the only difference that I've found is it might be easiest for me to build rapport with the Black Rhinos participant, because they can identify with me as a young [African] lawyer. (Program Lawyer B)*

In aligning with the Ubuntu philosophy value of family connectedness, the provision of culturally responsive legal support to Black Rhinos Basketball Program participants often involved obtaining consent to involve participants' family members to keep them informed about the legal proceedings.

*It makes it easier for me to explain to their family or their parents, who might not speak English, what's really involved, what's going on, the legal process. ... As long as the participant has given full consent from their parents and your family members to be appraised of the matters, and then, I guess, that's where the whole Ubuntu thing can, sort of, come into play. (Program Lawyer B)*

A program lawyer observed that participating in the Black Rhinos Basketball Program improved many of the young African Australians' legal outcomes and reduced their likelihood of reoffending, hence improving their employment outcomes.

*So, those participants or current clients that I work with who are Black Rhinos participants, a lot of them, once they are fully engaged with the Black Rhinos program, yeah, they stop further offending, they get paid employment, they attend all the programs and they become very compliant with their bail. (Program Lawyer B)*

Another program lawyer described one of the areas where they offered the Black Rhinos Basketball Program assistance as being in immigration-related legal issues, where young African Australians were in detention facilities and facing deportation from Australia.

*So, if they have a participant in the program who, for example, has issues with any sort of visa related issues or citizen issues ... Sometimes, it is a participant who has previously been part of Black Rhinos, but now unfortunately has had their visa cancelled and is perhaps in immigration detention, then I can handle the litigation – the court aspect of it. (Program Lawyer A)*

As premised in the Ubuntu concept of collectivism, all stakeholders needed to work in culturally responsive collaborative ways to improve the sociolegal outcomes of young African Australians in contact with the justice system. A program lawyer explained how their legal practice was informed by Ubuntu where people who were involved in a case worked collectively towards achieving a positive legal outcome for the young African Australians.

*So, that's really how I bring Ubuntu into my legal practice making sure that organisations and families and communities alike know that it's not just a one-man fight. It really needs to be the plurality of it all. Everyone needs to work together to make sure that this person is set on the right track. (Program Lawyer A)*

Ubuntu fosters collectivist ways of being, a sociocultural contextual understanding that was important for decision-makers to understand when making judgements involving young African Australians in contact with the justice system. A program lawyer in the Black Rhinos Basketball Program explained how they made decision-makers aware of the importance of sociocultural contexts in legal matters.

*So, drawing the decision-makers' attention to the fact that the applicant's cultural background really quite heavily determines their trajectory, and how they're able to either get support or not get support. ... making sure they understand that that context is extremely important, and that it can't really be isolated, or that the case can't be isolated, just to look at their offending behaviour, and not look at anything else (Program Lawyer A)*

There were possible issues of cultural dissonance in integrating an African collectivist concept of Ubuntu into the Australian legal system, which tends to focus on individuals in terms of their personal offences, in isolation from their wider context. Yet, according to a Black Rhinos Basketball Program lawyer, it was critical to acknowledge, understand, and practice Ubuntu connectedness in legal matters that faced the young African Australian program participants:

*So, it's a little bit more tricky to do anything that promotes Ubuntu [in the Australian legal system]. ... What I do is to talk to, not just the applicant, but also to make sure that their family have a good understanding of what's going on so that they can support them ... making sure they've got some sort of connection to their community, so that they don't lose focus on what they're fighting for. (Program Lawyer A)*

Informed by the African philosophy of Ubuntu, young African Australian participants of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program in contact with the justice system were offered culturally responsive legal support that improved their legal outcomes. The legal support in the program was thus clearly grounded in Ubuntu principles to support the program participants involved with the justice system. Culturally responsive legal support thus involved working holistically with young people, their family and community, but also with the wider legal community to improve legal outcomes for everybody.

### **Food distribution during COVID-19**

The Black Rhinos Basketball Program started a community food distribution initiative in response to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions to members of the African Australian communities who needed groceries. Many of the young African Australian program participants became valued volunteers, assisting with the COVID-19-related food distribution. This provided opportunities to stay connected with Afri-Aus Care and with their peers, participating in activities that increased engagement with their families and community. This was also an opportunity to develop and strengthen their leadership skills in taking a role directly helping others in need, distributing much-needed food relief to families in the community:

*What was really interesting last year was to watch the young people gathering together around food relief. So, at the very beginning of the COVID lockdown, a lot of people were really struggling with accessing food because they couldn't work; resources, money, all sorts of things were short. (Program Administrator C)*

Young African Australians participating in the Black Rhinos Basketball Program got involved with food distribution during COVID-19 as a way of assisting and giving back to the community to which they belong. A COVID-19 food delivery coordinator said that the involvement of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program participants in the food distribution assisted many community members who were facing increased difficulties, including loss of income and the inability to feed their families:

*I think it was empowering for [program participants] that they had something to do as part of a team. And, also, most of them joined or came to Afri-Aus Care because they wanted to give back to the community, ... and especially with the pandemic, and a lot of people losing their job and not being able to feed their family, it was difficult. And so, for them, I think they enjoyed that aspect of being able to help. (COVID-19 Food Relief Coordinator)*

Active engagement with the community and helping each other is one of the key principles of Ubuntu. The COVID-19 food delivery coordinator observed that during the food deliveries, the young African Australian participants had increased opportunities to actively

engage and interact with families and communities, a practice encouraged by the Ubuntu philosophy:

*So, that was something that they really enjoyed, being able to take food to the mamas. And the mamas coming back and saying, "Oh, my goodness, thank you very much. My family was suffering" ... And that's what this showed, from the boys' aspect to the mamas' aspect, they were waiting for the food. (COVID-19 Food Relief Coordinator)*

The development of a prosocial identity is widely recognised as key to young people leaving offending identities behind them. As observed by the COVID-19 food relief coordinator, the young African Australians who volunteered in the community COVID-19 food relief distribution demonstrated advanced leadership and teamwork skills, which were possibly transferable from the Black Rhinos Basketball Program basketball training sessions:

*Leadership skills were definitely thrown to the roof ... And then, eventually, we had other work to do, so they took over. And now, they're doing it on their own. ... but they definitely did pick up some positive changes and also responsibility, which I think is quite important, and also just teamwork. And I think that's a key figure there because you need to understand teamwork to be able to play basketball. (COVID-19 Food Relief Coordinator)*

Young African Australian participants of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program assisted with food distribution during COVID-19 that improved their leadership skills and increased their engagement with families and community members. In this way, informed by Ubuntu practices, aspects of the program assisted participants in developing their individual and collective skills were transferred directly to opportunities to help families and community members under the pandemic conditions.

Overall, informed by the African philosophy of Ubuntu, the Black Rhinos Basketball Program offered young African Australian participants culturally responsive services that included basketball training, counselling support, legal support as well as opportunities to participate in the life of the community through COVID-19 food distribution.

### **Recommendation 3**

*Table 3: Policy and practice recommendations drawn from 'delivering the program'*

#### **Recommendation 3**

With appropriate resourcing and collaborative efforts, the range of services offered by the Black Rhinos Basketball Program should be increased to include other culturally responsive activities that are attractive to young African Australians. These activities may include leadership programs; employment initiatives; peer-to-peer and professional mentoring; sports, such as football; and music or cultural performances.



## Summative evaluation of the program

Guided by the Ubuntu framework of support, the summative evaluation of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program focused on the young African Australian participants, their family connectedness, community engagement, and socioeconomic participation. Findings from the summative evaluation semi-structured interviews and the focus group session with program participants, family members of the participants, community and religious leaders and a program supporter suggested that the Black Rhinos Basketball Program contributed to reducing the young African Australian participants' likelihood of offending or reoffending. The summative evaluation findings are presented below across the four domains of the Ubuntu framework of support: the individual young people participating in the Black Rhinos program, their connection to family, to community, and the wider society.

### Young African Australians

The Black Rhinos Basketball Program provided young African Australian participants with culturally responsive support services that improved their health and wellbeing, transformed their perspectives, changed their behaviour positively, hence reducing their likelihood of offending or reoffending. Jonah's story, a case study of a young African Australian's experience and outcomes of participating in the Black Rhinos Basketball Program, is provided in Appendix B to illustrate one example of how this can come about. The data from the program participants suggests that the Black Rhinos Basketball Program created culturally responsive environments that, through perspective transformation, generated positive behaviour change in the young African Australian participants of the program.

### Culturally responsive environments

The Black Rhinos Basketball Program provided a culturally responsive environment for young people who had possibly experienced social exclusion. In contrast to such experiences, one Black Rhinos Basketball Program participant stated that the program gave him a sense of confidence because people in the program were treated equally and fairly:

*As soon as you come in, no-one looks at you differently. Everyone just welcomes you in here. And they were like, you have a past, but we're here to work on making you a better person, or a different person ... you don't have to worry about the same things bothering you again or you going back to being the same. (Program Participant B)*

A lack of socioeconomic participation had characterised some young African Australians experiences before they joined the Black Rhinos Basketball Program. The program created an environment where young people felt safe to consider alternative solutions to address their personal challenges. For example, a program participant described the positive options that the program provided, therefore mitigating risks of engaging in crime:

*So, I see a lot of potential in that, and that is definitely something that will lower a lot of crime rates because [the program] just gives a lot of options to the younger people to come and participate. And just in showing them that there is better things than going out and committing things; committing crimes.  
(Program Participant G)*

Using the Ubuntu notion of bringing communities together for the common good, the Black Rhinos Basketball Program provided a platform for young African Australians from different communities to meet, learn from, and support each other. A program participant appreciated such conducive social environments that encouraged cultural diversity:

*We are all from different communities, here. So, I think obviously, when you meet different people from different communities, no one is judging. ... You are learning something different, if that makes sense. (Program Participant C)*

Social inclusive and culturally responsive settings afforded by the Black Rhinos Basketball Program were key to fostering solidarity between the young African Australian participants. A participant observed that the program set itself apart from other basketball teams because it provided a culturally responsive and inclusive environment, which encouraged team members to support each other:

*I play a lot of basketball in a whole bunch of different teams ... out of all of the teams that I've played for over the last couple of years, I don't think there's been a better team that's been as inclusive and together as the Black Rhinos.  
(Program Participant I)*

Young African Australians participants developed and fostered a positive mindset deterrent of crime because of the social inclusive and culturally responsive environments that were created by the Black Rhinos Basketball Program. The key to fostering a positive mindset, according to one program participant, was the friendly and trusting “family” environment that existed in the program:

*So, [the program] try to limit you from even thinking of going back [to crime]. ... That family environment was, if you see each other doing good, so you want to keep doing good, and you don't want to get put in that state of mind where it's like “I'm in trouble again, what can I do? Why am I always in trouble?”.  
(Program Participant B)*

The Black Rhinos Basketball Program was considered as a space that offered the young African Australian participants a positive family-friendly environment that was culturally responsive. Alongside this, a participant reported that the program offered other supporting services, including legal support:

*Like, I had a court case, they helped me as well. ... So, I think that is always important. And especially maybe – I've got a pretty good family, but maybe*

*some of these people don't have, like, a mother figure or a father figure, really. Here, you can come and get that; you know? (Program Participant C)*

Overall, the Black Rhinos Basketball Program delivered program services to the young African Australian participants in culturally responsive environments that were informed by the African philosophy of Ubuntu.

### **Perspective transformation**

The Ubuntu-informed culturally responsive environments offered at the Black Rhinos Basketball Program enabled the young African Australian participants to develop positive mindsets that transformed their life perspectives. One participant described how the program enabled him to decide and let go of friends who negatively influenced his behaviour:

*... if you're able to get yourself out of that mindset and actually start thinking positively, it does benefit you a lot. Because like I said, even me, I've been in – all my friends that I used to hang out with were always not the best, like, they would be dealing with doing drugs off them, and dealing and all that. (Program Participant B)*

The Black Rhinos Basketball Program provided a positive calming environment that helped to alleviate and reduce anxieties for the young African Australian participants. One of the participants described the kinds of support he received through the program and how it had a positive impact on his mental health and wellbeing:

*There is going to be support [at the program] and that you are not alone, and you get to meet a lot of people who are in there, as well, that are going through the same thing as you; therefore, it kind of eases your mind. (Program Participant E)*

For young African Australians participants, knowing that culturally responsive support was available and accessible at the Black Rhinos Basketball Program seemed to enrich their sense of identity and a sense of belonging. According to one program participant, such inclusive supportive environments were often unavailable in other settings like in schools:

*... if we go to school, where there's probably a lot of white people, most of the places that we go you won't see a lot of, what do you call it, Black schools? Or you won't see a lot of cultural places. But coming to Black Rhinos, it gives that sense of identity, that sense of belonging, when you look around and you see everybody who is the same as you. (Program Participant F)*

The Black Rhinos Basketball Program encouraged young African Australian participants to seek, develop, and maintain relations that are positive and respectful rather than negative and harmful. According to one participant, the program offered a space that emphasised

the importance of having a personal positive mindset, confidence, and strength to resist negative influences from friends:

*So, like, it depends how good is your mindset. So, if people tell you come do this or do that, you say, no. You say no. You've got a future ahead of you. No time for that nonsense. Just push them away. ... Just cut them off from your life. And just make new friends that have good goals [and] everything else. (Program Participant A)*

The Ubuntu values of fairness, justice, and equity espoused in the Black Rhinos Basketball Program encouraged the young African Australians to be focused and to assist others. A program participant explained how, through the practice of Ubuntu, he became aware of his own goals as well as how to support others:

*[Ubuntu] is pretty much we are – I am, because we are, and treat others the way you want to be treated ... and that's what has been helping me get my mind straight, get focused, and try and help others too. ... But even though your dreams might be different, but it's like we could help each other achieve those goals. (Program Participant B)*

In all, these findings suggest that the Black Rhinos Basketball Program created an enabling environment for the young African Australian participants to transform their perspectives. Program participants' use of words like "get yourself out of that mindset", "eases your mind", "gives that sense of identity", "sense of belonging", "how good is your mindset", and "get my mind straight" demonstrated such perspective transformations. In this way, their life perspectives in relation to others began to transform through their engagement with the Black Rhinos Basketball Program.

### **Positive behaviour change**

The Black Rhinos Basketball Program, through creating enabling environments for perspective transformations to happen, enabled the young African Australian participants to attain positive behaviour change outcomes that included improving their prosocial skills and reducing their likelihood of offending or reoffending. A program participant said that he was delighted to be part of a basketball program that offered opportunities to belong through connecting and sharing experiences with other young people:

*I love basketball, good brothers being there for each other. The basketball makes me feel happy. ... Yes, because I love to hang out with friends, brothers and this makes me smile and happy connecting with each other, share experience, advice from each other. It also gives me the opportunity to form a family. (Program Participant A)*

One Black Rhinos Basketball Program participant described how, after being involved in the justice system, he positively changed his life perspective after the program lawyers successfully supported him in a court case. The support he received from the Black Rhinos

Basketball Program motivated him to return and volunteer in the program to support other young African Australians:

*I was in the wrong crowd, and I was just trying to find myself and whatnot. And then that involved me getting in trouble with the police and whatnot, like, having court hearings, even serious court hearings, where I needed to go get a lawyer. ... And ever since then, like, [the program] changed my life. (Program Participant B)*

Many of the young African Australian program participants reflected on their past and directly attributed their current improved life outcomes to their participation in the Black Rhinos Basketball Program. The program provided an environment that was not only safe and culturally responsive but also encouraging the young people to talk about their problems. For example, a program participant described himself as a positively changed person because the program provided him a second home, along with opportunities to talk about his past personal challenges that included involvement with crime:

*I would have been still doing the same thing I was doing, and that wasn't something I wanted to do at all. It was just like I was really lost. ... And luckily Afri-Aus Care [and the program] was able to give me that second home for me to come in more often, talk about my problems that I was having: resort to drinking, smoking, just doing crimes. And from that I was able to progress and become a better person. (Program Participant B)*

At the Black Rhinos Basketball Program, young African Australian participants were encouraged to appreciate hard work and positive life values, thereby, discouraging possible participation in offending activities. For example, a participant described how the program educated young African Australians about benefits of hard work and positive life values, translating to a reduction of program participants' crime risk factors:

*And with Black Rhinos being really easy, really accessible to young people, it goes to a lot of young people, and it teaches them good values about hard work and, yeah, just if you want it, go and get it basically. Yeah, so there's no easy way out so, yeah, that prevents crime. (Program Participant H)*

The Black Rhinos Basketball Program was described as an empowering program that provided young African Australians with capacity to assist others and better connect with family, as espoused by Ubuntu. A program participant reflected upon what he had learnt from the program and about being there for other people, and the value of connecting with their younger family members:

*I've seen when I've been helped out, like, why can't I do that for other people as well because that is Ubuntu as well. ... So then, now, I'm able to go home and be there to help my siblings ... even though they're going through times or hard*

*times. I got helped out here, so that way I'm able to help them out as well.*  
(Program Participant B)

These findings suggest that participating in Black Rhinos Basketball Program afforded young African Australians access to a culturally responsive environments through the practice of Ubuntu, which was an opportunity to engage with and receive support at many different levels. The program created culturally responsive environments through the practice of Ubuntu, that enabled perspective transformation of the young African Australians participating in the program, and subsequently resulting in participants' positive behaviour changes, including reduced offending or reoffending risks.

Conceptually, the African philosophy of Ubuntu was a way of life that prioritised and contributed to the wellbeing of individuals and humanity (Venter, 2014), therefore provided the culturally responsive contexts for the Black Rhinos Basketball Program to operate. This allowed for perspective transformation, i.e., an emancipatory process of becoming aware of life constraints and acting upon them with new understandings (Mezirow (1981;2009) to generate change mechanisms for the young African Australians participating in the program. As suggested by Payne (2007) and Testa and Semenza (2020), individuals with higher health and wellbeing outcomes were less likely to offend or reoffend. Therefore, as observed through the program participants' positive behaviour changes, including reduced offending or reoffending risks.

## **Family connectedness**

As a way of reducing program participants' likelihood of offending or reoffending, the Black Rhinos Basketball Program encouraged and provided practical opportunities for young African Australians in the program to better connect with family. A young person who attributed his offending behaviour to distancing and disconnection from a close family member described how participating in the program assisted him in appreciating and improving his relationship with family, and subsequently making positive personal life changes:

*I realised most of my problems started happening, is when I started distancing myself from my mother ... Recently, now, I've been getting closer to [my family], but before, I was not connected ... Because now, it's like I got bored of it, and I see the importance of family, so I'm trying to engage myself in them more. ... And ever since I started building that good friendship with my mum, I've seen a lot of positives. (Program Participant B)*

Close family members whose young African Australians were enrolled in the Black Rhinos Basketball Program expressed their personal, community, and government concerns about young people possible engagement in offending behaviour. A mother to a program

participant said that such situations that lead to young people getting into contact with the justice system made her unhappy:

*But if our kids [are] doing silly things, [and] they are not doing good things, it's not good. Even us, as a mum, we can't be happy, yeah, [and this applies] to the community and to the government, also. (Family Member B)*

The Black Rhinos kept the young African Australian participants busy and engaged in meaningful activities, therefore reducing the time that they would potentially be exposed to risky situations or negative peer influences. A mother to a program participant concurred that the program reduced the likelihood of her young son participating in criminal activities because the program kept him occupied away from negative influence:

*Because [at the Black Rhinos], they don't have time to go and walk around – they're just playing basketball. When they're finished, they're tired, [they] go home and have a shower. (Family Member A)*

Apart from keeping the young African Australian participants busy and engaged in prosocial activities, the Black Rhinos offered participants opportunities to make positive contributions in the community. A mother to one of the participants observed that, rather than his son going to places where he may encounter negative peer influence, the program instead offered him an opportunity to play basketball after school:

*Maybe, when kids at home come from the school and at home, I'm not at home also, I'm at work maybe. they will get a chance to go look for bad friend and go outside there; not good. [So, I] put him in the basketball. ... it's given them chance also to do something good too. (Family Member B)*

The Black Rhinos Basketball Program provided young African Australians with a safe, culturally responsive space where they could develop and enhance their solidarity with peers, as inspired by Ubuntu. A mother, who enrolled her son into the program, described that her son would be in a safe and brotherly environment engaging with other young African Australians in the program:

*I register him also to come to that Black Rhinos, because Black Rhinos is good in the future, and they are a team, and they are all Black, and you know, our Black people they are calling them, "brother, brother, brother". That also will give them good thing, no one will abuse them. (Family Member B)*

Improved family relations and connectedness was an important practice in the Black Rhinos Basketball Program where opportunities were provided for young African Australians and their families to resolve conflict through forgiveness, a key principle of Ubuntu and a way of improving social relations. While reflecting on family connectedness, one community and religious leader suggested that practising Ubuntu through forgiveness within the family could improve relationships between parents and the young people:

*Whenever [a young person] does something wrong, it is what I always say to the parents: you have to forgive your child, and this is also part of Ubuntu. That, yes, forgiveness is the key to establish a strong relationship. If forgiveness is not there; it can create more problems within the family, within the community, so it's very, very important. (Community Leader A)*

These findings indicate that the Black Rhinos Basketball Program practiced Ubuntu by encouraging and providing practical opportunities for the young program participants to connect and improve relationships with family. Furthermore, the program had made positive contributions, encouraged young people's solidarity with peers, used forgiveness as an Ubuntu family virtue, and thereby reduced offending risks for the young people. By building and increasing connectedness between young people and their parents and families, the Black Rhinos Basketball Program thus demonstrated how it had been able to reduce offending risks for the young African Australians attending the program.

According to Letseka (2013) and Ramose (2002), in Ubuntu, the family was considered a critical setting for communal moral values to be practised and affirmed. Furthermore, Shepherd et al. (2018) suggested that poor family connectedness was a key criminogenic factor of offending for young African Australians. Indeed, other studies (e.g., Maher et al., 2021) have suggested that parents feeling ashamed of their children because of their offending behaviour can contribute to the family relationship breakdown that is linked to increased risk of young people's reoffending.

## **Recommendation 4**

*Table 4: Policy and practice recommendations drawn from 'young African Australians' and 'family connectedness'*

### **Recommendation 4**

The Black Rhinos Basketball Program should be adequately funded to increase its human resource capacity to engage more with family and community members of the young African Australians participating in the program. From an Ubuntu perspective, this increased engagement with family and the community will contribute to reducing the offending or reoffending risks of the program participants.

## **Community engagement**

As a way of reducing program participants' likelihood of offending or reoffending, the Black Rhinos Basketball Program encouraged and provided practical opportunities for young African Australians in the program to better engage with community. On this basis, one community leader observed that some of the young people who were engaged in offending behaviour in the past were now participating in the program and improving their lives,

hence the need to establish more community programs like the Black Rhinos Basketball Program:

*[F]or the last five or six years, the crime is now reducing because of these activities that were lacking before. ... They have this basketball engaging them, so keep them from all this trouble. And I think we need similar thing, or we need to increase this kind of these ideas forming more basketballs, more soccer, more sport. This will keep them away from trouble. I saw the fruit of it, and I think some of them now focusing on doing something better for themselves.  
(Community Leader A)*

There was a perception from some African Australian community leaders in Victoria that the Black Rhinos Basketball Program has contributed to some extent towards improvement of the crime and justice situation involving young members of the community. For example, one community leader observed that there was reduced offending incidences involving young African Australians since the inception of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program:

*[The Black Rhinos program] is very important because what I've seen, and I'm talking something out of experience because when I saw what was happening ... Today, it's not like before; before it was really bad ... If there was nothing like [the Black Rhinos], it would have been worse. (Community Leader B)*

The African Australian community in Victoria is said to be appreciating how young people who have been reintegrated into the community through the Black Rhinos Basketball Program were now responsible of taking care of themselves through socioeconomic participation in society. A program administrator, who doubled as a community leader, noted that community members were happy because some young people had managed to desist from crime following their participation in the program:

*Young people who were offenders are now buying their own cars; not carjacking. Buying their homes; not invasion. Working in government, working as lawyers ... So slowly, slowly, a lot of African kids are doing well, and when the community see this, the community is happy. (Program Administrator A)*

Addressing the issues of community crime prevention required collaborative efforts of community grassroots organisations and other key stakeholders, such as the Church, to provide ongoing support to young African Australian community members. A community and religious leader highlighted the importance of such collaborations by citing an example, where a young person who was released from prison was assisted in reintegrating into the community:

*One case that we have to be on Zoom, giving evidence that if this young person is released from the detention, we will come as church. I will do my part in providing pastoral direction, spiritual direction. And [the program] will also be*

*able to organise with a different organisation, find him a job. And we work well and we win the case and the boy came out. (Community Leader A)*

Collaborative efforts of community grassroots organisations and other key stakeholders is crucial in supporting the reintegration of young African Australians, but also that this needs to be supported by and extend to working closely with governments. As suggested by an African Australian community and religious leader, more inclusive collaborative efforts between community members and governments were required to accomplish community crime prevention:

*I think this is what we need [from the] government ... more collaboration, more partnership with African community, with community leaders. And this way we will be able to solve all this problem, yeah. ... We need African community be part of the solution. (Community Leader A)*

The Black Rhinos Basketball Program provided engagement opportunities, not only to the young African Australian participants but also to community members who were keen to support the program as a way of giving back to community. For example, a community leader and a businessperson described the importance of supporting grassroots community initiatives, such as the Black Rhinos, which was a way of appreciating and giving back to a community that made him a successful businessperson:

*The community, for example, are the ones who supported me to where I am, so, I was trying to give back to the community ... I was trying to interact with the [program participants] to see what I can help them [with] ... because my aim is not just taking from the community; I want to give back. [One] small thing I can give is appreciation because without them, I would not be where I am. (Community Leader B)*

The idea of having the Black Rhinos Basketball Program as an African-managed program aligned with views of some community leaders about African Australians were best placed to take lead in addressing community challenges. For example, a community leader suggested that, to take lead in addressing community issues, it was important for senior African Australians to engage more with the young people in the community to improve community engagement and foster the notion of respect inherent in Ubuntu:

*We need Africans because Africans will understand the culture and how to get the boys to do it, but the Australian way, the young boys of Australia are different to our African way. Yeah, and for example, in our African culture, an elder person is aunty or uncle. Even though not related to you, you call aunty or uncle, so this is part of the respect we have. (Community Leader B)*

Relationality is at the heart of Ubuntu philosophy and collectivist African cultures. In this way the principle of Ubuntu promotes active community engagement and can be used as a basis for reintegrating young African Australians by way of acknowledging offending as a

community challenge and responsibility. A religious community leader, while acknowledging Ubuntu as an African concept, gave an example of the practice of people being responsible for each other in families, communities, and to society can also apply universally in Australia:

*[Ubuntu] is very important because we need each other; we need each other, and we have to be keepers to one another, and this is very important. ... In Africa, if your child does something wrong, it is our responsibility, but here if your child does something wrong it is you, not everybody talk about it. But in the village [in Africa], we can talk about it, that this child is doing this, and everybody will keep an eye for this child, seeing the child, if it does something wrong, it is our responsibility. (Community Leader A)*

These findings indicate that the Black Rhinos Basketball Program provided young African Australians with opportunities that improved their community engagement. Based on this understanding, the Black Rhinos Basketball Program provided young African Australians with opportunities to engage with their community. The community leaders and program administrators quoted here acknowledged that the program had helped young people to reengage with the community and highlighted the importance of community collaboration and of applying Ubuntu as a way of activating community responsibility, and thereby including young people rather than shutting them out or rejecting them. In this way the program lowered offending and reoffending risks for the young people.

From an Ubuntu philosophy perspective, an individual and community were always in the process of coming into being (Cornell & van Marle, 2012; Letseka, 2013). Also, the community played an active role in mitigating offending risks for community members (Cornell & Muvangua, 2012; Moore et al., 2016; United Nations, 2018). Therefore, the improved community engagement of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program participants likely reduced their offending or reoffending risks.

## **Recommendation 5**

*Table 5: Policy and practice recommendations drawn from ‘community engagement’*

### **Recommendation 5**

The COVID-19 restrictions often constrained community engagement and exacerbated the isolation of community members. With the onset of COVID-19, African Australian communities should be appropriately supported by governments and other stakeholders to play a greater active role in engaging and supporting young African Australians as a way of enhancing community connectedness that will contribute to the young people reducing their risks of offending or reoffending.

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## Socioeconomic participation

Despite significant challenges of confronting racism, the Black Rhinos Basketball Program provided young African Australian participants of the program with assistance in improving their socioeconomic opportunities and participation, hence contributed to reducing their likelihood of offending or reoffending. A program supporter, an individual who was neither a family nor community member, described how young people were less likely to be involved in criminal activities if they were engaged in positive socioeconomic activities, such as employment:

*So, I know anecdotally that getting kids involved or young people involved in positive activities must be having a reduction or must be reducing their likelihood of going and committing crimes or other mischievous activity, purely on the fact that they're there doing something positive for a period of the day. (Program Supporter)*

Indeed, having a job was “very important” for the young African Australians participating in the Black Rhinos Basketball Program. A program participant said that being unemployed could make a person homeless for a very long time:

*It's just like just trying to find a job as soon as possible because a job is the most important thing. Because without a job you go onto the streets all day, begging for money, blah, blah, blah, be homeless for maybe two days, couple of week or month. (Program Participant A)*

The participant also pointed out that a key challenge to finding a job for some for young African Australians in the Black Rhinos Basketball Program was having a police or criminal record:

*Well maybe their criminal record, or how they behave at work, something like that. ... Because like the police records are still there, you know what I mean? So, it's going to really be hard for them to find a job. Unless the police try to clear your record out. (Program Participant A)*

The young African Australians faced unemployment, yet their socioeconomic participation was premised on being afforded opportunities to get meaningful employment. The Black Rhinos Basketball Program offered employment preparation advice that included advising about how to address racism at the workplace for participants who were looking for work:

*So, we're teaching people to reduce that hate so that they can work well, and encouraging young people to look for work, and when they work – when they work, we tell them what they do when they go to work. (Program Administrator A)*

Despite the efforts of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program to find employment for the program participants, many African Australians confronted racial discrimination that

severely limited their socioeconomic participation. One of the program participants said that looking for work was daunting and frustrating due to the negative stereotyping and racism he confronted:

*Because at first, you're just another African that is coming here to take their jobs and whatnot. And it gets frustrating because a lot of people look down on [you], like, it's not even your fault that you're getting a job, and they're just doing nothing, kind of thing. (Program Participant B)*

The kinds of racism that confronted young African Australian members of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program when looking for employment are also experienced on the basketball courts during competitions. While highlighting the how participants confronted and managed racism, the program's basketball coach attributed the racism in society to White privilege and White fragility of denial of racism.

*White privilege and White fragility is what stands in the way of racial equity and racial equality. And it's the fact that White folk are not prepared to confront of their behaviours, their own commentaries, their own privileges ... [This] is what's holding us back, and so for the boys to experience that and deal with it and manage it on court and then turn around in real life and go, okay. (Basketball Coach)*

Persistent racial discrimination and racialised narratives about young African Australians were key barriers to their socioeconomic participation in Australia. A participant provided an illustration of how some mainstream media and the police were at the forefront of perpetuating negative racist narratives about young African Australians' involvement in criminal activities:

*I've had bad [experiences] in the past, and it's just like, it's one of those stuff that's like, we're being fed by the media and the police to the point that we almost gave in. But the fact that some of us are switched on and working, we're studying, and we're not always in crimes. (Program Participant B)*

Ubuntu was the operating principle for the Black Rhinos Basketball Program. A program supporter offered their personal understanding of Ubuntu, and its similarities with some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures, by emphasising the importance of communities supporting each other:

*Well, [Ubuntu is] literally the sense of community that we are – I think, to me, it's a little bit – it has also similarities in Indigenous Australian culture as well, where it is – I am, you are, we are. We are all individuals, but we are all of a community as well. So that's my understanding. We are individuals, but we form a community that support one another. (Program Supporter)*

Ubuntu was the basis of the cultural responsiveness of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program, hence the program offered appropriate and meaningful support to the young African

Australian participants. The program supporter observed that, with support from stakeholders, there was a greater social impact if culturally responsive programs were driven and delivered by members of the African Australian community:

*[A]lot of these community groups work for the benefit, not just of African kids, but in part for African kids; they are really well placed because there's a great deal of trust that comes with familiarity ... So, I think, it's undeniable that there's a great advantage in culturally sensitive programs and culturally sensitive delivered initiatives. ... but a lot of these groups do survive and thrive well because of that connectivity. (Program Supporter)*

These findings show overall that the Black Rhinos provided young African Australian participants with opportunities to participate, both through the basketball and through the community assistance activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Focusing on socioeconomic participation, some program administrators, staff, participants, and program supporters acknowledged the importance of culturally responsive community initiatives for the young people in society, the racialised challenges of finding employment for young African Australians, and the possibility of using Ubuntu as an anti-racism approach to employment and reduced offending risks for the young people due to their socioeconomic participation.

The African philosophy of Ubuntu nurtures the interconnectedness of self with society, of which therefore, social exclusion is a contradiction (Agyeno, 2019; Le Grange, 2012). Furthermore, individuals who are excluded from socioeconomic participation are at increased risk of engaging in offending (Drabsch, 2006; Hamilton-Smith & Vogel, 2012; Shepherd et al., 2018). The assumption is that improving socioeconomic and employment opportunities reduces social exclusion and thereby lowers any associated risks of offending. From this wider risk factor-related evidence, it can be extrapolated that by increasing socioeconomic participation and a sense of belonging, the Black Rhinos Basketball Program likely reduced participants risk of offending or reoffending.

## **Recommendation 6**

*Table 6: Policy and practice recommendations drawn from 'socioeconomic participation'*

### **Recommendation 6**

Governments, the private sector, communities, and other stakeholders must work, both independently and collaboratively to counter racism and discrimination in the community, and to offer inclusive socioeconomic and employment opportunities for young African Australians, thereby contributing in reducing their offending or reoffending risks.

## Policy and practice recommendations

The findings show that the Black Rhinos Basketball Program has been developed and implemented as intended and has worked across the interconnected domains of individual, family, community, and wider society to reduce young African Australian participants' likelihood of offending or reoffending. On this basis, we make the following policy and practice recommendations:

1. The Black Rhinos Basketball Program should be adequately resourced and expanded to address the increasing community need for culturally responsive approaches to supporting young African Australians. This expansion could mean the program venturing into new jurisdictions in metropolitan and regional Victoria, particularly where large proportions of African Australians reside.
2. The Black Rhinos Basketball Program should be adequately funded to increase its human resource capacity. The Ubuntu knowledge and skills capacity of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program staff and service providers should be enhanced through regular professional development opportunities to continue providing the critical culturally responsive services that support young African Australians.
3. With appropriate resourcing and collaborative efforts, the range of services offered by the Black Rhinos Basketball Program should be increased to include other culturally responsive activities that are attractive to young African Australians. These activities may include leadership programs; employment initiatives; peer-to-peer and professional mentoring; sports, such as football; and music or cultural performances.
4. The Black Rhinos Basketball Program should be adequately funded to increase its human resource capacity to engage more with family and community members of the young African Australians participating in the program. From an Ubuntu perspective, this increased engagement with family and the community will contribute to reducing the offending or reoffending risks of the program participants.
5. The COVID-19 restrictions often constrained community engagement and exacerbated the isolation of community members. With the onset of COVID-19, African Australian communities should be appropriately supported by governments and other stakeholders to play a greater active role in engaging and supporting young African Australians as a way of enhancing community connectedness that will contribute to the young people reducing their risks of offending or reoffending.
6. Governments, the private sector, communities, and other stakeholders must work, both independently and collaboratively to counter racism and discrimination in the community, and to offer inclusive socioeconomic and employment opportunities for

young African Australians, thereby contributing in reducing their offending or reoffending risks.

These policy and practice recommendations, if implemented, will significantly contribute to improve the health and wellbeing of young African Australians, reduce their offending or reoffending risks, and consequently increase community safety.

## **The evaluation team profile**

The Black Rhinos Basketball Program evaluation was conducted by the University of Melbourne research team comprising Dr Gerald Onsando (Chief Researcher), Dr Diana Johns (Responsible Researcher), Mr Kofi Bediako and Ms Patience Onuogu (Research Assistants).

### **Dr Gerald Onsando**

Dr Onsando is a Research Fellow at the School of Social and Political Sciences and the Melbourne Social Equity Institute, University of Melbourne. He is an active member of the African community in Victoria and an experienced researcher and program evaluator. Dr Onsando is a recipient of the David Biles Correctional Research Award presented by the Australian and New Zealand Society of Criminology. Dr Onsando has a Master of Evaluation (University of Melbourne) and is a professional member of the Australasian Evaluation Society and the Evaluation Society of Kenya.

### **Dr Diana Johns**

Dr Johns is a Senior Lecturer in Criminology at the School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne. She brings expertise in youth justice, crime prevention, and post-prison reintegration, as well as strong links with African-Australian communities through her collaborative research on African Australians' experiences of media representation, racism, social and economic exclusion, and community support and (re)integration needs. Dr Diana Johns is an experienced evaluator with 20 years' experience researching criminal justice issues, particularly focused on young people.

### **Mr Kofi Bediako**

Mr Bediako is a PhD candidate at the School of Social and Political Science, University of Melbourne, where he also works as a Research Assistant. His PhD research is on international intervention in post-conflict justice in Africa, focusing on Ghana and Liberia. Kofi also holds a Master in Peace Studies from Liverpool Hope University and a Master in African Studies from the University of Oxford. His research explores the African conception of justice and how it shapes, and is shaped by, the interactions between Africans and others.

### **Ms Patience Onuogu**

Ms Onuogu is a Research Assistant at the School of Social and Political Sciences, University of Melbourne. She received her Master of Public Health (health program evaluation) from the University of Melbourne through the Australia Awards Africa scholarship program. Before coming to Australia, Patience received her bachelor's degree in Health Information Management from Houdegbe North American University Benin Republic and has worked in Nigerian hospitals as a Health Information Manager. Ms Onuogu is an active member of the Health Information Managers Association of Australia.

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## Appendix A – Black Rhinos Basketball Program: Attendance, 2016 - 2021

| Year | Attendance | Average attendance per session |
|------|------------|--------------------------------|
| 2016 | N/A        | N/A                            |
| 2017 | N/A        | N/A                            |
| 2018 | 430        | 12                             |
| 2019 | 1156       | 26                             |
| 2020 | 93         | 16                             |
| 2021 | 365        | 16                             |

Source: Afri-Aus Care

# Appendix B – Jonah’s Story: A Case Study

## Jonah’s Story



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**Jonah (not his real name) is a 23 year old man who came with his mother and sister as refugees from Sudan. Jonah had witnessed his father’s death and since arriving in Australia experienced difficulties adjusting to and finding a place in a new land and culture.**

The relationship between Jonah and Afri-Aus Care (AAC) began in August 2018 when Jonah turned up, of his own accord, at AAC’s weekly **Black Rhinos B** basketball practice and personal development sessions held at Dandenong High School. Jonah heard of AAC and the basketball program on the grape vine from other boys who were receiving this form of support.

Jonah attended basketball sessions for two weeks, and we were impressed with his good behaviour and enthusiasm. But then he stopped coming.

A month later, Selba Luka (AAC’s CEO/Founder) got a call from Fulham Correctional Centre in Sale. They said that there was someone who wanted to speak with her. Unbeknownst to AAC, Jonah had committed armed robbery in the week before.

With permission to call, Jonah rang Selba. He was in a remorseful state – “I’m in jail, I feel terrible, I have to go to court and I’m scared – I need help”. Jonah, by his own admission, had got in with the wrong crowd and had made some poor decisions.

As is often the case, Jonah could not get nurturing support from his family (in this case his single mother). Jonah did not feel he was able to speak with his mother about his circumstances, since the response would have been one of retribution and disappointment. Another reason why he turned to Selba.

*One of AAC’s core services is providing young offenders with **support and advocacy at Magistrates Court**, with the aim of seeking alternatives to jail time.*

### **Court Appearances**

Selba and AAC’s case managers prepared Jonah for his court appearance by recording his life’s history, contacting a lawyer for him, briefing the lawyer and appearing at Magistrates Court with him to advocate for his release. As it is, it took three court appearances before bail was granted.

Jonah was given strict bail conditions (daily reporting to police and a curfew), and more to the point, he was required to join the Alcohol Diversion and Black Rhinos B Basketball Programs.

*The Black Rhinos B is a clinical support and personal development program funded by Multicultural Sports Victoria via Basketball Victoria, in partnership with the Dandenong based Victoria Police **Alcohol Diversion Program**. The majority of **Black Rhinos B** take part as a requirement by Magistrates to join the program as an alternative to incarceration. The program is a combination of basketball, counselling and direct case management by AAC, which provides ongoing support and direction to clients.*

As part of his diversion program activities, Jonah became a model Black Rhinos B participant, attended ‘Mens Behaviour Change’ counselling, and cooperated fully with AAC’s health and wellbeing guidance.

The latter included commencing regular sessions with AAC's educators to improve his presentation and job readiness skills.

In the meantime, AAC counselled Jonah's mother and sister, focusing on how best to support him and provide encouragement.

Another reason swaying the Magistrate to release Jonah was the prospect that he could enter the *Support for Jobseekers of African and Pasifika Heritage* program funded by Jobs Victoria, delivered as a partnership between AAC and Whitelion (the latter also a JVEN provider with a focus on youth at risk).

*A core of this program is referring young Africans to Whitelion's PAWS enterprise in South Dandenong. PAWS is a 'pick and pack' warehouse job experience opportunity, where participants learn about work, punctuality, respect for authority, and get help in preparing resumes and/or for job interviews.*

Jonah was assessed as suitable for PAWS, and began working at the warehouse. To everyone's delight, Jonah took to the role with dedication and enthusiasm, and rapidly became a PAWS start recruit.

#### **Milestone Court Appearance**

After the one month bail period, Jonah faced the Magistrate again, with Selba as advocate. His appearance was impressive. Jonah was well dressed and groomed, and spoke confidently and politely.

His mother and sister also attended, and described how much he had changed since joining AAC's programs and working at PAWS, and how much better the family relationship was. This was a combination of change in attitude in Jonah and his mother. They spoke of how Jonah had taken on direct responsibility for his family's wellbeing, rather "hanging around" with poor role models.

Letters were provided the Magistrate from Selba Luka as case manager, from the Men's Behaviour Change Counsellor and from Jonah's PAWS manager. They all spoke highly of Jonah, how determined he had was to better his circumstances, and from PAWS' point of view, how Jonah had excelled in his work ethic and been the most reliable of all PAWS participants to date.

Jonah still works with PAWS and is, in effect, second in charge in support of the manager, helping many other young people take the path he did. As an aside, Jonah also actively recruited five more Black Rhinos B basketball participants, knowing that the program could help them as much as it helped him, and that they too might get the benefit of job pathways via Whitelion.

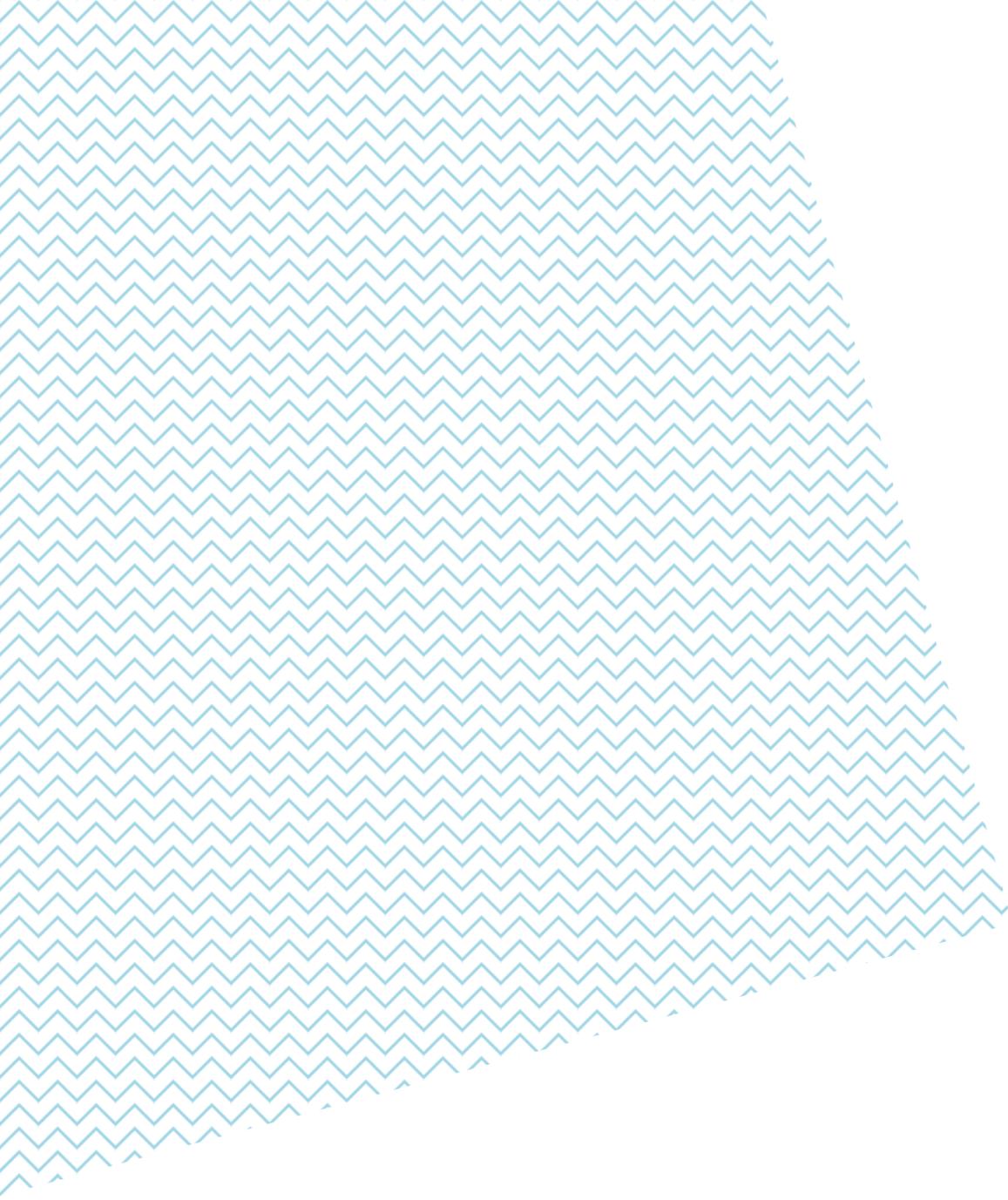
Jonah also has a positive vision for his future. He is now keen to recommence studies for a Bachelor of IT at RMIT University. AAC's educators are helping him map a pathway to achieving that.

#### **Relieve for a Better Life**

At Jonah's final court appearance, he was given 12 months bail on the condition that he adheres to the personal development program set up for him and overseen by AAC, and that reports are provided to the magistrate evidencing this progress.

If after that period Jonah proves his commitment to taking positive charge of his life, he will be released from bail without prison time.

**Jonah is ever grateful, and we have every confidence he will continue to grow as a valuable contributor to society.**



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**School of Social and Political Sciences**

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