



Green Gown Awards
Australasia

Benefitting Society

2020 Case Study



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA

Daughters and Dads Active and Empowered

Why Daughters and Dads? More than 90% of girls do not meet physical activity recommendations, less than 10% have demonstrated mastery of basic sports skills, and body image concerns are highly prevalent. This is of concern given the adverse health consequences associated with physical inactivity and poor social-emotional wellbeing.

Activities undertaken – To address these issues, Daughters and Dads Active and Empowered was established as the world first program to engage fathers to improve their daughter's wellbeing. The nine, weekly program sessions, combining theory/practical, target girls' physical and social-emotional skills including resilience and critical thinking. Fathers are taught positive parenting strategies and become gender equity advocates to empower their daughters to resist the pervasive culture of gender prejudice that limits opportunities in all aspects of their lives.

Departments/organisations involved and time-scale – The program is firmly established on principles of community-university-industry collaboration. Supported by industry partner, Port Waratah Coal Services, and medical research affiliate Hunter Medical Research Institute, the program was able to establish efficacy in rigorous randomised controlled trials and progress from the pilot stage (delivered at the University of Newcastle (UoN) in 2015) to a standalone community program delivered by facilitators at Newcastle

schools. Given the impact, facilitator training became an approved UoN course for pre-service teachers in 2016. In-service teachers can also attend. Far reaching societal benefit has been achieved by this course which addresses issues of gender bias and physical inactivity. Our research has shown the course impacts teaching practices in schools to benefit all children. Course attendees also assist with program implementation, offering a rich, work-integrated learning opportunity and strengthening relationships between UoN and the community. These partnerships have enabled the use of school sites, assisted program promotion and facilitated the research process.

In testament to the impact of this program, UoN has been inundated with requests for the program from sporting and community organisations, both nationally and internationally. More recently, UoN secured \$2.4 million from the NSW government for it to be rolled out across NSW in collaboration with the Department of Sport and Recreation and key sporting organisations. In 2018, Women in Sport-UK secured \$893,635 from Sport England for a roll out across England using English Football Clubs, highlighting its global relevance and significance.

External recognition: The program won a 2017 National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect Play Your Part Award, recognising outstanding initiatives promoting the wellbeing of children and was presented in Canberra by His Excellency Sir Peter Cosgrove - Governor-General of Australia. It was also awarded 3 national/international research impact awards including best paper and the prestigious ASICS medal at the Sports Medicine Australia Conference (2018) and best family research at the premier international physical activity/nutrition conference (2019).

The program has had an impact locally, nationally and internationally. Achievements include:

- **Funding for research and development:** \$4.1 million has been received since 2014.
- **Community engagement:** 35 programs delivered to 790 daughters and 678 fathers in local, state and international regions (e.g. Newcastle, Sydney, Orange, Wagga Wagga, Central Coast and England).
- **Innovative teaching course:** Training has been developed into an innovative work integrated learning course with >190

facilitators trained, including >100 pre-service and 27 in-service teachers (Australia) and 22 in England. In-service teachers receive 15 hrs of NSW Education Standards Authority accredited professional development hours.

- **Community facilities:** Delivered at 6 schools in Newcastle (80% classified as disadvantaged), 5 Sport and Recreational Centres across NSW and 8 community settings across England.
- **Research Higher Degree students:** PhD candidate and honors student investigating broader impact of the program, including for other family members, in workplaces, and schools.
- **Government acknowledgement of community impact:** Received recognition of community engagement excellence in Legislative Assembly of the NSW Parliament.

FIND OUT MORE



Leadership & Engagement

Daughters and Dads Active and Empowered is the only program internationally targeting fathers to increase their daughters' physical activity levels and social-emotional wellbeing. The program is distinctive due to:

| **Targeting fathers:** Fathers have a unique influence on their children's health but 94% of participants in parenting programs are mothers. The interaction style of fathers has inherent physical and social-emotional benefits and provides a unique platform to engage and maximise the father-daughter relationship. Alarming, studies have shown up to 70% of fathers only see themselves as an 'extra set of hands' when raising their daughters. Fathers are often less involved with their daughters than mothers and spend less time with daughters than sons. By teaching fathers about the significance of their influence, the program helps fathers improve the wellbeing of their daughter.

| **Female participation in sport:** Girls are often marginalised in physical activity, receiving less encouragement to be active than boys, leading to alarming differences in activity levels and sport skill proficiency. By high school, <10% of girls can perform basic sport skills, key for confident participation in physical activities throughout life. The program raises daughters' and fathers' awareness of restrictive gender bias' and provides evidence-based strategies for development of physical skills to optimise their wellbeing and participation in physical activity/sport.

| **Far reaching impact through a University course addressing gender bias and physical inactivity:** The program facilitator training has been developed into a course which offers an innovative work-integrated learning opportunity for student teachers and which impacts on their teaching practices to the benefit of their student and schools.

Environmental & Social Benefits

The program has compelling evidence of social benefits, gained in rigorous program evaluation (including two randomised controlled trials and dissemination trials) with a long-term follow up. Our significant outcomes directly align with the three key Sustainable Development Goals:

Good Health and Wellbeing: Daughters and dads became more physically active and reduced their use of screen time; and daughters greatly improved their sport skill proficiency (Morgan, 2019). Girls also demonstrated improved wellbeing with greatly improved resilience and social-emotional wellbeing; while dads improved their parenting practices and became more engaged with their daughters. Both fathers and daughters reported an improved relationship (Young, 2019).

Gender Equality: Focus group interviews with 24 pre-service teachers and program facilitators identified the course improved their awareness of gender inequity; gave them the skills and strategies to address gender issues; and led to wider community impact as teachers applied this knowledge to their teaching practice. Interviews with 23 fathers revealed the program improved their understanding of gender bias, and their role in promoting gender equity (Pollock, 2020).

Quality Education: Based on the latest evidence regarding positive parenting, sports skill development and the influence of restrictive gender roles; the program has consistently achieved exceptional satisfaction ratings from participants for the program (4.9/5.0) and the facilitators (5.0/5.0) (Morgan, 2019).

“Put simply, for me it was life changing. We will forever be grateful for the many lessons learnt and I will be a better parent as a result...A fantastic program that every father should do. I feel privileged to have had the opportunity.” (Participating father)

The UoN course for pre-service teachers has achieved an exceptional average rating of 4.8/5 for all measures of program satisfaction since 2017, making it one of the highest student rated courses at the University. The course has also received approval from the NSW Education Standards Authority for compulsory professional development hours for qualified teachers that attend.

“I wanted to extend my sincerest gratitude for allowing me to be involved in the program for 2017. I have never had a program that has made me so passionate about my career path and I can't wait to start integrating everything I have learnt throughout the duration of the program with my teaching philosophy.” (Student facilitator)

Please note: The Daughters and Dads Active and Empowered program was known as DADEE (Dads And Daughters Exercising and Empowered) up until mid-2019.

Wider Societal Impact

By teaching fathers about the gender bias present in many aspects of girls' lives, it has encouraged them to become gender equality advocates not only for their daughters but women in general, offering the potential to positively impact workplaces and the wider community.

Secondly, the program facilitator training is a NESA accredited course for qualified teachers and a University subject for pre-service teachers.

The course impacts on students' beliefs and their teaching practices outside of the program, to the benefit of their students and the wider school community.

Top 3 Learnings

The development of strong collaborative partnerships between Universities, Industry, Schools, Communities and Government are key for the scale up and sustainability of impactful community programs

Quality education programs using evidence-based pedagogies, delivered by engaging facilitators are essential to maximise benefits for communities

Targeting valued outcomes in an innovative and meaningful manner is critical for the engagement of families in health programs and attracting funding support to ensure sustainability