



## VOLUNTEER BRIEFING PACK

### Ice Breakers - How To Engage With Midnight Basketball Players?

Talking to, working with and engaging with young people is sometimes challenging for adults.

For some it can be easy and others find it quite difficult. What we need to remember is that any effort to acknowledge and talk with a young person is worthwhile. It is a normal experience for any relationship with a young person to perhaps be slow to develop at first but it will become easier over time as young people and adults come to get to know each other and trust each other - so don't stop trying!!

Please remember to keep questions general and not personal or intimidating, you have a professional and responsible role at Midnight Basketball and trust in and care of Players is our priority.

#### Tips

- Non face to face conversation is OK; eye to eye contact is not always comfortable initially for youth.
- Working together on a task creates a distraction and allows general conversation to occur more readily, for example:
  - ask questions about the night; structure, what is coming up, what has happened, etc.
  - what was the score in the last game?
  - ask about how the scoring works
- At the drinks point, take on the task of writing names on drink cups by asking each young person their name. Try to remember as many names as possible and always use that young person's name when speaking to them. Do not use general nicknames e.g.: young fella, boy, kid. If you have forgotten, ask again. And don't forget to always introduce yourself.
- Laugh and have a sense of humour, young people love to play and hear jokes (make sure it is appropriate – no discrimination, racism, gender bias, slang or swearing). Laugh with young people and not at young people. It is a joy to find how funny they can be.
- Look to assign tasks (check with the Tournament Night Manager if not sure), for example, if you are a Coach, ask a Player to be in charge of basketballs on the night and 'check in' with them. Praise them for managing the responsibility well.
- Ask questions about their favourite bands or singers. If you don't know them that's OK, have them tell you about their music style and what they know about that band or singer. It can be very enlightening!
- Ask questions about favourite football teams (AFL, Football, League or Rugby) and how they are doing this year. Ask about favourite players and if they watch them on TV or go to any matches.
- Ask about computer games they like to play. If you don't know the game, ask them to tell you about it. Do they play with friends? Family?
- Ask about any job aspirations. Tell them about your own work history – including difficult jobs, jobs you did and didn't like and any opportunities you had and how they come about. Share a story.



- Following on from any conversation about work, ask them if they know what study they might have to do to fulfil their aspirations? Provide any information you may have that could be useful.
- Silences are OK. Stick with it, young people can take longer to respond, it's normal.
- Always use a handshake and aim to gain eye contact when introducing yourself, being introduced or congratulating a Player during presentations. Remember, you have wonderful opportunities to role model respect and manners towards other people during a Midnight Basketball Tournament Night.
- Ask if the Player knows anyone else at Midnight Basketball. Use your experience to introduce the Player to other people as they may be reluctant.
- Listen non-judgementally. We all have beliefs and values about life; do not impose these inappropriately on young people.
- Be aware of your own body language. Be open and approachable; always place yourself at the same level as the young person, for example: if they are sitting, sit with them. Do not stand over young people as this may be intimidating.
- Respect personal spaces, the culture and identity of Players. Remember they can teach us too .
- Be brave. Reach out. Kindness has a powerful effect on everyone.
- Above all, be yourself; be patient, calm and caring in your approach. Do not use jargon you are not familiar with. Young people do not care to do things just because 'that's how you did it'. However, they are like sponges and will listen and absorb common sense (it seeps in; remember we all learnt somehow). While the young live in the here and now and face daily challenges, teenage years are a time of important formative learning for adulthood and the responsibilities that come with it.