

Kiwis More Active Than Aussies

Contributed by Craig - GKA Staff
Tuesday, 29 November 2005

First it was the rugby league, then the netball, then the hockey. Now research has found New Zealanders are beating Australians in the battle of physical activity.

Preliminary results from an international study of activity levels across 19 countries found 63.7 per cent of New Zealand adults are active, compared with 58.8 per cent of Australians. Sports Minister Trevor Mallard celebrated the result, early November, by beating Australian High Commissioner Allan Hawke in the best-of-three races up Parliament's front steps.

Hawke later blamed too much "horizontal folk-dancing" among the Australian population for its position below New Zealand's.

"We used to have a wonderful programme called Life Be In It, which was quite active," he said. Get Kids Active spokesman Craig Kemp, believes the use of the Get Kids Active programme will enhance physical activity in our communities, and the number of people being active. Maybe Australians can take a page from our book and ask Get Kids Active for help. We would love to see that!

"I don't know whether we've dropped off the pace or whether New Zealand's leading the way and has got yet again something they can teach us about how to do better in an important part of life and well-being."

Mallard said New Zealand's victory in the report over Australia was important. "We've done a lot of work over recent years trying to build up physical activity for New Zealanders â€" very important from a health point of view and from an economic point of view to have Kiwis productive through their lives," he said.

The study was conducted in 2002 and 2003 and sampled 1500 adults in New Zealand and 2600 across the Tasman. Other countries taking part included China, Canada, India, Norway, Portugal and Japan.

The benchmark for physical activity was set at 3000 metabolic equivalents (METs) a week â€" about one hour of moderate to vigorous physical activity a day.

New Zealand's position relative to other countries is not yet known as full details have yet to be published.

Kiwi males aged 50 to 65 had contributed the most to the difference with Australia, with 63.2 per cent active compared with only 50.3 per cent of Australians in that age bracket.

Mallard said the "Bledisloe Cup of physical activity" followed wins in netball, hockey and rugby league.

"As a mature Kiwi bloke, this victory is especially sweet."

Hawke said he would ask Mallard to raise the fitness issue at the next meeting of the Australasian Sport Ministerial Council. "I think he himself is a pretty good example of what he is preaching because I notice that over the last couple of years he's shed a bit of weight, as have I. I've still got more to go than Trevor, but he's leading by example," Hawke said.

Asked how he was feeling after their contest, Hawke replied: "I'm absolutely buggered."

For more information about the GKA Fitness programme please contact Craig Kemp on craig@getkidsactive.com

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