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## Sport and kids: more benefits than health & fitness

“Recent advocacy for physical education and sport has highlighted their benefits in the fight against childhood obesity, but the research presented in this book reminds us not to lose sight of the other ways in which they contribute to the development of young people”, says Dr Richard Light, author of a new book from Sydney University Press.

Titled *Sport in the lives of young Australians*, the book features in-depth studies on children within school, club and social environments around Australia. Children as young as 10 years old showed the ability to reflect on the conflicting messages from elite and professional ‘media’ sport. “If we can play fairly, then why can’t footy players who get paid to play?” said one.

A chapter on nippers and surf life saving clubs showed how the children developed on a number of levels. Friendships with older kids and adults through the surf club ‘community’, the ability to decide on how competitive to be, and social responsibility for those who went on to take an active role in patrolling were important aspects.

According to Dr Light, children learn fair play, gender identity, self motivation and much more through participation in sport activities.

Providing a unique insight into how children view sport and its role in their lives, the book also analyses some of the new methods being used to engage children in sport and offers suggestion for improving kids’ experiences of sport and physical education. For example, the Game Sense encourages player participation in the format and organisation of the game. Modified games allow greater participation (e.g. six-a-side soccer provides kids with more chances to touch the ball than 11-a-side) and involving the kids in the rule-making and strategizing to make them more engaged.

“The book will be a valuable resource for teachers, coaches and anyone interested in understanding how to provide physical education in a way that engages and develops the kids,” Richard said.

**About the author:** Dr Richard Light is a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Education and Social Work. He teaches Human Movement and Health Education and researches in the areas of sport and physical education pedagogy, and the socio-cultural dimensions of youth sport.

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**Sydney University Press:** [www.sup.usyd.edu.au](http://www.sup.usyd.edu.au)