



PICKLEBALL IN CENTRAL GOLDFIELDS

The Social and Informal Pickleball Program was developed to give community members a low cost and beginner friendly way to be active. The focus was on having fun, meeting other people and trying a new activity without the pressure of joining a club or playing in a formal competition.

The sessions ran from April to June 2026 and welcomed people with different ages, abilities and levels of experience.



HOW WE WORKED TOGETHER

Healthy Loddon Campaspe funded and coordinated the program, with support from Central Goldfields Shire Council.

Brendon Booth facilitated the sessions and helped participants learn the basic skills and rules in a relaxed and supportive environment. The sessions were designed so that beginners could join in, while people with some experience could continue to build their skills. The program was promoted through Healthy Loddon Campaspe and Central Goldfields Shire communication channels, partner organisations, social media, newsletters, flyers, local radio and the Maryborough Advertiser.

SUCCESSES



PARTICIPATION NUMBERS

The pickleball sessions received a strong response from the community, with some sessions attracting more people than expected.



ACCESSIBILITY & FLEXIBILITY

The beginner friendly approach made it easy for people to try pickleball without needing previous experience or joining a formal competition.



SUSTAINABILITY & LONGEVITY

Participants wanted the sessions to continue and began working towards forming their own pickleball club. The group has continued to run beyond the funding period.



BROADER BENEFITS

By continuing to play pickleball as part of a club, participants can expect broader benefits such as boosted mental health, and increased social connection by meeting new people and developing friendships.



200+

people participated
in the program
during April-June
2026

CHALLENGES

One of the primary challenges was finding a qualified facilitator to deliver the sessions, as there were no local pickleball facilitators available within the Central Goldfields Shire. As a result, a facilitator had to be sourced from outside the region, which required additional time and contributed to a later-than-planned program commencement.

Identifying a suitable venue and scheduling an appropriate session time also presented challenges. While participant numbers exceeded expectations, demonstrating strong community interest, the higher attendance created additional demands on session delivery. In particular, it was more difficult to accommodate varying skill levels and ensure all participants had sufficient opportunities to actively engage in the sessions.

SUSTAINABILITY & ONGOING BENEFITS

One of the strongest outcomes from the project was that the program did not end when the funded sessions finished. Participants took ownership of the activity and wanted to establish their own pickleball club.

This demonstrates that the project was more than just a short-term activity. It helped build an ongoing, community-led opportunity for people to be active and socially connected.

Pickleball offers a range of social and mental wellbeing benefits, making it much more than just a physical activity. As a highly social sport, it provides opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to connect, build friendships and strengthen community networks in a welcoming and inclusive environment. Regular participation can help reduce feelings of social isolation and improve overall mood, while the fun and supportive nature of the game can boost self-confidence and a sense of belonging. Mentally, pickleball encourages concentration, strategic thinking and quick decision-making, helping to keep the mind active and engaged. Participating in regular social and physical activity such as pickleball can also help reduce stress, support positive mental health and contribute to improved overall wellbeing.

"I loved coming
along and
learning how to
play"

