FACT SHEET

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

If you have a kinder or school aged child in your life, chances are they might be starting to show an interest in taking up an extracurricular activity. An extracurricular activity can be a great opportunity for a child to build new skills, meet new friends and explore new interests. But how do you choose which one to try? Here are some things to consider:

GIVING CHOICES

It's important that children know they have choices. Before automatically suggesting that a girl tries ballet or gymnastics, or a boy has a go at footy, make sure they're aware that other options are out there, and that you'll support them in their choice, whatever that might be. They may still opt for the more 'typical' activity for their gender – and there's nothing wrong with that - but it's essential that they're aware that other, less typical choices, aren't off limits.

Children may worry that if they want to do an activity that's less usual for their gender, you will be disappointed, or that their peers will tease them - your support can go a long way to giving them the freedom to choose something they're genuinely interested in.

Of course, not all extracurricular activities are accessible for all families. There might be particular reasons (competing timetables, location, cost, ability) for guiding a child to a particular activity, but where possible, always offer suggestions that are based on a child's **interests, strengths and skills.**

To find activities in your area, try your local council website or a site such as Active Activities: https://www.activeactivities.com.au

FOCUS ON STRENGTHS & SKILLS

Activities are for everyone – and that means **everyone**! Children of all genders, abilities and ages should be encouraged to try activities that spark their interest. If they're having trouble choosing just one thing they'd like to try, or if the activity they want isn't available but there might be alternatives they'd enjoy, then bringing the conversation back to strengths and skills can help:

- "You love to move your body and feel strong – that's something you would get to do in karate or ballet."
- "You love running, racing and going fast – maybe you'd like to try athletics?"
- "I know you like doing things together with a team – how about soccer, or scouts?"

LETTING CHILDREN TAKE THE LEAD

- Take advantage of free trials or introductory sessions to let your child experience activities before committing.
- Encourage your child to explore activities with friends for added enjoyment and support.
- Even if your child's interests don't align with yours or seem unconventional, respect their choices. Validate their preferences and show enthusiasm for their interests.
- Once your child has chosen an activity, provide ongoing support and encouragement. Attend their performances, games, or events, and show interest in their progress and achievements.