

# Play Her Way

Championing girls and women through sport

2024-2028



# Acknowledgement of Country

The Office of Sport acknowledges and celebrates the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters of NSW where we work, live and play.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and recognise their strengths, knowledge, and continuing connection to Country.

Artwork

## **“Jennebe”**

*By Jasmin Sarin*

*Proud Kamilaroi and Jerrinja woman*

This artwork reflects the importance of sport and physical activity in community. The love of sport brings tens of thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples together to reconnect, spectate, play, coach and just enjoy the love of the game. Not only has the involvement of Aboriginal people in sport been a game changer across many codes, it has also led to the spotlighting of cultural and political issues that has seen many changes in this state and country. Sport has always been a major social event in Aboriginal communities and continues to play a greater role in the ongoing recognition of Aboriginal culture and history.

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# Minister's message

The Play Her Way strategy affirms the NSW Government's commitment to empower women and girls to have full access to opportunity and choice. Women and girls must be recognised for their contribution, valued for their diversity and able to participate in sport at all levels in environments that foster a strong sense of belonging.

Gender equity across the entire sports landscape is a complex challenge that requires ongoing system adjustments, cultural change and the continued championing of women and girls to participate at all levels.

We know that sport is such a huge determinant of physical and mental health and it is important that all cohorts of women and girls and intersectional groups are able to realise these benefits.

**“That’s why we’ve set some bold challenges for the sport and recreation sector and will help facilitate opportunities for more women and girls in NSW to get involved and stay involved.”**

The Play Her Way Strategy is the NSW Government's plan to facilitate opportunities for more NSW women and girls to get involved and stay involved in sport. It builds on the work of the last four years to advance equality for women and girls in sport in NSW and reflects current evidence, insights and opportunities for increasing participation. Play Her Way is built on three strategic pillars of leadership and culture, participation, and partnerships and investment within the overarching focus of inclusion.

For the first time in NSW gender equity on board targets for State Sporting Organisations and State Sporting Organisations for People with Disability will be introduced. Through the Play Her Way strategy, this journey will be supported.

We also know women face different barriers to men when participating in sport and Play Her Way drills down to addressing these barriers, with a particular focus on adolescent girls who are participating at the lowest rates.

I am also pleased that the strategy will deliver on some of the NSW Government's priority strategies. Importantly there are initiatives built into Play Her Way that deliver actions under the NSW Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Primary Prevention Strategy.

I welcome the opportunities this strategy brings, and look forward to working with a broad range of partners to deliver better sport outcomes for women and girls in NSW.



**The Hon Steve Kamper MP**  
Minister for Sport



Strategy  
at a  
glance

# Strategy at a glance

## Play Her Way



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# Introduction



## The power of women's sport

**We have seen unprecedented interest in women's sport catapulted by hosting World Cups on home soil.**

This has provided powerful opportunities to leverage investment and drive positive legacy. From cricket and rugby league to cycling, basketball and football, our female athlete role models have been on full display at these major events and have connected with young girls and communities all over NSW.

While an incredible amount has been accomplished, achieving lasting gender equality in sport requires consistent effort over many years to realise sustained population-wide impact.

Despite the collective advancements that have been made for women in sport under the previous strategy and the momentum and interest generated by hosting successful events, significant barriers still exist for women and girls to realise the benefits of participation in sport.

We are living in one of the most transformational moments in history defined by change. At the same time, we are seeing uplifting societal powers from strong female role models and leaders. Belonging, connection and a sense of worth are the new social currency, championed by the heavyweights of our national female sporting teams and professional codes.



*“Sport can help uplift young females now and into the future because it’s the best place to learn so many life skills. You learn teamwork, you learn resilience, you learn about committing to something and I think that the friendships you make in sport will last an absolute lifetime.”*

Maddy Proud, Swifts Netball Captain





# 3

Case for  
change



# Need for a new strategy for women and girls in sport

**Sport is a huge determinant of physical and mental health. The myriad benefits of participating in sport such as teamwork and social wellbeing have been widely acknowledged.**

Right now, the prevalence of mental health issues being experienced by adolescent girls is soaring. At the same time, we are seeing ongoing barriers to participation in sport including a fear of judgement, conflicting priorities and appearance.

Together, these represent significant challenges for women and girls.

It is critical that all women and girls have full access to participate in sport at all levels and in environments where they feel welcome, and that foster female participation and celebrate women in sport.

We need to prioritise strategies that encourage women and girls to join sport (again) or encourage them to stay in sport.

Despite the advancements that have been made for women in sport in NSW over the last four years, unprecedented events during this time had a significant impact on individuals, families and the entire sport system, with females being disproportionately affected.

Consultations and research conducted for the development of the NSW Women's Strategy 2023-2026 has reinforced that time and concerted effort is required to achieve lasting change at a societal level, and that gender equality strategies like Play Her Way require a long-term commitment.

Play Her Way builds on the work that has been happening over the last four years on advancing equality for women and girls in sport in NSW and reflects the current evidence, insights and opportunities for increasing participation across all aspects of sport.



## A smart move for our kids

A new study from the University of Sydney has found links between children's long-term participation in sport and increased academic performance.

In the first long-term study of its kind, published in the *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*, researchers found that continued sports participation during school years was linked to lower absenteeism, better attention and memory, higher NAPLAN and end-of-school scores and higher odds of studying at university.

Those in team sports had better performance on attention and working memory tests, fewer absent days without permission and were more likely to be awarded the HSC or equivalent.<sup>1</sup>

# Current issues



Women's participation in sport and physical activity across all adult ages (15-65 years) has **dropped nationally by 5.6% from 2020 to 2023<sup>2</sup>**



Youth loneliness is on the rise. **Females aged 15-24 experienced highest levels of loneliness with a mean score of 3.3 out of 7.<sup>6</sup>** This longer-term trend may be linked to the growth in smartphones and social media use



Adolescent girls are participating in sports at the lowest rates. In NSW, by the time girls reach the ages of 15-17, they participate (3+ times a week) at a rate **23.5% lower than boys<sup>3</sup>**



**Less than 10%** of the top high-performance sports in Australia are led by female head coaches



Mental health issues for teenage girls are at an all-time high, with **79% of 14-19 year olds experiencing mild to severe mental health disorder.** Poor self-esteem and negative body image are major triggers<sup>4</sup>



**59% of the State Sporting Organisations and State Sporting Organisations for People with Disability met the target of 40% of women on boards in 2023/24**



Mental health disorders are **1.5-2.5 times lower** for girls who play sports vs those who never played.<sup>5</sup>



# Focus of the Play Her Way strategy 2024-2028

Now is the time to develop a new Women in Sport Strategy and shape the future for equality across sport.

There has been strong progress with the NSW Government's introduction of gender equity related requirements for State Sporting Organisations with an increased focus on participation at all levels for women and girls.

But more support is needed to achieve significant change and improve culture across the sport sector. The Play Her Way Strategy introduces a strong and coordinated focus at all levels.



# The development of Play Her Way

The development of Play Her Way 2024-2028 has utilised the learnings and findings from face-to-face engagement and feedback from stakeholders across the sport eco-system including sporting leaders, coaches, academia, brands, broadcasters and media including in addition to published evaluation reports from the previous strategy. This includes:



Over 65 presentations, forums, workshops, webinars and think tanks during the 2019-2023 strategy



Over 9,490 attendees at these engagement events



Findings published in two *Her Sport Her Way Grant Program Evaluation* reports by the Sport & Recreation INTervention & Epidemiology Research (SPRINTER) Group of The University of Sydney



Analysis of key Australian and international data and insights



Qualitative interviews with State Sporting Organisations and State Sporting Organisations for People with Disability CEO's

The strategic pillars of Play Her Way - She Belongs, She Plays and She Wins - were selected after considering global and national policies targeting women in sport and gender equality and extensive consultation with a broad range of stakeholders across NSW.

**She Belongs** focuses on leadership and culture. This pillar will contain initiatives to advance more women into leadership positions, develop inclusive sporting cultures and create and invest in developing welcoming places and spaces.

**She Plays** focuses on participation. Initiatives will put girls at the centre of a system-wide approach addressing barriers and opportunities for participation with a focus on adolescent girls.

**She Wins** focuses on partnerships and investment. There are innovative approaches to commercialise and generate funding via corporate value alignment and we seek to capitalise on opportunities with upcoming Women's World Cup events.

Play Her Way has a focus to ensure that everyone is included. A gender impact assessment was conducted during the development of Play Her Way, highlighting how intersecting aspects of a person's identity including First Nations identity, cultural background, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability and age, affect the way they experience proposed initiatives. The gender impact assessment will ensure that strategies are implemented to ensure the needs of different cohorts are not inadvertently overlooked.

# The Social Ecological Model: Propelling system-wide change

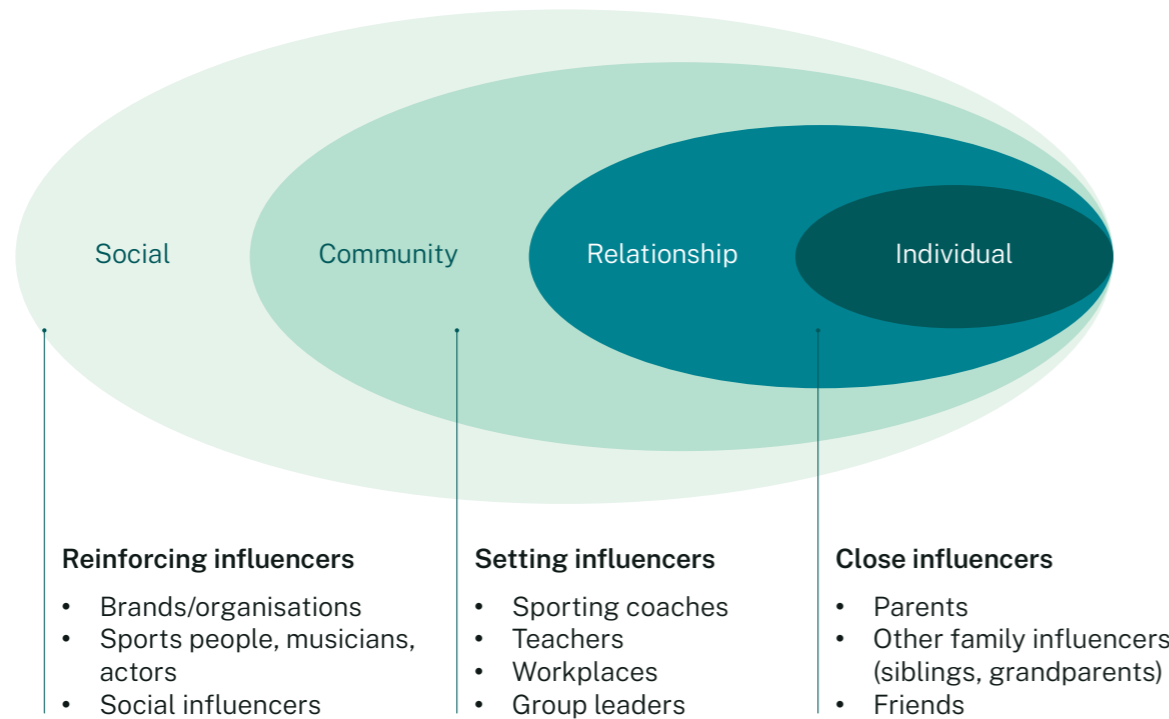
Play Her Way (2024-2028) is based on the proven Social Ecological Model (SEM) that works on the principle that to drive societal change, you need to act across multiple levels of the model simultaneously.

This approach is more likely to sustain impact over time than any single intervention. The four-level model is

used widely by organisations such as the World Health Organization and Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. It considers the complex interplay between individual, relationship, community, and societal factors<sup>7</sup> and will help propel lasting change for women and girls in sport.

## Social Ecological Model for system-wide change

Partnerships can play a major role in effecting societal change at all levels





# 4

## Play Her Way initiatives

Play Her Way's strategy for success is built upon the foundational pillars -

**She Belongs**

**She Plays**

**She Wins**

Each pillar represents a different strategic focus to address gender inequality and increase participation of women and girls in sport – both on and off the field.

The pillars range from developing inclusive cultures within sporting organisations, system-wide approaches to dismantle barriers for sport participation and working with partners from across the eco-system to invest in girls' and women's sport.



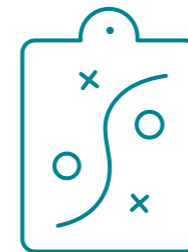
## Pillar 1

# She Belongs



### Intent

*She Belongs* aims to create a cultural shift within sporting organisations and clubs, where women feel welcomed, valued, and heard. From the boardroom to participating across coaching or employment, *She Belongs* invests in developing environments based on inclusivity, equality and respect. This will be achieved through initiatives that provide support for women at all stages of their careers in the sport sector.



### Rationale

Strong leadership that brings breadth of perspective and diversity in decision making can better support sport participation and inspire the next generation.

It is imperative that girls see women across the sport landscape in leadership positions, in boardrooms, in the media and in coaching roles. Yet there is still a significant gap in representation throughout the sector. Creating pathways and support will help increase the opportunities for women throughout these areas.



## State of play

### Under-representation of women in leadership

There continues to be a significant under-representation of women in leadership in the sport sector workforce in NSW.

For example, data captured in early 2024 shows that only 59% of 97 funded State Sporting Organisations met the 40% target for women on boards. In NSW, Boards of State Sporting Organisations and State Sporting Organisations for people with Disability funded by the NSW Office of Sport will be required to achieve gender equity targets for their boards by a certain timeframe as part of the implementation of the *National Gender equity in Sport Governance Policy*.

Leaders across the sport sector are key influencers. Visibility of women and girls across sport is vital to inspire the next generation.

### Gap in female coaches

Coaches play a pivotal role within sport and, as the face of the organisation, should reflect the diversity of participants.



Less than 10% of the top 36 funded high-performance sports were led by female head coaches, despite female athlete representation at recent Summer and Winter Olympics reaching over 50%<sup>8</sup>



In 2021, 33% of NSWIS coaches were female



Only 5.1% of females in NSW volunteered as a coach, trainer or instructor (compared with 8.3% of males)<sup>9</sup>

The Australian Institute of Sport's national report into *Women in High Performance Coaching* identified four drivers of poor participation in coaching at all levels for women:

- **Bad behaviour and toxic organisation cultures**
- **Organisational barriers and outdated work structures**
- **Substandard and inconsistent recruitment practices and**
- **Lack of coordinated development opportunities**

### Diversity in the sport workforce

The inaugural *Women in Sport Workforce Roundtable*, held by the Commonwealth Government in September 2022 found that the pathway for women in most areas of sport employment remains more convoluted than it is for male counterparts, and barriers are even more pronounced for Indigenous women and women of colour, women with a disability, culturally and linguistically diverse women and those who are gender diverse.

The recommendations included:

- **Improving the experience of female athletes - including strategies to transition them into the sport sector workforce**
- **Growing women's employment in sport - including better reporting and transparency to hold sporting organisations and government accountable and**
- **Establishing metrics and reporting, supported by evaluation and research into the barriers to participation and success and the opportunities.**

### Women's sport media coverage

Reducing the gap in media coverage is fundamental to advancing gender equality in sport and beyond.

In February 2024, the Office for Women in Sport and Recreation, Victoria released [The Conversation for Sport, Representation of Women in Sports News Coverage 2022-23](#) report.

The research found only 15% of sports news coverage in Victoria was focused on women's sport in 2022-23, with women's sport also less likely to receive deeper coverage and analysis.

This skew in coverage may fuel negative stereotypes in community sport around 'who sport is for' and 'who is more important' and is limiting the ability for women's elite sport to fully professionalise.

## She Belongs strategies and initiatives

Strategy	Initiative
<b>Lead Her Way</b> A comprehensive range of programs to support employment opportunities for women in the sector	Career Support Package including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseline research on women employed in the sector to enable an informed approach to developing metrics</li> <li>• Partnerships with key tertiary institutions to target transition of female students into the workforce</li> <li>• Partnership with Minerva Network to support athletes transitioning into the sport workforce</li> <li>• Partnerships to increase opportunities for women to access broadcasting mentors and learn broadcasting skills from a team of industry experts</li> <li>• A targeted 'Awareness to Action' leadership and inclusive culture campaign</li> </ul>
<b>Coach Her Way</b> Targeted coaching and officiating initiatives to increase the number of female coaches and officials and improve opportunities at all levels of coaching	Coaching initiatives including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A partnership with Sport NSW to deliver coaching and leadership pathway opportunities for women and girls including the Fast Track for Female Coaches program</li> <li>• Establishment of a NSW Coaching Framework for Women and Girls aligned to the national Fixing the Leaking Pipeline Action Plan, for current and aspiring female coaches and officials that encompasses:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ongoing educational support and guidance</li> <li>- Professional development</li> <li>- Networking and mentoring opportunities</li> </ul> </li> </ul>





Strategy	Initiative
<p><b>Gender Inclusive Boards</b></p> <p>Training and resourcing partnerships to effect cultural change and provide increased opportunities for women, with the aim of meeting targets for women on boards.</p>	<p>A partnership with Sport NSW to increase diversity in leadership and on boards through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender inclusive board training for State Sporting Organisations and State Sporting Organisations for people with Disability</li> <li>• Scholarships for aspiring female directors and leaders</li> <li>• Increasing awareness of good governance at the community sport level</li> </ul> <p>A partnership with Minerva Network to grow the Women in Governance Program, driving inclusion and best practise sports governance.</p>
<p><b>Safe sporting environments for women</b></p> <p>Implement actions under the <i>NSW Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Primary Prevention Strategy</i></p>	<p>Specific initiatives include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grants to sporting organisations</li> <li>• Initiatives that address the gender drivers of violence for targeted communities</li> <li>• Actions to build the evidence about what works in sport to support gender equality</li> </ul>
<p><b>Organisation Support Program</b></p> <p>Implement board gender equity targets for State Sporting Organisations and State Sporting Organisations for people with Disability through the Organisation Support Program</p>	<p>Office of Sport will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist State Sporting Organisations and State Sporting Organisations for people with Disability to meet gender equity targets for boards in line with the National Gender Equity in Sport Governance Policy</li> </ul>

## Case study: Footy for all



AFL's National [Women and Girls Game Development Action Plan](#) includes a vision for game development centred around belonging: *“Footy belongs in every household and in every community.”*

AFL has developed an all-encompassing action plan for their game from national to community level with three key action areas: Playing, Officiating and Leadership and Environment.

Each area of the action plan details goals for 2030 with examples including dedicated women and girls' participation options in every region at every level, from Auskick to Senior Community, women role models in community coaching positions, with women making up at least 40% of all accredited coaches and sufficient capacity of gender-neutral community football facilities to support the growth in women's football.

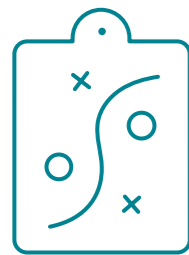
Regular AFL impact reports are released detailing progress against the action plan. In addition, AFL have released a [Women & Girls Community Football Charter](#) which is a commitment from community football clubs to work towards making community football environments welcoming, safe and inclusive for women and girls. This charter sets out the expectation that clubs will champion women and girls guided by four principles: opportunity, visibility, access and investment.

# She Plays



## Intent

*She Plays* will implement a system-wide approach to addressing barriers and opportunities for participation to ensure women and girls feel supported, build body confidence and have autonomy and input into their sport choices. This will build participation and shift social narratives, redefining how women and girls play and perceive sport. *She Plays* will also focus on adolescent girls.



## Rationale

There are many proven benefits for women and girls who participate in sport. Yet despite the positive physical, psychological and social outcomes, adolescent girls consistently participate at lower rates, are more likely to drop out and report poor quality sport experiences compared to boys. At the same time, our adolescent girls' mental health is rapidly declining with poor self-esteem and negative body image as major triggers.

The sport and active recreation sectors are recognised as critical settings for promoting health and wellbeing, including mental health, yet girls are participating at the lowest rates.

The importance of involving more women and girls in sport is well understood by sports organisations, however they report a lack of capacity to make change.<sup>15</sup>

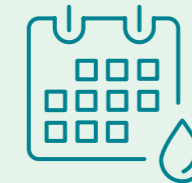


## State of play

### Barriers for adolescent girls



70% of girls avoid trying new things during puberty because they are too afraid to fail<sup>10</sup>



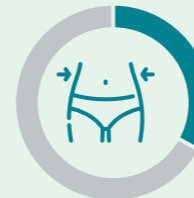
3/5 people report feelings of shame and stigma about periods and how they affect participation in sport<sup>11</sup>



63% of young women would not play sport or exercise without a friend by their side<sup>10</sup>



79% of 14-19 year old girls in Australia are experiencing a mental health disorder. Poor self-esteem and negative body image are major triggers<sup>12</sup>



33% of girls are unhappy with their body image<sup>10</sup>



Nationally, only 3.7% of girls aged 15-17 met the physical activity guidelines in 2022<sup>13</sup>



4/10 of girls define themselves as sporty compared to 6/10 boys<sup>10</sup>



In sport settings where girls have more "voice and choice" over goals and activities, there are less depression symptoms (10.4% compared to 35.1% where they don't have the opportunity)<sup>14</sup>





### Impact of key influencers

Key influencers are critical for creating a culture for women and girls to thrive – a culture that changes conversations at home and in other key settings. Conversations between daughters and dads, daughters and mums, sisters and brothers, girls and teachers and girls and coaches shape perceptions about gender equality, outdated stereotypes and focusing on what she CAN do.

Research from the *Women in Sport UK* highlights the potential positive benefits of mothers and teenagers being active together. It shows that teenage girls cherish alone time with their mother/mother-figure and view this relationship as their ‘safe space’ without any fear of judgement.<sup>16</sup>

Building on the success of the Daughters and Dads Active and Empowered program, which was shown to improve daughters social and emotional well-being and the father-daughter relationship,<sup>17</sup> additional girls’ and broader key influencer programs will provide opportunities for girls to find their judgement-free space together, get active and discover the joy, fun and wellbeing benefits of exercise.

### Brands helping drive change for our young people

Increasingly, brands are stepping in to make a difference on broader social issues.

At a time of heightened awareness of the influence of social media on adolescent girls, Dove launched an advertising campaign that celebrated female athletes titled ‘Hard Knocks’ at the Super Bowl LVIII. The ad featured various girls participating in sport and facing several setbacks and challenges before cutting to the message: *“The knocks don’t stop girls from playing sports, low body confidence does.”*

Dove has many brand and ambassador partners to help amplify the reach of their Body Confidence messaging. The ‘Hard Knocks’ advertisement introduced the Body Confident Sport program co-developed by Dove, Nike and academic experts, which offers coaches a set of evidence-based resources and tools to build body confidence in adolescent girls.

### Grant programs deliver success

From 2019 – 2023, dedicated funding was delivered for NSW State Sporting Organisations to innovate and provide unique offerings for girls and women. The SPort & Recreation INTervention & Epidemiology Research (SPRINTER) group at Sydney University found that

- **Participation focused projects engaged approximately 1,176 women and girls**
- **Leadership focused projects engaged 227 women and girls**
- **The programs positively influenced the capability of funded organisations to create more gender inclusive sports environments**
- **There was a significant positive impact on increasing organisational capability and capacity to design, deliver and evaluate new programs while fostering gender-inclusive cultures and environments.**<sup>18</sup>



### She Plays strategies and initiatives

Strategy	Initiative
<p><b>InnovateHER partnerships</b></p> <p>Supporting innovative ways to increase participation by engaging partners inside and outside the traditional sport system</p>	<p>Develop partnerships that will broaden the reach and position sport in new ways to meet the specific needs of women, girls and intersectional groups</p>
<p><b>EmpowHER campaign</b></p> <p>Campaign activities that address the barriers to participation for women and girls</p> <p>A key focus of EmpowHER will be re-engaging adolescent girls in sport with body positivity as a key campaign concept</p>	<p>EmpowHER campaign to unify Play Her Way initiatives and amplify messaging across all touchpoints</p> <p>Campaign concepts will encourage all women and girls, with a specific focus on adolescent girls, to give sport a go and will leverage existing and new partnerships to extend campaign reach</p> <p>The campaign will be complemented by a research-based empowerment program for adolescent girls focusing on health and wellbeing, building on the foundational Daughters and Dads program, through a new partnership with the University of Newcastle</p>
<p><b>Funding to increase participation</b></p> <p>Funding for State Sporting Organisations (SSOs) and State Sporting Organisations for people with Disability (SSODs) under the Organisation Support Program to increase the participation of women and girls</p>	<p>The Organisation Support Program provides funding to eligible SSOs/SSODs to support the sector and boost participation</p> <p>As part of the increased investment in the program, the Office of Sport will agree on outcomes for under-represented groups with SSOs/SSODs. In particular, this includes actions to increase female participation and leadership and work towards gender equity in sport</p>

Case study:

## Reimagining sport delivers spectacular results

Over 100 projects were successfully delivered as part of the Her Sport Her Way Grant Program. Two diverse programs are highlighted below.



### Finish Lines not Finish Times

New memberships sold, new friendships formed, and lifelong memories created are just some of the outcomes of Triathlon NSW 'Finish Lines not Finish Times' initiative.

Since its inception in 2019/2020, over 3,000 brand new female participants have been introduced to the sport of triathlon through this program.

From simple beginnings in the pilot phase with 11 clubs taking part back in 2019, the concept has grown and expanded to include pre-event training programs, education sessions and skills development, all delivered by the clubs and AUS Triathlon accredited coaches.

*"We always say, triathlon is for all ages and abilities but then our marketing and our media is photos of elite athletes. Once the events started, a lot of the clubs got their own photographers... so now we have this huge bank of photos of women of all shapes and sizes just having fun. And we just gradually introduced it into our regular communications."*

Club Representative

All designed to reduce barriers and promote inclusive sport experiences for women and girls.

The programs focused on providing a 'first touch' opportunity for women to try their first triathlon in a safe, welcoming and low-pressure environment. Each club developed a *First Timers Strategy* including goodie bags, Facebook support groups, group training sessions and gym access around the event, as well as new marketing collateral to appeal and connect with local and new audiences.

*"The grant program was the impetus for us to say: 'Here's our opportunity.' We know we've got a problem with visibility. We also know we've got extraordinary athletes. How do we bring those ideas together now that we have some flexibility and funding to do it? We set out to create a campaign which would elevate the visibility of our wonderful athletes, not only the superstars of our sport but also the emerging younger athletes."*

Mick Garnett, CEO Wheelchair Sports NSW.

### How I Roll

Showcasing female 'roll models' to increase the visibility of the incredible girls and women who play wheelchair sport, *How I Roll* is the story of thinking differently, speaking out and 'rolling' up.

Through the universal passion points of culture - music, dance and art - the campaign aimed to inspire girls and women living with a disability to give it a go.

The extraordinary spirit of the female athletes was captured in a [music video](#), performed by Casey Donovan and shown on high-profile broadcast media spots including 2GB, Today Show and ABC.

A [poignant portrait exhibition](#), painted by Archibald finalist, Kirsty Neilson, featured seven girls and women who participate in wheelchair sport. The exhibition travelled around the state.

To complement the campaign, HER SPORT festivals provided a safe and welcoming first point of entry for girls and women into wheelchair sport.

Overall, the campaign achieved remarkable success:

- **More than 300,000 views for the campaign**
- **The overall participation in wheelchair sports across NSW/ACT tripled**



*"In speaking to female wheelchair athletes who made it through all of these barriers, one of the common things is having role models to aspire to."*

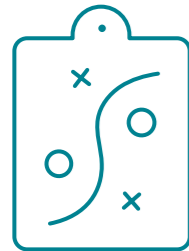
Hayley Slocome, Wheelchair tennis athlete.

# She Wins



### Intent

*She Wins* focuses on innovative approaches to commercialise and generate funding for women's sport through corporate value alignment. This also includes encouraging corporations to leverage sponsorship and funding opportunities with upcoming Women's World Cup events.



### Rationale

Investment in partnerships is crucial to changing social outcomes in sport. *She Wins* promotes Australian sport and collective achievement at the centre of aligned brand's narratives, creating not only inspiration for girls and women, but showing that women's sport is valued and respected in Australian society.



## State of play

### Brand partnerships deliver soaring win-win benefits on and off the field

Increasing partnerships and investment in women's sport can greatly increase participation and opportunities for all women and girls. Clearly defining the value of corporate sponsorship for women's sport and building understanding across the sport and corporate sectors of sophisticated and nimble approaches to investment in women's sport is key to driving better commercial decisions in this space.

In addition, new media channels, along with multi-platform and streaming behaviours are changing the way that people watch and engage with athletes. For women's sport to grow sustainably and reach diverse markets, audience interest and engagement platforms need to be better understood, and female athletes and teams need to be visible in ways that resonate with diverse fans.



For women's sport to grow sustainably and reach diverse markets, audience interest and engagement platforms need to be better understood, and female athletes and teams need to be visible in ways that resonate with diverse fans.

### Fan engagement - the evidence is clear

Australian women's teams have a significantly higher emotional connection with the public compared to men's teams.<sup>19</sup>



69% of women's sports fans are likely to buy sponsors product or service<sup>20</sup>



Avid fans of women's sport are trendsetters, early adopters of new tech and increasingly receptive to sponsorship<sup>21</sup>

Events and family experiences are central to fan engagement and driving participation right down to the community level – *'if she can see it, she can be it'*. World Cups also support future participation through legacy and strategic alignment across a code.

### The impacts of Women's World Cups

NSW has led the way in hosting major women's sporting events that have shifted the dial for girls and women in sport. Dedicated funding for legacy initiatives reinforces the importance and power of World Cups on home soil.

The 2026 Asian Football Cup and the 2027 Netball World Cup will be hosted in Australia.

Businesses that partner with state organisations for sports hosting World Cup events create opportunities to intensively scale Play Her Way initiatives through legacy and strategic alignment across a code, particularly for adolescent girls.

Proactive planning is key to achieving success. With the Netball World Cup 2027 to be hosted in Sydney, athletes and brands joined forces for a Shooting for 2027 Storytelling Workshop to explore how to grow their stories together, with the ultimate goal of maximising the 2027 World Cup impact for Australia.

## She Wins strategies and initiatives

Strategy	Initiative
<p><b>World Cup legacy</b></p> <p>Creating tournament legacy initiatives for netball and football to ensure women and girls in NSW are positively impacted by the hosting of the 2027 Netball World Cup and the 2026 AFC Women's Asian Cup</p>	<p>Partnerships with Netball NSW, Football NSW and Northern NSW Football to deliver participation legacy initiatives to support women and girls' participation and promote gender equality</p>
<p><b>NSW Professional Sporting Codes Collective</b></p> <p>Innovative approaches to commercialise and generate funding for women's sport and drive fan engagement</p>	<p>The NSW Women's Professional Sporting Team Collective will include activities to collectively increase the visibility of female professional athletes in NSW to inspire the next generation</p>
<p><b>Innovation forums</b></p> <p>To promote value alignment of brands, women's sporting codes and athletes</p>	<p>Innovation forums will bring brands, sports together to deliver powerful outcomes and showcase research, insights and cutting-edge campaigns and programs</p>



## Case study:

# A lasting legacy: The Winning Playbook – Leading Innovative Change in Sport



*"This World Cup is a turning point for football. It's the most inclusive and the best FIFA Women's World Cup ever."*

Fatma Samoura, FIFA Secretary General

The FIFA Women's World Cup 2023™ was a flashpoint moment for our nation. Records were smashed and women's sport in Australia was redefined.

The Matildas' FIFA World Cup 2023 match against England is the most watched television program ever and the CommBank Matildas are now the most marketable national sports team in Australia.<sup>22</sup>

As the Matildas' success soared on home soil, over 400 global trailblazers, local changemakers, community leaders and junior players gathered together in Sydney for *The Winning Playbook: Leading Innovative Change in Sport* day-long forum.

An initiative of the NSW Government's NSW Football Legacy Program, *The Winning Playbook* discussed the key trends driving innovation in women's sport and the strategies to promote growth, increase visibility and supercharge engagement.

*The Winning Playbook* captured the key learnings and insights from the day, leveraging the momentum to grow women's sport across Australia.

Case study:

## Shooting for 2027: Throwing open the opportunities for the Netball World Cup

The countdown to the next Women's World Cup is on. With the Netball World Cup landing in Sydney in 2027, NSW Office of Sport and Netball NSW brought together brands and athletes for a Shooting for 2027 Storytelling Workshop.

Nearly 100 people collaborated and strategised about how to harness the power of storytelling to maximise the impact of the World Cup.

Major brands Suncorp and Woolworths spoke to the audience about how their values-based partnerships are delivering big impact.

Sarah De La Mare, Head of Community & Sponsorships at Woolworths highlighted the benefit of engaging athletes and ambassadors. "Athletes are important because they get the cut-through of the message. They bring personality, credibility, athleticism. Not only that, they can bring their audience and they are seen as idols. So, by using them, you can create more engaging content," she said.

Mim Hayson, EGM Brand and Customer Experience presented Suncorp's 8-year partnership with netball through their Team Girls program. Team Girls was founded on a key insight that the drop-out rate for girls in sport remains much higher than boys.

"It's important we keep increasing the access and profile of women's sport at a community participation level through to the elite level, so our girls can see opportunities and pathways to benefit into adulthood," she explained.

During the practical storytelling session, brands and athletes were guided through workbooks to equip them with the tools to discover their purpose and use storytelling to connect deeply with fans and audiences.

Jamie Lee Price, Australian Diamond and co-captain of the GIANTS, who also participated in the workshop shared her enthusiasm for the upcoming 2027 Netball World Cup in Sydney. "A Netball World Cup in Sydney will be a dream come true. I think it's a huge opportunity for netball to grow even more and to be able to inspire the next generation of women and men is really exciting."



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Image: John Rohloff, Paddle Australia.

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