

AFL Workforce Gender Equity Action Plan

2022-2024



The AFL acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge we play our great game on this land and respect the cultures of all First Peoples, their contribution to our nation and contribution to the game of Australian Football.

Foreword

Australian football is a game for everyone – men, women, boys and girls – no matter where you are in our country. There is a place for everyone in our game, be that as a player, coach, umpire, administrator, volunteer, member or, most importantly, as a fan.

Our game needs to reflect our communities across Australia and our Gender Equity Action Plan is vital to ensure women are at the forefront of the AFL and its administration.

As football for women and girls continues to grow, and the AFLW competition provides aspiration for our next generation of elite female players, the AFL must continue to push for the strongest representation of women at the senior leadership levels for our game. Our plan also recognises the importance of community and senior club football, for female talent to move through our industry.

Here, we outline our commitments through to 2024, and where and how we will take action. As our game continues to grow, we will drive inclusivity across every part of our industry.



Gillon McLachlan
AFL CEO



Introduction

At the AFL, our purpose is to 'Progress the game so everyone can share in its heritage and possibilities'.

In the last five years, we have seen a significant increase in the presence of women at all levels of the AFL. Supported by our inaugural Gender Action Plan and buoyed by the launch of the AFLW competition, we are stronger than ever in attracting, retaining and advancing female talent in our organisation.

The second Gender Equity Action Plan sets our ambition for 2022-24, building on the strong foundations of the inaugural Plan to accelerate the presence of women, transgender and non-binary people across the industry. All of our team members- men and women alike- are essential in leading from the front, growing talent and shaping environments for everyone to thrive.

The Gender Equity Action Plan works in tandem with our Women's Football Vision and Women & Girls Participation Action Plan to continue driving inclusivity across every part of our industry.



Our aspiration at the AFL is to create an inclusive and equal workplace that brings out the very best in our people.

We have made strong progress towards this aspiration over the last several years and this plan aims to drive further positive changes.

Sarah Fair
EGM People



Our vision

Our Vision is to have women and men equally represented and respected, visibly leading and succeeding across all areas of our industry; with an inclusive culture that allows everyone to belong & thrive.

State of play

OUR PROGRESS SO FAR

The AFL has been a leader in driving a gender-inclusive organisation within the sports industry.

Since the launch of AFLW in 2017 and the Gender Action Plan in 2019, we have made significant strides toward gender equity in our organisation, including:

- » **40%** representation of women across the AFL.
- » **+17%** increase of females at senior leadership levels.
- » **40%** representation of women on AFL Executive Team.
- » **40%** women in Senior Leadership Team.
- » Accredited by Work180 as an endorsed employer for women.
- » Established targeted talent development programs to accelerate women's careers at the AFL.
 - GenW Executive Program - Executive / CEO readiness.
 - Accelerate Program: Senior leader readiness.
 - Emerging Women's Program: Leadership readiness.
- » Implemented our enhanced gender-neutral Parental Leave Policy.
 - 26 weeks paid leave for Primary Carer.
 - 6 Weeks paid leave for Secondary Carer.
 - Continuous superannuation guarantee payments through leave period (paid and unpaid).
 - Fully paid primary and secondary parental leave for families who experience stillbirth or the death of an infant.
 - Introduction of a formal Domestic & Family Violence Support Policy for our people.
- » Delivery of Evolve - our men's development program to actively engage men in the role they play in creating a more inclusive and diverse workplace.
- » Delivery of yearly AFL Industry Women's Summits - bringing our talented women together.



EMPOWER EMPOWER EMPOWER

AN INCLUSIVE AFL

90%

I enjoy working for the AFL

91%

I feel our working environment is safe, inclusive and respectful

94%

I feel supported by my people leader to work flexibly in our blended way of working



“It is a key priority for the AFL to continue to create and support more opportunities for women...”

Gillon McLachlan
AFL CEO

Our ambition

OUR COMMITMENT TO ACTION



Equal representation

Our 40/40/20 goal strives for men and women to be equally represented in all parts of the AFL organisation. Over the next three years, we are particularly focused on female representation in key areas including football operations, game development and technology.



Career progression

We are developing the future talent pipeline through a focus on early career attraction, investing in leadership capability, and support for career development through mentoring, coaching and equity in key opportunities for women and men.



Increased visibility

Visibility of leadership and fostering strong professional and informal networks across the AFL and industry are essential to growing our female talent. We aim to be widely recognised as an employer of choice for women internally and externally.



Culture of ownership

We drive accountability and ownership at all levels of our organisation. Equity begins with equipping our workforce with the skills to be strong, inclusive leaders that engage all genders and champion change.



Structures that empower

Important policies enshrine and support the delivery of our aspirations, from how we recruit new talent to flexible working for all of our staff to parental leave. We commit to maintaining policies and practices that reflect our values and help us compete for talent.

Our commitment

THE PATH TO 2024

The following early priorities have been identified as key to driving continued progress towards achieving our ambitions:



Equal representation

- » Industry pledge and action to achieve 40/40/20 vision at senior leadership level at the AFL and Clubs.
- » Establish key development programs in football roles/ 'hot jobs' to grow representation of women (In coaching, umpiring, football operations).
- » Develop and implement strategic talent attraction plan to draw more women to the AFL.
- » Understand inclusion for our non-binary, transexual workforce and the steps we can take proactively to make the AFL a workplace where our people feel safe, heard, included and represented.



Career progression

- » Establish AFL graduate program to attract and recruit underrepresented groups (gender, First Nations, multicultural).
- » Continue to grow AFL female talent programs (Women in Leadership, Accelerate, GenW).
- » Establish AFL female talent pool to promote career progression and visibility across the industry. Focused on CEO, Executive and Senior Leadership readiness.
- » Support team members realise career aspirations (coaching, feedback).
- » Continue career development program so team members have the tools and knowledge to drive their own careers.



Increased visibility

- » Develop plan to build pipeline of the next female external speakers to increase visibility of women working in the AFL.
- » Host a yearly AFL Women's Summit.
- » Continue to produce podcast featuring thought-provoking conversations with women shaping the AFL industry.



Culture of ownership

- » Promote the benefits of a GEAP for the men in our organisation (paid parental leave, work-life flexibility and balance etc) to embrace benefits, champion and sponsor equity.
- » Develop plan to transition to a shared ownership model where leaders & People team co-drive and are equally accountable for progress.
- » Establish an industry working group focusing on 'hot jobs' within AFL Clubs.
- » Conduct men's development program to actively promote allyship.



Structures that empower

- » Provide more education on the AFL's Remuneration Framework.
- » Test and promote uptake of key policies amongst men and women (e.g. parental leave).
- » Review and update People Policies to have gender neutral and inclusive language.

Equal Representation



We as a team are energised by the progress we have made, with strong gender representation across all levels of our organisation reflecting the commitment and effort of our people.

We are looking to carry this momentum forward with an important opportunity to invest in key focus areas - umpiring, coaching and football administration - to further progress gender equity.

Increasing and maintaining gender balance

We are seeking 40:40:20 representation at senior leadership levels across the AFL Industry, supporting all parts of our industry to deliver change and drive accountability.

Greater female representation in football administration

The Gender Equity Action Plan focuses on the AFL, but recognises the importance of our community and elite Club football areas in enabling female talent to move through and across the Industry. We are investing in development and new opportunities for women to succeed in positions where they are under-represented today, including umpiring, coaching and football administration.

Broadening our approach

We want all of our people to feel safe, heard, represented and included. We have ensured that our policies and procedures reflect gender-neutral language and entitlements. By engaging, listening and understanding what inclusion looks like for our non-binary and transgender workforce, we will be able to take further steps to make our workplace inclusive for all.



A balanced future

KEY INITIATIVES

As more and more women are playing our game from grassroots to AFLW, a key priority for the AFL is seeing that representation mirrored in the critical parts of running the game- coaching, umpiring and football operations. These are aspirational and important roles where we increasingly see female talent emerging and looking to grow through our community and state leagues, talent pathways and the elite game.

The AFL commits to investing in targeted initiatives aimed at accelerating female participation and progression in these areas, to help us achieve a more balanced game, in every part of the game.

Football Operations

» Football Operations Acceleration Pilot Program

Building football operations technical and management skills to prepare female talent for senior leadership roles.

» Talent ID Program

Develop a new training program to engage women in player recruitment and build a pipeline of female talent scouts to identify next generation of high potential players.

Coaching

» Head Coach Readiness Program

Focused 12-month program for female coaches to expand the rounded, critical skillset needed for Head Coach readiness in NAB League and beyond.

» Coach Developers

Two dedicated, experienced coach developers to work with female coaches in the NAB League.

Umpiring

» Elite Umpiring Accelerators (T2 and High Performance)

Scholarship programs to expand pipeline of females preparing for elite level umpiring; dedicated resource to support female umpiring talent.

» Elite Talent Camp

To identify leading female talent across state leagues and community.

» Community Combine

To build community umpiring talent and increase female participation in grassroots umpiring.



We have seen a significant increase in the number of opportunities provided for women to coach both boys and girls in National and State/Club football academy programs and representative teams in addition to the many females that have taken on coaching roles in the NAB League program to develop their coaching skills and experience.

We need to continue to ensure that all talent pathways - playing, coaching, umpiring, administration, medical and high performance - support opportunities, seek diversity, are accessible and available to everyone.

Grant Williams
Head of Talent Pathways



“We have prioritised several initiatives to accelerate the growth in women and girls taking on umpiring roles across the country, and ensuring we have a safe and welcoming pathway from community to elite level.”

Andrew Dillon
EGM Football Operations, Legal and Integrity



Career progression



Our talent pools in the AFL today are stronger and more gender diverse than ever, supported by ongoing investment in female-oriented talent and leadership development programs. Our 2024 plan provides additional investment into developing female talent at early stages of their career and supports the AFL in drawing in women with valued experience from a breadth of other industries.

Learning & development

We invest in programs to support the development of our women at different stages of their career. Our executive women's program, GenW, has been a resounding success in highlighting, developing and connecting our senior female talent. Our recently-launched Accelerate program is a three-month intensive for emerging female leaders to build leadership readiness and profile while our Women in Leadership Program supports people leaders to consolidate and grow their leadership approach and prepare for senior roles.

Industry wide talent planning

Within the AFL, we have been active in identifying our talented women and creating learning and development opportunities to drive career progression.

As we seek to deliver diverse and fulfilling careers for more talented women, we need to take a stronger cross-industry lens to the opportunities we can offer. This means working with Clubs and others to collaborate on secondment opportunities, succession planning and identifying candidates for emerging roles to keep talented women in the football industry.



I have been supported by a range of different managers throughout my time at the AFL, both male and female. I am a true believer the development is to be driven by the individual and throughout my experience there have been so many welcoming and supportive senior leaders who have not hesitated to provide advice, support and encouragement along the way. There are also a range of incredible development opportunities available for women in the AFL and I have been fortunate to participate in the Women's Emerging Leadership Program and most recently receiving the Jill Lindsay Scholarship which has provided an incredible opportunity for me to choose development in my own style.

Rosie Butler
National Partnerships Manager



Accelerating growth

CULTIVATING LEADERS OF OUR INDUSTRY

GenW Executive Leadership Program (GenW)

The GenW Program is a bespoke executive leadership program for the most senior female leaders working in both the AFL and AFLW Clubs.

Now entering its third year, one of the key success factors of the program is the visibility of our talented women and the ongoing advocacy and sponsorship from our industry executives. The program plays a critically important role in both identifying and supporting the accelerated development and progression of our most talented women in the AFL industry.



I participated in the inaugural GenW program in 2019 and I strongly believe that the visibility and sponsorship from the program has been the catalyst for accelerating my career within the AFL industry.

During the program my executive responsibilities at Essendon Football Club were broadened to include stepping up into the Acting CEO role and expanding my portfolio from people & culture to also include technology, legal, risk & compliance.

Since the GenW program, I've worked in the men's football program during the 2020 COVID impacted season and was seconded to the AFL Executive team in 2021 into the role of Acting Executive General Manager - People.



In May 2022, I was appointed to the newly created role of General Manager Umpiring within the AFL's Football Operations Department where I'm part of a 50:50 gender balanced leadership team who are collectively responsible for the overall administration of the key football competitions across AFL, AFLW, VFL, VFLW and the NAB Leagues.

The GenW program has not only expanded my networks but it has also given me the skills, confidence and advocacy to progress into more senior roles within the AFL industry.

Lisa Lawry
General Manager Umpiring



I joined the AFL from the North Melbourne Football Club where I spent six years working in the football department holding positions of General Manager Strategy and Football Operations and Head of Football Operations. I also was a member of the Club's Executive leadership team for the last five years of my tenure at the Club which led to my nomination for the GenW program in 2021.

During the program I was appointed to the AFL's General Manager Competition Management role within the AFL's Football Operations Department and my program sponsor Andrew Dillon became my new leader!

Laura Kane
General Manager
Competition Management



Increased visibility



As women make up more of the AFL administration internally, it is important to see their presence reflected in our external media and industry networks. We are committed to ensuring representation of the AFL in panels, media engagements and AFL generated content, makes women visible and reflects our diversity aspirations.

Visible gender balance externally

Launched in 2021, League Leaders is a podcast that tells the inspiring stories of the women who work in the football industry. Hosted by General Manager of Women's Football Nicole Livingstone, League Leaders celebrates our female talent and provides a window into their incredible experiences and stories.

AFL as an employer of choice

The AFL has been an endorsed employer for women by Work180 since 2020, demonstrating our ongoing commitment to equity and inclusion. We want females across all industries in Australia to know the AFL as a great employer for women.

Professional industry networking and connection

Our AFL Women's Summit in 2021 was attended by more than five hundred women across the playing cohort and AFL industry. We continue to invest in this event annually to celebrate women in the game and build connections across the industry. Going forward, our focus is creating stronger networks for men and women together across Clubs and the AFL.



Having representation matters.

The AFL is on a journey to being more inclusive and continues to actively consult and build an understanding of what it means to be an organisation and a sport for all.

Tanya Hosch
GM Social Policy & Inclusion



Our Journeys

EXPERIENCES IN THE AFL



I made a conscious decision to look for an opportunity within the AFL and, in particular being a female, I wanted to put my stamp on the organisation. When I commenced, I was accepted into the AFL family straightaway. There is an emphasis on asking directly, 'What more can we do for you?'. My role has the flexibility to create change and improve the environment of our clubs, leagues, regions, volunteers, administrators, coaches and umpires.

Sophie Williams
Operations Manager



What have I valued most from a career development perspective during my time at the AFL?

- » The opportunity to work with and amongst different people across the country
- » Being able to work under pressure
- » Learning how to influence and motivate
- » Creating programs for Indigenous people that have impact and worth
- » Being surrounded by changemakers

Narelle Long
Indigenous Talent
Programs Manager



I started in my role as Head of Data & Analytics at the AFL at the end of 2019. Prior to the AFL, I had never worked in the sports industry with most of my career spent in retail and FMCG. Furthermore, I am American and moved to Australia in 2013 so footy was also foreign to me! However, what attracted me to the AFL and the role was the greenfield opportunity to build a data capability in such an exciting and dynamic industry.

I had many preconceived notions about what it would be like working at the AFL, but I was surprised in many different areas. Firstly, I was surprised to see a higher proportion of women who work in the industry. Second, I was thrilled to realise that you do not need to be a footy expert to be successful, and I've never felt uncomfortable or embarrassed to ask the most basic questions!

Finally, I have found that people who work at the AFL want to actively learn from other industries and always open to hear from external experts.

Elisa Koch
Head of Data & Analytics





“The rewards will be delivering on the promise of equality of experience and opportunity for girls and women in our sport...”

Nicole Livingstone OAM
GM, Women's Football

Culture of ownership



To have an inclusive game, we must be an inclusive administration. We embrace our critical responsibility to foster an inclusive culture and empower our teams to be their authentic selves.

Our leaders carry this responsibility and are integral to driving the progress we are targeting through the second Gender Equity Action Plan.

Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) committee

Our GEAP Committee was established in 2021, chaired by Gillon McLachlan AFL CEO with men and women representing each of our business functions. This group has consulted across AFL teams and shaped the Gender Equity Action Plan, and now carries forward the delivery of initiatives and actions identified in the plan, as well as championing gender equity within the teams they represent.

Leadership accountability

Our senior leaders are serious about gender equity. We know if we create positive and inclusive experiences for our people, we will deliver the best experiences for our fans, players, community and partners.

We keep 'gender on the agenda' at all levels of leadership and our leaders are accountable for role modelling and setting expectations in their teams in how they hire, drive and reward performance and work day-to-day.



AFL for all

CHAMPIONING DIVERSITY

A plan that engages all genders in the conversation

To achieve an authentic culture of inclusion, it is critical that men feel empowered to engage on and lead gender diversity efforts. This means we must equip all our team with the skills to be inclusive team members and leaders, and champion diversity in a way that is genuine to them. We launched Evolve in 2019; a development program focusing on actively engaging men in driving change through self-awareness, inclusive leadership and allyship.



The Evolve program has been a fantastic growth opportunity for me in terms of knowing and leading myself. Specifically, how men can lead and help others lead in a way that fosters inclusiveness, diversity and exhibits positive masculine behaviors

Scott Fitzgerald
Head of Membership, Hospitality & Marvel Stadium Commercial



Our AFL values set our culture expectations

Our AFL Values of Play to Win, Play with Passion, Play Fair and Play as one Team, are important in bringing to life the culture we want at the AFL. All team members give and receive feedback on values during our performance cycle and are held accountable for bringing them to life in they way we work together.



Structures that empower



To achieve gender equity in practice, we have worked to ensure it is embedded in our policies, practices and ways of working ranging from pay equity to flexible work and parental leave to gender balance in recruitment panels.

We continue to evolve and learn from best practices as they emerge across industries, and test that our policies and practices are used to their fullest effect day-to-day.

A flexible approach to work

We are passionate about an approach to work that enables our team to balance performance with a sustainable lifestyle where caring responsibilities can be balanced across all genders.

Our hybrid working model of “Connect” days and “Work from Anywhere” allows team members to blend time in their workplace and home or other locations.

We also offer Flex Cultural Leave where team members have full flexibility to work on the day of an existing public holiday in their state or territory and use the day’s leave in lieu to celebrate another cultural or religious event or holiday that is of more significance to them.

Creating positive and healthy daily experiences for our people

Every permanent AFL team member is given a ‘Wellness Day’ each quarter; time dedicated to an activity that positively impacts their physical, mental, social or emotional wellbeing.

We continue to expand our health and wellbeing program, Play Well, which helps our people be at their best across four key fundamentals - Healthy Body, Healthy Mind, Healthy Workplace and Healthy life.



Future proof SUPPORTING OUR PARENTS

Growing families and careers

Our parental leave policy offers permanent AFL team members six months paid leave for primary carers regardless of gender and offers continuous superannuation payments during any unpaid leave period up to 28 weeks.

We have also extended our full paid parental leave entitlement to apply where stillbirth occurs.



I had a wonderful experience of parental leave through the AFL. I had my first child in the peak of COVID in 2020 when there were global changes around many industries, it was so amazing to see the AFL not only continued but also made substantial changes to the Parental leave policy that considered both primary and secondary carers.

I felt very supported when returning from parental leave and I have a wonderful leader who has been supportive of working parents across our department. This included regularly checking in as my return date approached and getting me back up to speed.

The leave policy made such a positive impact in my first year of parenthood and I know is a testament to how much

my son thrived. Being able to spend his first year of life with him, in particular given COVID and numerous lockdowns in Victoria, will be something I will always cherish. However, it has been so great getting back to work and being so supported from so many people around the business. This has been made even better by the flexible nature of working at the AFL where I work from home three days a week and can-do daycare drop offs whilst reducing the stress and time of a commute to the office. Since returning, the implementation of 'wellness days' has been amazing. It means, as a working mum, I can get a day a quarter to myself to get some R&R.

Maeve Ryan
Head of Game Development
Engagement



Total AFL industry commitments to gender equity

We are building to a future where women are integral to every aspect of our game by leading as a code that engages, invests in, empowers and celebrates women across the Australian Football community.

A VISION FOR:

Today's Players

Aspiring Players

Our Workforce

Today's Leaders

Aspiring Coaches and Leaders

Our Partners



PILLARS AND KEY ACTIONS			
Women and girls' participation	Women's elite and pathways football	Women in our workforce	Women in football management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Institute a local football participation program at every level, in every region, for women and girls. » Invest in female-friendly facilities across community venues. » Ensure girls have the same opportunities as boys to participate in schools. » Target 40%+ of all accredited coaches and umpires in community to be female. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Drive professionalisation of Women's Football on and off field supported by pay, programs and infrastructure. » Support integration of men's and women's football programs in Elite Clubs. » Provide a Talent Pathway offering equal support and development to women. » Grow a strong Women's Football economy in collaboration with partners and broadcasters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Drive a 40/40/20 vision in every part of our industry. » Embed culture of ownership in senior leaders. » Invest in female career development at every stage. » Promote visibility of AFL female talent across the Industry and in media. » Implement graduate program to attract emerging talent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Engage the Industry to increase the presence of women in managing football operations. » Accelerate the development and presence of female coaches in elite and talent leagues. » Promote pathways into talent identification careers. » Create focused pathways for female umpires.
<p>Women in Australian Football are: THRIVING, INCLUDED, WELCOME, ENGAGED, SAFE, DIVERSE</p>			



“The inclusion of women’s football has been a defining moment in the history of our game and has opened our eyes to all the possibilities that lie before us.”

Richard Goyder AO
AFL Commission Chairman

