

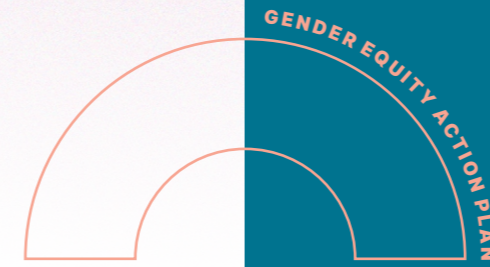
AFL WORKFORCE GENDER EQUITY ACTION PLAN



The AFL acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work and play our game. We 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 Rules Football.



FOREWORD



The AFL's Vision is for everyone to love and connect with Australia's game. To realise this vision, it's imperative that our workforce reflects the rich diversity of the communities in which our game is played to drive future participation and fan and audience growth across AFL and AFLW.

We also know a more inclusive and equitable AFL will continue to drive better organisational outcomes, through enhanced decision making, innovation and higher employee engagement, making the ongoing case for change not only compelling but a necessity to maintain our position as the leading sport in Australia.

This is the third iteration of the AFL's Workforce Gender Equity Action Plan (GEAP). Previous plans have laid strong foundations and driven substantial cultural change through an inclusion-led approach.

Our focus has and will continue to be realising the benefits of inclusivity and creating an environment in which all of our people can thrive.

I look forward to working with all of our people to bring this plan to life, truly embedding a culture of inclusion at the AFL.

Andrew Dillon, AFL CEO



The AFL is one of the most recognised and influential brands in Australia. What is perhaps less well known is the significant cultural transformation that has taken place within our organisation in recent years.

From the outset, we've worked intentionally to bring people along on the journey, building a strong sense of collective ownership and pride in what we're achieving together.

In 2019, we launched our inaugural Gender Equity Action Plan – a defining moment that set a clear direction and marked the start of sustained, meaningful progress.

We've moved from being a male-dominated organisation to one that is genuinely more inclusive and equitable for women. Our leadership and workforce now reflect a broader, more balanced picture of the communities in which our game is played.

Back in 2018, just 16% of our senior leaders were women. Today, that number stands at 51%. Women now make up 45% of our overall workforce — up from 32% — and our annual engagement survey shows that women are experiencing our workplace just as positively as men.

We've also taken major steps on pay equity, achieving a 0% median gender pay gap.

As we look ahead to our third Gender Equity Action Plan (2025–2027), we do so with momentum, strong leadership commitment, and a deep understanding of the work to be done.

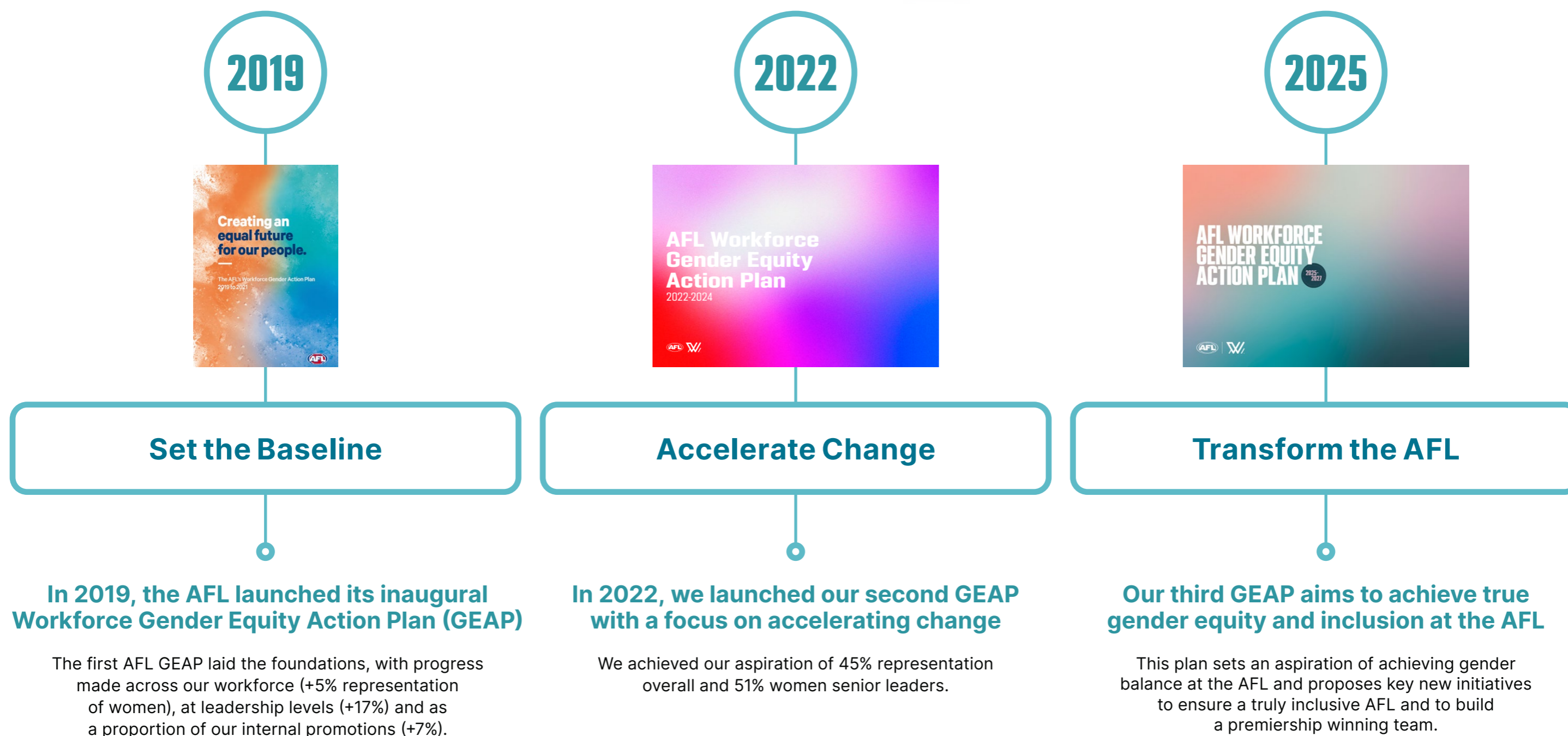
This next chapter is bolder and more focused, with a clear vision to achieve true gender equity and inclusion across every part of the AFL.

We have a shared belief that a stronger AFL is a more equal and inclusive one. By continuing to lead this work with intention, we will further strengthen our culture, our performance, and our position as Australia's leading sport.

Sarah Fair, EGM People



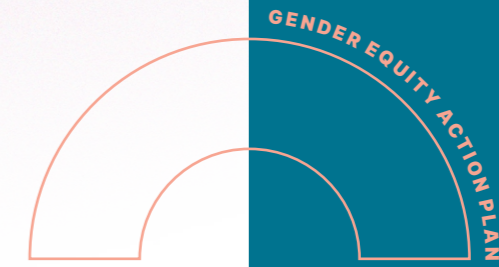
The 2025-2027 GEAP builds on the progress of our two previous plans



OUR VISION

**TRUE GENDER EQUITY AND
INCLUSION AT THE AFL**

AN INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE AFL



The AFL Workforce Gender Equity Action Plan focuses on building a more inclusive and equitable environment within the AFL's internal workforce – both as an employer and as a leader across the industry. It sits alongside our broader Inclusion and Diversity plans, each designed to deliver targeted and sustained change that supports a culture of fairness, respect and belonging for everyone at the AFL.

For much of its history, the AFL workforce has been male dominated. However, since the launch of our inaugural Gender Equity Action Plan seven years ago, we've made significant progress in increasing the representation and inclusion of women across our organisation. While we're proud of this progress, we know there is more to do.

This plan is purposefully focused on continuing to advance equity for women in the AFL — particularly where disparities remain — but it is not a women-only issue. Meaningful progress to achieving gender equity requires the active engagement of men and we are committed to bringing men on the journey, as allies, advocates and leaders of change. Men's involvement is critical in challenging outdated gender norms, shifting culture, and realising the mutual benefits of gender equity to build a truly inclusive organisation.

At the same time, we recognise that gender is not binary, and our commitment to inclusion extends beyond women and men in our LGBTQI+ Inclusion Action Plan which outlines the work we're doing to ensure people of all gender identities and expressions feel seen, valued and supported within the AFL.

Together, these action plans form part of our wider vision for an AFL where everyone belongs.



OUR PROGRESS

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, and our first Gender Equity Action Plan.



» **51% of Senior Leaders are women (+14%).**



» **10% increase in number of women in Football Department.**



» **55% of new starters were women in 2024** – up from 39% in 2021.



» Launch of inaugural **AFL Pride Plan** – fostering inclusion for LGBTQI+ team members.



» **45% of AFL workforce are women** – up from 38% in 2021.



» **Women and men equally engaged** at the AFL.



» Established **AFL Graduate Program**. **83% women in inaugural program.**



» **Targeted Talent Programs to accelerate progression** – Women in Leadership, Accelerator and GenW, Women in Football.



» Annual AFL Industry **Women's Summit**.



» Scholarships to further education and career aspirations – **Jill Lindsay and Ray Gunston**.



» **0% median pay gap.**



» **26 weeks Parental Leave** for primary carer with no qualifying period and ongoing paid superannuation.



» AFL Podcast – **League Leaders** – profiling senior women across the AFL Industry.



» Established **AFL Industry Diversity Dashboard**.



» **Men's health and development** series to promote healthy masculinity.



“The third phase of the GEAP is critical to the future of our code, it is more than an evolution of policy, it will ensure we transform our teams, working environment and game for the better.”

Rob Auld,
Executive General Manager - Game Development

2024 AFLW Draft
Grace Belloni, Lucia Painter, Poppy Scholz, Emma McDonald, India Rasheed, Sara Howley,
Sophie McKay, Sierra Grieves, Havana Harris, Ash Centra, Molly O’Hehir, Zipporah Fish

Our next era of change focuses on four pillars to help achieve true equity and inclusion.



Culture of Belonging

The culture of the AFL is one in which difference is truly valued, where women and men feel equally engaged, respected and supported.



Gender Balance

Equal representation and opportunities for women and men at the AFL to realise their full potential.



Visibility and Connection

Women and men equally visible, recognised and connected within and outside of the AFL.

The AFL is a leading employer in Australia.



Inclusive Practices

Inclusive systems, processes, policies and structures in place that address barriers to gender equity.



Jen Watt, CEO North Melbourne and
Laura Kane, Executive General Manager Football Operations



Workplay – the AFL’s career development platform for our players, empowers women athletes in football to pursue their sporting aspirations whilst also forging pathways for success beyond the field.



Workplay
Mattea Breed, Maddy Hendrie,
Tahlia Gillard, Marianna Anthony

CULTURE OF BELONGING

Further embedding a culture of belonging will ensure difference is valued where everybody feels equally respected, engaged and supported at the AFL.



The emergence of AFLW has been one of the most exciting developments in the sport's history. I've had the privilege of watching Nicole Bresnehan's journey – starting in community footy, working at the AFL, and ultimately becoming an AFLW Premiership player. Her story is not only inspiring but transformative. Nicole's journey shows young Tasmanian girls that they don't just have a place in football – they belong.

Damian Gill,
Head of AFL Tasmania

True gender equity means more than equal numbers. It's about creating space for different ways of working, leading, and caring. It's about backing people to bring their whole selves to the table – and making sure the systems around them actually make that possible.

Nioka Tyson,
Social and Emotional Wellbeing Lead



Living in Indonesia during COVID and doing all my classes online, built a strong desire to work somewhere that I felt connected with people who shared my values. This led me to the AFL's Graduate Program.

I started with very minimal footy and industry knowledge, and since, have been across numerous projects in various streams. I genuinely feel valued by those around me, being trusted to take ownership of the work that I do.

Sapphira Dainty,
Premium Growth Coordinator

GENDER BALANCE

We aspire to achieve equal representation at the AFL and ensure equal opportunities for our people.



I am incredibly proud to work in a team at the AFL where the elite, state and talent functions of footy are all led by women. In my role as Head of Talent, I am a believer that gender equality in Football Operations shouldn't be viewed as aspirational – it must be operational. It needs to be built into how we recruit people, how we lead these people, and how we define success. Our game is better when everyone has a fair and equal chance to shape it.

Nicky Couston, Head of Talent



With a background in nursing, after the pandemic I was looking for a complete career change - which led me to the AFL. Somewhat afraid I was walking into a male dominated industry, I immediately learnt it is quite the opposite, from the minute I walked in the door for an interview.

I participated in the NEXT Emerging Leaders Program, where I felt empowered, specifically as a woman to succeed within this organisation and industry more broadly. With so many admirable women in senior leadership positions, it is easy to foresee longevity within this industry, knowing I have the support and resources to flourish.

Maddy Martin, Sales Manager



The AFL I stepped into 15 years ago was a game for men, mostly run by men. I am pleased to say that between then and now, the AFL has changed markedly due to strong leadership and key strategic decisions. Our organisation has sought to identify talented women leaders and bring them into our organisation and allow them to demonstrate their capabilities in what were previously male-dominated roles. This has changed the perception – and reality – of the role of women leaders in our game, and professional sport more broadly.

David Grossman, General Manager – Clubs & Scheduling

Above: Jennifer Macmillan, Head of Salary Cap and Soft Cap Compliance
Michelle Thomson, Player Contract Administration Manager

VISIBILITY & CONNECTION

Women and men must be equally visible, recognised, and connected within and outside the AFL if we are to cement our position as a leading employer in Australia.



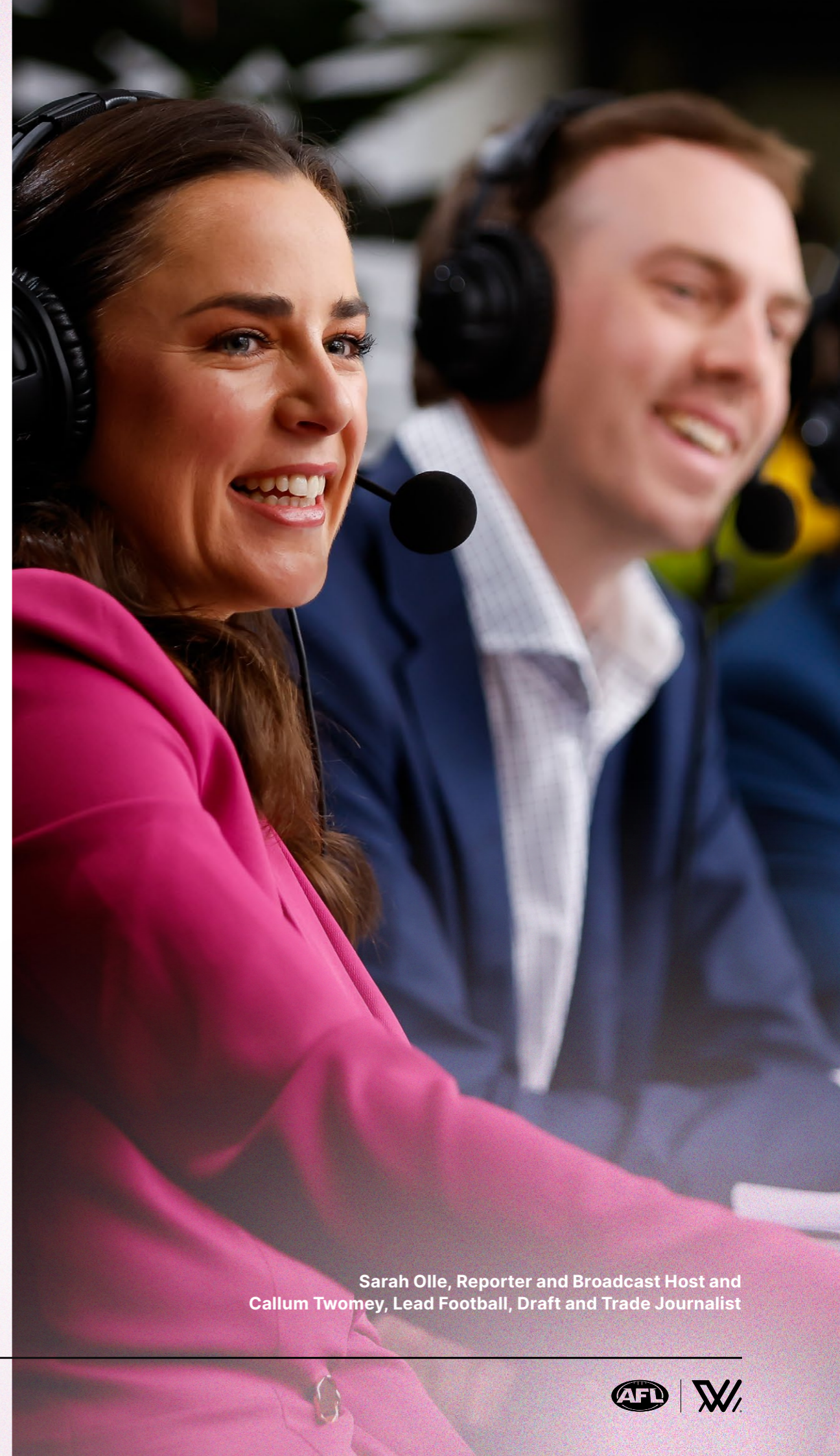
I made the decision to transition from a career in Financial Services to Game Development at the AFL because it offered a rare and meaningful opportunity – to shape the future of Australia’s game at a grassroots level, influence national conversations, and contribute to major events and initiatives that bring communities together.

Helen Lonsdale,
Head of Game Development Experience



The newly established Women in AFL SteerCo is an exciting initiative that will help support this next phase of the Gender Equity Action Plan and ensure we continue to make progress towards gender equity. By bringing senior women from across the AFL together it allows us to be more strategic in our initiatives and ensure we are working and delivering across departments. It provides a regular forum where we can share, learn and collaborate on ideas, opportunities and issues to accelerate positive change.

Madeline Penny, General Manager – Game Development



Sarah Olle, Reporter and Broadcast Host and
Callum Twomey, Lead Football, Draft and Trade Journalist

INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

Our systems, processes, and policies must address barriers to gender equity.



Being able to spend the first eight months of my twin daughters lives as not just a support, but a Dad who was completely present and engaged through their earliest and most formative stages, is something I will always cherish. This time allowed me to form a deep bond and understand their needs, whilst also challenging traditional gender roles as I was able to take on responsibilities and expectations that are often disproportionately placed on mothers. As a man, I'm incredibly grateful to have this experience and have no doubt it has enabled me to be the best father I can be.

Sean Williams, Ticketing Operations Lead



As someone who spent a lot of time and energy prioritising work, becoming a Mum was a huge change in my life. The support provided by the AFL's Paid Parental Leave scheme provided significant peace of mind for my partner and I when we were planning how to manage the transition to parenthood. It helped us figure out how to split the time at home during the first year of our son's life in a way that suited both of us.

The AFL were incredibly flexible and encouraging in allowing me to adjust my return to work date back a little as we dealt with the lumps and bumps of sleepless nights and other new parenting challenges. Having the ability to make decisions that were in the best interests of our family and with the knowledge that work were super understanding was a great comfort.

Returning to work on my own timeline and being able to ramp up slowly to full-time hours was also important for me personally (as I tried to remember how to send an email!). Now that I am back and up to speed, the AFL's flexible work commitment has helped me be home to help out and manage the juggle of full-time work and parenthood.

Lou Caluzzi, Player Movement & Projects Manager



Nadia Okraglik, Strategy Manager;
AFL Commissioner Gabrielle Trainor AO; and
Annelie Smith, General Manager of Football, Box Hill Hawks

“Through the Jill Lindsay
Scholarship, I’m excited to
develop my leadership skills
and contribute to achieving
the AFL’s vision for everyone
to love and connect with
Australia’s game.”

Nadia Okraglik, Strategy Manager

KEY INITIATIVES

Coming into our third plan, there is still unfinished business. We have momentum, strong leadership commitment, and will pursue even greater aspirations.

Some of our initiatives will include:



Our non-primary paid parental leave will increase from six weeks to eight weeks, allowing all of our people to spend more valuable time with their families. We'll also maintain 26 weeks paid parental leave for primary carer, with no qualifying period and ongoing paid superannuation.



To achieve true gender balance, we will continue to focus on driving change to two traditional footy areas – Game Development and Football Operations.



We'll roll out inclusion training for all people leaders and new starters, embedding a culture of belonging at the AFL.



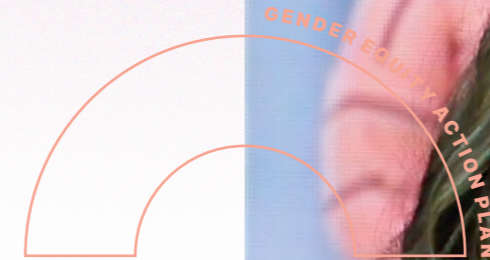
To accelerate change, we have recently we have recently formed a Women in AFL SteerCo and will establish a Men's Advisory Group.



We'll continue to conduct our women's talent programs – GenW Executive Leadership, Women in Leadership, Women in Football, Women in Game Development – and implement a men's development series.



Conduct twice yearly formal pay gap reviews to achieve pay equity.



Kirstie Fitzgerald, AFL Publicist

2025-2027 GEAP

