

Women's Football Vision

2021-2030

Acknowledgment of Country

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 Rules Football.

The 2030 AFL Women's Football Vision

It begins here



Foreword

Gillon McLachlan

Chief Executive Officer

Australian Football forever changed for the better in 2015.

With our announcement to form a national women's league and the immediate build of an industry-wide plan to support that new league, we have witnessed a tide of change that has built on and amplified the amazing work over many decades by the pioneers of women's football.

It saw a re-set of Australia's iconic football code immediately take place. From a sport that for more than a century had focused on the pursuits of sporting excellence for men, it now offered women and girls an elite competition with talent pathways to provide both inspiration and aspiration.

That was impossible without the incredible work of those thousands of pioneering women players, coaches and administrators who worked for years to build the opportunities for women and girls at community level and kept pushing for a national competition and a national pathway. We are here today because of their passion and commitment.

Since the introduction of a national league, we have witnessed unprecedented growth in both the AFLW and in women's participation. Eight club licences were awarded within a year and an official competition was in place inside two years - and in 2017 we launched the AFLW, whose arrival inspired so many girls to take up our game. In 2018, the overall number of women and girls playing our national game was one-third of

our total football participation around the country. More than half a million girls and women were now playing our game.

Since our AFLW debut, we have enabled further growth and progression, adding two more clubs in 2019, followed by four more in 2020, before announcing that all 18 clubs would field a team by our seventh season, commencing late 2022. Now our competition is whole and with this has come increased opportunity for Australian girls and women:

- » Opportunity to train and develop in high-performance environments and play elite Australian Football.
- » A chance to live out their dreams and ambitions as footballers.
- » Play a leadership role in enabling women's sport and women in sport's governance.

But there is still so much to be done.

Rapid growth, both at community level and at the elite level, brings us the challenge and responsibility to ensure we have enough ovals to play on, umpires to officiate games, administrators to run competitions and the pathways for players to pursue their dreams - to play in the AFLW or for the love of community football.

The AFLW is the jewel of football for women and girls. As our players lead on the football field, we will continue to lead off field and make decisions for the betterment

of women's football - a game we want to succeed and flourish. Growth can often cause pain and, as frustrating as it might be, some of the detail is still to be determined, however the possibilities are endless, and we will work to maximise the opportunities ahead of us. It is a key priority for the AFL to continue to create and support more opportunities for women in every part of our game and at every level of our game.

All parts of our game must exist together, community and elite, to strengthen our base and sustain for the long-term. We must make the right decisions at the right time - these decisions must be agile and flexible within a sporting landscape that is evolving quickly, thus ensuring the long-term health and future growth of girls and women's football at every level.

What is vitally important for women's Australian Football is for these next steps to be taken with the whole of our industry working together to build our game. From players, coaches and clubs at all levels, through to communities and government, it is the responsibility of ALL to get it right.

I look forward to working together to create the sustainable and successful future we all desire.

Gillon McLachlan
CEO AFL



Foreword

Nicole Livingstone OAM

GM, Women's Football

Women have contributed to our nation's sporting success for generations. We have watched and cheered on with pride as Australian women excelled. I've had the joy of being involved in, or witness to, many of these iconic moments in the Olympic arena. The opportunity to shine has not always been on offer to us as women and girls in Australian Football.

The earliest matches for women were played more than 100 years ago. While we have made an immense contribution to community football, now we have the ability to make our mark in the elite game of Australian Football, that for too long was either limited or not on offer at all.

In 2017, the Australian sporting landscape changed indelibly. It was a year of many wonderful historic moments for Australian Football - a year of firsts.

Since the launch of the AFLW competition that year, much has been achieved in the advancement of women in football.

Since its inception in 2017, the AFLW competition has gone from strength to strength, with the passion and excitement from our earliest seasons, progressing to a sustainable women's football competition.

Following the success of the 2021 AFLW season, we announced that all 18 Clubs would be granted the opportunity to join the AFLW by 2023. This achievement further solidifies AFLW as an integral part of the fabric of Australian Football and amplifies our great game in the broader sporting landscape.

While we are moving in the right direction, there is no doubt that significant hurdles remain. Girls and women still face barriers to participating in sport and physical activity. Although improving, women's sport suffers from a lack of coverage within the mainstream media. After considerable building works, less than 35 per cent of facilities are currently deemed inclusive for girls and women, presenting significant challenges in attracting and retaining girls and women in the game.

Our ambition is to remove the barriers that still exist:

- » To enable and empower women that choose our sport to pursue their careers on or off the field.
- » To do so in safe environments that provide equal opportunities for women and girls and equally value their contributions.

For the players, coaches, umpires and administrators who want to pursue football at the highest level, we want you to thrive. We want you

to do so in professional environments that offer opportunities based on talent, not by gender.

Our AFLW competition is about to enter its sixth season and while we have come a long way, we know we have much work left to do to build the revenue required to deliver better pay outcomes for players. Our mission remains to accelerate the growth in women's football economy to create greater opportunities on and off the field for our best women players and administrators.

All that we aspire will take commitment from everyone within our football community, no matter the role you play. This responsibility belongs to all of us - we are all custodians of women's football.

We have much to do and it will require strong community foundations, long-term successful partnerships, and a passionate and committed fan base and audience.

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

Nicole Livingstone

**Nicole Livingstone OAM
GM, Women's Football**



Empower and enable the women's game at all levels



We commit to equal opportunities for all, and to enabling players, coaches, umpires and officials to thrive and succeed at all levels of the game

Participation

Equal opportunity for women to play, coach, umpire, officiate, administer and govern the game.

Pathways and Performance

Visible and accessible pathways from community to elite for aspiring players, coaches, umpires and administrators to progress in the game at all levels.

Partnerships

Women's sport is highly visible and maximises its value.



Become the most accessible, inclusive and visible sport in Australia, and the number one sporting choice for girls and women

Introduction

In 2017 the first AFLW national competition changed the game and the national sporting landscape forever

Women first played Australian Football more than 100 years ago.

But despite the passionate support by women of Australian Football throughout its history, the women's game itself has suffered from the lack of attention, investment and institutional support.

In 2017, the first AFLW national competition changed the game and the national sporting landscape forever.

It was a turning point.

And we will never go back.

All over the country, girls and women signed up to play.

Our traditional fans turned out in support, supporters came to our game for the first time, and new members joined clubs to support their women's team and women more broadly.

The excitement and passion of the first few seasons of AFLW provided the platform on which we must continue to build and invest.

There are challenges ahead.

Girls and women still face broad social barriers to participating in sport and physical activity.

Women's sport still suffers from a lack of media coverage and investment.

Sporting facilities in the community have not kept up with girls' and women's participation.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls and women frequently face additional challenges in accessing and navigating pathways in sport, including football.

We acknowledge and are grateful for the leadership and strong participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women across the country who are ensuring participation of women and girls in the game.

We know this will go from strength to strength and we will maintain and enhance programs and opportunities to ensure this growth and representation.

Additionally we must also work to ensure women and girls from diverse cultural backgrounds have equal opportunities to participate in our game. Pleasingly there is growth in diverse communities across the country and we need to further facilitate these opportunities.

The strength of women's football will always depend on inclusion - women's football talent will come from communities everywhere and we want to see it fully visible in our game.

The AFL's role is to empower and enable the women's game at all levels.

We commit to equal opportunities at all levels of the game.

We want our game to be the first choice for girls and women at all levels.

We want women players, coaches, umpires and officials to thrive and succeed at all levels of the game.

We want to remove barriers for all, tackle the challenges and invest in the programs and infrastructure that create change.

Achieving that change requires commitment from everyone within our football community.

No matter the role you play. We are all custodians of the women's game, and the responsibility belongs to all of us at all levels of the game.





“The inclusion of women’s football has been a defining moment in the rich 161-year history of our game and has clearly opened our eyes to all the possibilities that lie before us in the future.”

Richard Goyder AO
AFL Chair

The women's football journey - the last 12 years



2010

205 community football teams.

2013

Community football teams had doubled to more than 400.

Sat 29 June - the first AFL Women's exhibition match takes place. The AFL sets sights on a semi-professional women's competition by 2020.

2015

609 community football teams.

AFL CEO Gillon McLachlan announces that the AFL would launch a national women's competition, fast-tracking plans from 2020 to 2017.

2017

1,690 community football teams.

Inaugural AFL Women's season is launched. Girl's and women's participation skyrockets - community football **participation grows 76%.**

2019

2,540 community football teams.

Women's football continues to grow rapidly - the fastest growing segment of the game.

2020

COVID-19 takes grip on the world. Sport and life in general are greatly impacted. AFLW Season 4 stopped early with no premier decided.

2021

Longest AFLW season to date with 9 home and away Rounds and 3 weeks of Finals. **420 Women** playing for 14 teams. Announced future League expansion to **18 teams.**

2021

Debbie Lee is the **first woman inducted** into the Australian Football Hall of Fame.

2022+

Women's football vision comes to life.

Debbie Lee is recognised for her significant contribution to Australian Football through her efforts as a player, coach and administrator of the women's game. Debbie played in 302 VWFL games, winning four premierships and five league Best and Fairest medals. She was named a member of the All-Australian team on six occasions. Debbie is a life member of the VWFL and also served as the President of the VWFL. Debbie is the current General Manager of Women's Football at the Western Bulldogs.



Current state of play



14 clubs.

With a commitment to the final four clubs to enter the competition by 2023.

420 players.

The single biggest employer of professional sportswomen in the country.

The AFLW is the most supported women's league in Australia, with **7.3 million Australians** having some level of interest in the women's competition.



2,540

girls and women's community football teams.

Across Australia, for every **1** women's football team in 2010, there are now **12.4**.



69,829

girls and women playing community football.*

71,390

girls playing Auskick.*

Girls and women represent **17.3%** of all registered Community club participants and **19.5%** of registered Auskickers.

586,422

overall participation number for girls and women.*



10.5%

of umpires are women*.

6.8%

of coaches are women.*

The majority of whom exclusively coach female teams.



47%

of all facilities currently host female football.

35%

of venues have female friendly changerooms.

2021 season numbers
*2019 AFL Census data at time of release

Football pathway for women and girls



**Participation
Programs**



**Community
Football**



**Talent
Pathways**



**State
Leagues**



AFLW

Our Vision

Empower and enable the women's game at all levels



We commit to equal opportunities for all, and to enabling players, coaches, umpires and officials to thrive and succeed at all levels of the game

Our Game

A game played by, and for, everyone at all levels.

A game where you feel at home, at your best, empowered and part of something bigger.

A game that celebrates and promotes girls and women as participants, administrators, coaches, umpires, fans and professional athletes.

Our Code

Be the number one sporting choice for girls and women.

The AFL and our clubs are respected for our commitment to gender equity.

Our national women's League is as inspirational and loved as any sport in the country.

Our code has a national talent pathway and competitions that are strongly supported and sustainable.

Our game reflects the diversity of our country's population and is a game for everyone at every level both on and off field.

The women's game delivers for fans, the players and the clubs.



Progressive, inclusive, and original

We aspire to become the most accessible, inclusive and visible sport in Australia, and the number one sporting choice for girls and women. To achieve this, we must embrace the uniqueness of our game and work together to deliver on three key pillars

Participation

Equal opportunity for women to play, coach, umpire, officiate, administer and govern the game.

A participation pathway that best supports the continued development of participants and enables lifelong participation in the game.

Pathways and Performance

Visible pathways from community to elite for aspiring players, coaches, umpires and administrators to progress in the game at all levels.

A well resourced talent pathway that provides equal opportunity for women and men.

The best athletes playing AFLW in an established and professional 18 team competition in a high-performance environment.

Partnerships

Women's sport is highly visible and maximises its value.

A strong women's football economy that supports players to have rewarding careers and development opportunities.

Our Game Plan

Participation

1. Equal opportunity

Equal opportunity for women to play, coach, umpire, officiate, administer and govern the game.

2. Inclusion

A welcoming, inclusive, safe and positive experience for girls and women of all abilities to experience our game.

3. Diversity

Community clubs are representative of the communities in which they live. Everyone is welcome to experience our game and belong.

4. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls and women

Our game is enjoyed by, accessible to and participated in by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls and women leading to their leadership and success in our game.

5. Role Models

We have a diversity of role models across the industry, on and off field that inspire the next generation.



Participation

Challenges

Ensuring every girl and woman across the country has access to facilities that allow them to trial or participate in the game in a safe and inclusive manner.

Women are still under-represented in coaching, umpiring, officiating and managing the game, particularly at the senior levels.

Women and girls continue to face social and cultural pressures that lead to less physical activity and sporting participation.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls and women are underrepresented at all levels of our game and face additional challenges in their participation in our game, including dealing with the intersection of racism and sexism and the corresponding social, economic, political impacts.

Access to facilities can also be accentuated given some of the remote and regional locations where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities live.

There is great cultural diversity amongst these groups of women so issues of cultural safety and the cultural capability of our game needs to continue to improve.

Girls and women of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and/or faith groups face additional and unique challenges to their participation in our game, including intersections of discrimination.

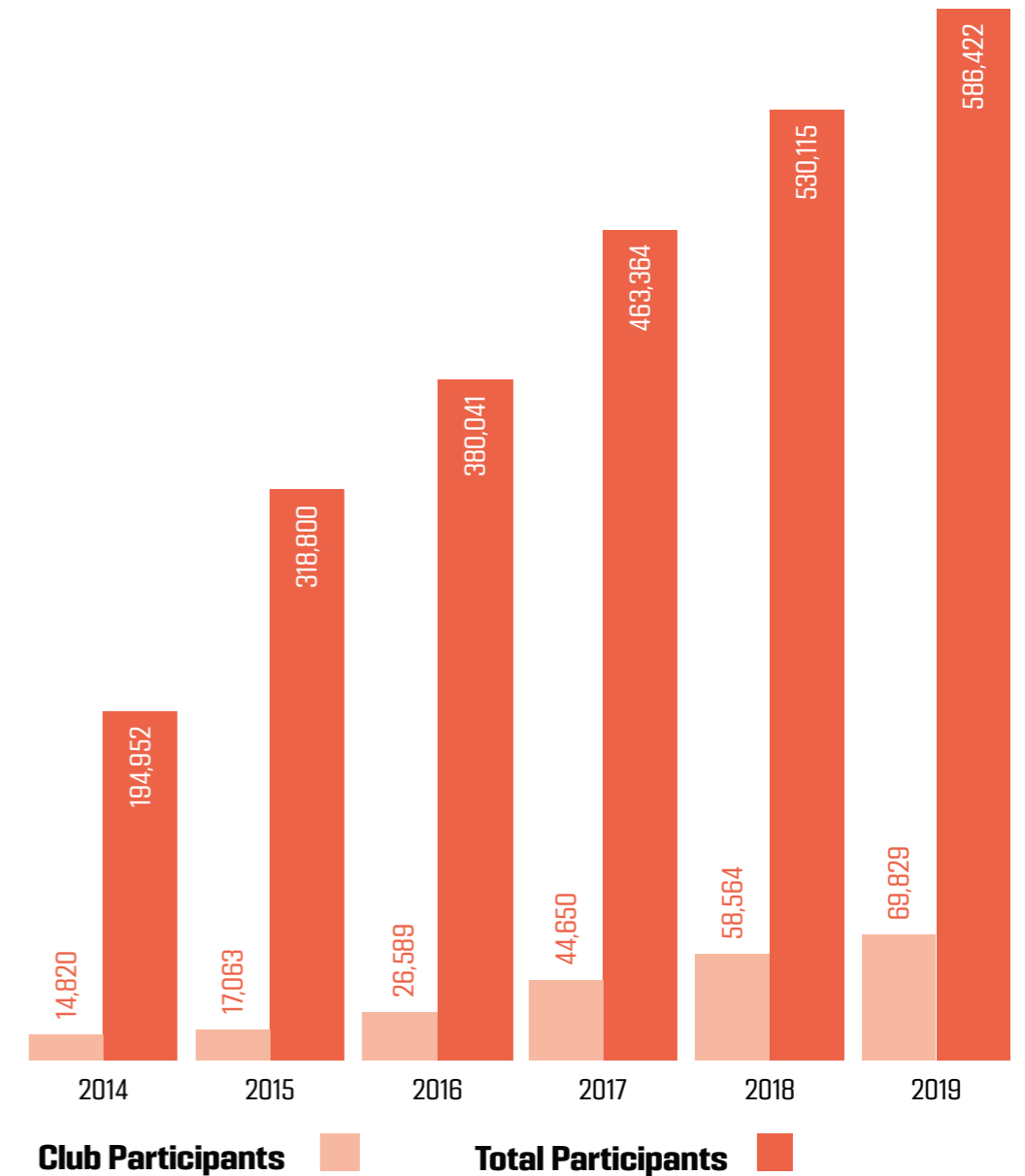
These diverse populations must be supported to become familiar with our sport, to navigate cultural and/or spiritual considerations and like us all, be reassured they have a place in our game, are welcome in our game, and feel that they can belong as contributors, participants and leaders at all levels.

Actions

We commit to

- » Ensuring the participation pathway best supports the continued development of participants and enables lifelong participation in the game.
- » Creating new opportunities for growth and development of women in coaching, umpiring and leadership positions in the community and at the elite level.
- » Developing and delivering a curriculum that helps schools deliver appropriate football engagement programs, that both encourage girls to try the game and keeps girls participating in the sport.
- » Working with governments, councils and businesses to secure funding that supports community clubs to improve female friendly and inclusive facilities.
- » Improving the mental health and wellbeing of players through best practice.
- » Improving player safety and reducing injuries through the Prep to Play program, including launch of a new online training module for coaches, and supporting research into injury reduction and prevention through the AFL Medical Research Board.
- » Developing tools, resources and initiatives to break down barriers for women of diverse backgrounds to engage with Australian Football and to foster an inclusive culture.
- » Enriching ClubHelp with practical resources and education materials to better support women working and volunteering in sports administration roles to develop and deliver a safe and inclusive environment for all female participants.
- » Promoting industry 'best practice' through the National Female Community Football Guidelines as well as providing coaching content for women and girls on Coach.AFL.
- » Developing a strategy and implementation plan to lift the participation and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls and women across the industry at all levels.
- » Investing in education, peer sponsorship and professional development to promote equity in football across all levels.
- » Developing new programs and professional development support to build the numbers of high-performance women umpires at all levels.
- » Develop and supporting women in governance, decision making and leadership positions in football. Celebrate and promote women currently leading in football.

Women's Participation Growth



Aspirational Targets

Strive for equal participation and representation in community football by 2030.

Our Game Plan

Pathways and Performance

1. Quality

The best athletes playing in an established and professional 18-team competition, in high-performance environments in the best facilities.

2. Integration

Fully integrated club environments.

3. Professional Development

Professional athletes with rewarding careers and development opportunities.

4. Heroes

National superstars who inspire the next generation.

5. Visible Pathways

Enhanced visible pathways from community to elite for aspiring players to progress in the game.

6. Talent Pathway

A well resourced talent pathway that provides equal opportunity and support for women and men.

7. Inclusion

Inclusive and culturally safe club and pathway environments that welcome and support Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and culturally diverse players, coaches and officials.

8. Women Coaching

Women coaching both men's and women's teams at the elite level and in our talent pathways.

9. Coaching Talent

Attracting the best coaches to women's football.



Pathways and Performance

Challenges

Scale of economy required for expansion for clubs and League.

Facility readiness for integration at both the club and pathway level.

Distribution of talent across all clubs for a competitive League.

Resourcing of programs at club level and shared workforce pressures.

Scale of economy required for enhanced pathway programming.

Aspirational Targets

- » **50% of AFLW senior coaching positions held by women.**
- » **AFLW players are the highest paid sportswomen in a domestic competition in the country.**
- » **Visible pathways for administrators to ensure that women are positioned for senior football positions.**

Actions

We commit to

- » Leadership and collaboration driven by clubs, players and the AFLPA through inclusive and broad representation of the AFLW Competition Committee.
- » A strategy for the 18-team elite AFLW Competition that considers economic sustainability, competition quality and state league enhancement.
- » An AFL and AFLPA commitment to a model of professional careers for athletes that grows with the competition.
- » Further develop the AFL Women's Coaching and Umpiring Academy to support women's progression into senior coaching and umpiring roles.
- » A new player-to-coach pathway for AFLW players, with a specific education and accreditation model.
- » A new AFL Women's Coaching Acceleration Program based at selected AFL Clubs within AFL and AFLW football programs.
- » The creation and implementation of workplay - a professional network and platform connecting female athletes to flexible work, education and career development opportunities.
- » Ensuring every club has a strategy to full integration of the women's and men's teams.
- » Ensure each of the 18 AFLW clubs has a dedicated Player Development Manager to provide player support in their lives outside of football.
- » Support the health, safety and wellbeing needs of players through education, opportunities and support.
- » State league structures and resourcing that enhances the talent pathways and ensures competition success.
- » Greater promotion to increase the visibility of pathways to AFLW.
- » Collaboratively develop a national U16 talent program and competition to ensure earlier exposure to high-performance expectations and environments.
- » Continue to evolve the national U18 competition to support the development and preparation of players entering AFLW.
- » Continue to develop and nurture the engagement and progress of diversity talent programming for Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and culturally diverse girls.
- » Using talent pathways to support the ongoing development of women involved in the game - coaching, umpiring, administration and high performance.
- » Attracting the best emerging and experienced coaches pursuing career opportunities in women's football.

“Women coaching both men's and women's teams”

Our Game Plan

Partnerships

1. Visibility

Women's sport is highly visible and maximises its value.

2. Fan Love

AFLW is respected by our fans and the sporting public as the premier women's sporting competition in Australia.

3. Reach

AFLW has the largest and most diverse audience, attendance and membership base of any women's sporting competition in Australia.

4. Aligned Partners

The women's game thrives with support from partnerships with communities, governments, and businesses with shared values.

5. Commercial Investment

Increased commercial investment in the women's game.

6. Heroes

Showcase new role models to inspire girls and women across the nation, highlighting the importance of inclusion and diversity.

7. Athletes

Athletes have greater financial security via increased on and off field opportunities.



Partnerships

Challenges

Growing the audience in a competitive sporting landscape.

An emerging competition with demands for new teams and expanding season.

A passionate supporter base, but growth and expansion required.

Financial sustainability as the competition grows with 18 clubs and a longer season.

Women's sport undervalued in commercial investment value compared to men's sport.

Women's sport still facing massive under-reporting in mainstream news and sports media.

Ensuring strong coverage of the competition with more games.

Aspirational Targets

- » **Most engaged audience across any women's sporting competition in Australia.**
- » **Attract and retain partners who share in our vision for women's football.**
- » **Work to increase fandom and personal brands of AFLW players.**

Actions

We commit to

- » Work with broadcast partners to provide high-quality coverage and innovative programming and to provide a platform for AFLW players to work in the media covering their game.
- » Invest in new channels including the AFLW app, website and AFL On Demand.
- » Deliver innovative and engaging content year-round, showcasing diverse new talent across media platforms.
- » Ensure content is accessible for new fans, including providing information through the AFL and AFLW apps and through AFL/AFLW channels.
- » Collaborate with corporate partners to drive mutually beneficial activity that raises the profile of the AFLW, women's football and talent on and off the field.
- » Encourage brands to invest more in women's sport to support the growth of the game.
- » Develop innovative commercial partnerships with non-endemic brands that support the growth of women's football at all levels.
- » Continue commercial partnerships to support player development and off-field opportunities.
- » Work to provide a quality and positive matchday experience for fans, including improving the facilities at AFLW venues.

- » Develop and support AFLW players as ambassadors to drive community engagement.

- » Create a valuable AFLW membership offering and support clubs to drive significant AFLW membership growth.

- » Achieve record-breaking ticketed attendance at AFLW matches across the country for the home and away season and finals.

- » Develop new opportunities for fans to engage with and support the AFLW, through innovative products and experiences.

“A strong women's football economy that supports players with rewarding careers and development opportunities”

workplay

workplay

workplay is a leading careers platform and network designed to empower female footballers in sport and business by connecting players to flexible employment, education and development.

1. Membership

Vetted athlete and employer memberships to facilitate profile, job listings, employer offers, reviews, career development opportunities and internships.

2. Job Listings

Open job listings, internships, graduate programs and contract opportunities with vetted employers.

3. Reviews

Company ratings and reviews based on workplay flexibility criteria.

4. Research

Research capability leveraging network to drive insights into workplace flexibility and the women's sports sector.

5. Content

workplay branded content and distribution designed to educate, entertain and inspire both within and external to the network.

6. Talent

workplay talent network, ambassador model and speakers bureau.

7. Events

workplay annual conferences, networking events, speaker series, workshops and study tours.

8. Education

workplay short courses, accreditation, white papers and career development.

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workplay - Flex to work and play. The professional network for female footballers.



To those that paved the way

For 100 years, away from the spotlight and with limited resources, many dedicated women and men supported competitions specifically for girls and women, providing an opportunity for them to participate in our game.

From local, grassroots competitions came those first players for the inaugural AFLW season, women who overnight became high-profile role models for girls and women, and new ambassadors for equity.

There have been many champions of women's football who have advocated for change and for equality, demanding better resources and better representation. Many of these champions are well known, from community leaders to AFL Commissioners.

But many of the people who played and fought for women's football are not so well known, and the AFL acknowledges that the success of the AFLW owes a debt of gratitude to these pioneers.

We thank all women who played our game, coached our game, administered our game and continued to advocate for our game at all levels over the decades for providing the foundations upon which our game continues to grow. You created the interest, nurtured it and ensured that more women across the country came to participate in our game.



