Female Football Club Guide
Female Football Club Guide

To assist clubs to provide an inclusive environment
To be used in conjunction with the Australian Football Match Policy
Female-friendly clubs guide

- What having females at our club means to us ...
- A guide to setting up female-friendly clubs

Quick-view checklist

Following is a quick checklist for your club to work through.

1. First impressions of your club:
   - List of strategies to welcome new members

2. Fun: the 10 things parents and coaches need to know

3. NAB AFL Auskick:
   - Setting up a new all-girls NAB AFL Auskick group
   - Including females in your mixed gender centre

4. Recruiting new junior and youth girls players:
   - Strategies to recruit new female players in particular
   - Promotion ideas
   - Making membership affordable
   - How to apply for a seeding grant to take the financial pressure off your club

5. Coaching female footballers:
   - Resources to help coaches
   - Getting the best out of all your footballers, including the competitive and social players
   - Addressing areas such as providing empathy for developing positive body image
   - and the emotional needs of youth girls players

6. Facilities:
   - What are appropriate facilities for female footballers?
   - State AFL affiliates who can help you acquire these

7. Showcasing the social aspects of your club:
   - Providing social events
   - Catering for less-competitive players

8. Including everyone:
   - Tips to include all-comers
   - Nurturing volunteers
   - Bringing diversity to your club leadership

Further information

- Resources and website references
- Research bibliography
- State and Territory affiliates
- State and Territory Departments of Sport and Recreation

What having females at our club means to us ...

For a number of years the AFL has surveyed numerous community football stakeholders to better understand the benefits associated with having women and girls involved at the community club level.

Here’s a selection of some recent testimonials:

“Our club loved having the girls. They brought in new volunteers and lots of fun.”
Victoria, youth girls, club president

“Go for it, women improve the social fabric of the club. Financially they offer value, they are diligent and good contributors of the club and they support social functions.”
Deer Park JFC, Victoria, club secretary

“These surveys, case studies and testimonials have helped shape this Female Football Club Guide as a way to support community clubs to become female-friendly clubs.”

“Having the team has added a new dynamic to our club and improved our club culture.”
Eastlake, ACT, football administrator

“The junior girls have added lots of excitement and the parents of the girls really get involved.”
Hammond Park JFC, Western Australia, parent volunteer

“For us it means the whole family can be at the one club – we start at Auskick and can go through to youth girls.”
Queensland, coach/parent

These surveys, case studies and testimonials have helped shape this Female Football Club Guide as a way to support community clubs to become female-friendly clubs.”
A guide to setting up female-friendly clubs

In 2016, more than 380,000 females participated in Australian Football through introductory programs and competitions – this represents a growth of 27 per cent in the past 12 months. With so many girls being introduced to the game each year, it is important to understand the benefits of becoming a Female-Friendly Football Club and some of the strategies you can use to attract more female members to your club.

The benefits of being a Female-Friendly Club include:

- More members, supporters and volunteers
- More players
- Diversification, leading to better decision-making
- Wider sponsorship and fundraising appeal
- More appealing social atmosphere

Setting up a new female football team for the first time can seem daunting to clubs that have traditionally catered for male players only. Clubs that have instigated a female team are full of praise for what the girls and women have positively added to their club. These clubs also report that recruiting female players was easier than they first expected, particularly those that followed a few simple steps.

This guide provides the following:

- A series of checklists for your club to work through to ensure you provide a safe and inclusive environment
- A summary of the opportunities to get girls involved with suggestions as to who within your club can take responsibility for implementing various strategies
- A number of website links and organisations which can assist your club to successfully recruit and engage females
- A series of Club Case Studies providing examples where clubs have instigated a new female team and provided a more inclusive environment for their female supporters

Clubs who have already successfully recruited females will find the checklists useful for appraising their current strategies and providing fresh ideas for them to address to make the experience even better.

Comprehensive checklist

The following checklist includes website addresses and organisations that can help your club.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of task to be completed</th>
<th>Coach</th>
<th>Administrator/Committee</th>
<th>Team Manager</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategies to welcome new female members</td>
<td>Select a peer buddy from player group to partner new players</td>
<td>Select a welcome officer to host new members</td>
<td>Implement a ‘try before you buy’ series of sessions before requesting membership payment/registration fee from new members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide female role models</td>
<td>Provide some opportunities and conditions for the females as the males</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All members of the club are featured in club memorabilia such as trophies, photos and banners</td>
<td>Club facilities are clean and hygienically presented</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Offer discounts to current players who introduce new members</td>
<td>Select a welcome officer to host new members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Volunteers and staff are qualified, friendly and approachable</td>
<td>Provide female role models</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensure your social media and website platforms are up to date and reflect the culture of your club – potential players will generally do research before contacting your club</td>
<td>Provide same opportunities and conditions for the females as the males</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male members of the club display appropriate behaviours towards female members</td>
<td>Club facilities are clean and hygienically presented</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) First impressions of your club

Research tells us that some young people perceive football clubs are not for them. Providing an enjoyable and welcoming environment during the first visit is paramount to helping the girl feel connected – this is vital to ensuring new players return.
Girls are more likely to stay involved in sport if they receive quality coaching and supportive parents. It is crucial for the adults involved in girls’ sport to understand what they like and what they want from the coach, parents, and their AFL experience. We list the 10 most important things that make AFL fun for young female footballers.

1. **What fun means**
2. **Being in an all-girls group**
3. **Socialising**
4. **Access to female role models**
5. **Listening to music**
6. **Ambition**
7. **Improve skills**
8. **Simply being able to play**
9. **Making their own decisions**
10. **Small-sided games**

### Let’s break down some of these ideas

#### Fun
Girls tell us that the No. 1 reason they play sport is to have fun with their friends. It is not about winning or claiming for being the ‘best’.

#### Ambition: meeting expectations
Meeting expectations means understanding the differences between what the child wants to get out of NAB AFL Auskick and what you as a coach want to get out of the experience. Then compare this with parent expectations. Work on bridging the gap between the three different groups of expectations.

#### Improving their skills
Girls are no different to boys when it comes to being challenged. It’s how coaches articulate the challenge where there is a difference. If you think the girls are playing to win, then you have missed the point. They want to improve their skills, so challenge them to use both sides of their body, run faster, jump higher, concentrate and be first-grab, clean ball-handlers.

#### Making their own decisions
Coaches need to adopt an athlete-centred approach to their coaching. This is about considering the player first and realising it is about the education and learning of the footballers. Having a coach-directed approach (dictator) does nothing to enhance learning. John O’Sullivan (Changing the Game Project) writes: “We have far too many training environments that are too coach-centric. Conventional wisdom tells parents to look for these environments, with the domineering coach constantly shouting instructions and solving problems, laying out dozens of cones and clearly in charge. These coaches make all the decisions and tell players where to go, when to go and why to go. The game no longer belongs to kids. Kids do not get to make game like decisions in practice and play fearful of making mistakes and incurring the coach’s wrath. Then game-time comes along, and we wonder why the kids cannot figure it out for themselves.”

### Small-sided games
This means providing small-sided games for athletes to grow and develop their skills of the game. Coaching research, along with real-life examples, highlight the importance of small-sided games when it comes to developing the fundamentals of the game and enhancing decision-making skills in confined environments. It is also more fun for athletes to be involved in a small-sided game as opposed to a traditional training drill, and it allows for players to self-manage or self-govern. Even Hawthorn premiership coach Alastair Clarkson provides small-sided games in every training session because it helps his players understand each other’s strengths and solve problems for themselves.

### Play has a major role in enjoyment levels and children continuing to play sport
Coaches must understand the importance of providing players the opportunity to innovate, to create, to be in control of their learning and creating unstructured activities where the footballers have the decision-making power. This sense of ownership in an activity or learning experience is not only positive, but improves levels of player motivation, allowing them to gain a better understanding of their own achievement.

An example of unstructured play is for a coach to put two defenders on three attackers in a grid and see how long the attackers can keep the football off the defenders. Or taking shots at goal from 10m out – what parts of the foot can you use to kick to the goals? What was successful and what didn’t work? That’s it! No other instructions! See what they create!

Providing unstructured play opportunities is often difficult for coaches. You should not remove all the structured formal instruction activities. Coaches must find the right balance between structured and unstructured activity. They should also discuss the unstructured activity with parents so they have an understanding of what is being done and the reasons behind it.

Seek ways to add unstructured play into your sessions whereby the girls take control in order to discover what they can create to experience learning on their terms and problem solve. The opportunity to take ownership of decision-making will enhance them as athletes and as people. Sometimes as adults we simply need to get out of the way and let the girls play.

### Coaches need to adopt an athlete-centred approach to their coaching
This is about considering the player first and realising it is about the education and learning of the footballers. Having a coach-directed approach (dictator) does nothing to enhance learning. John O’Sullivan (Changing the Game Project) writes: “We have far too many training environments that are too coach-centric. Conventional wisdom tells parents to look for these environments, with the domineering coach constantly shouting instructions and solving problems, laying out dozens of cones and clearly in charge. These coaches make all the decisions and tell players where to go, when to go and why to go. The game no longer belongs to kids. Kids do not get to make game like decisions in practice and play fearful of making mistakes and incurring the coach’s wrath. Then game-time comes along, and we wonder why the kids cannot figure it out for themselves.”

### Above all else, realise this is about the girl’s ambition – not yours as the coach!
3) NAB AFL Auskick: where the football journey starts

The NAB AFL Auskick program makes learning to play AFL fun, safe and easy for boys and girls. Through weekly sessions they will have fun learning the skills of the game in an exciting, social and safe environment. The NAB AFL Auskick program has centres that operate all over the country. Visit aflauskick.com.au/centre-finder-panel to ensure your club is included.

The program also provides a great opportunity for parents to interact with their kids through the activities, have the opportunity to make new friends, learn about the game and spend quality time with their children. If your club is unable to provide an all-girls group, still welcome girls to your centre. You may be able to start with small numbers and build to an all-girls group within your centre over time. It also means that in line with the AFL Junior Match Policy, the girls can choose to move between male or female groups should they feel confident enough and have the necessary skills to do so.

Setting up a new all-girls NAB AFL Auskick group

If you have a number of girls at your centre, consider setting up a new all-girls NAB AFL Auskick group.

Reasons for this include:
- In a mixed gender setting, girls feel intimidated or excluded from learning the game to the level they would like.
- Female players feel the males do not pass the ball to them.
- Often experience teasing from male players.

There are other key considerations that have been well researched such as:
- Girls’ motivation to participate is more about being social and to learn new skills whereas males are more likely to be motivated by the contest and winning.
- Females are more likely to improve skills in single-gender settings.

As with any new club or team, the club needs to identify a ‘passionate driver’. A mum, dad or a local women’s league player/who can provide that female role model as well as invest some time and energy into recruiting players and parents to the centre.

Once you have found the right person, contact your local Development Officer (see State and Territory Affiliates at the end of the Guide to locate the relevant personnel). They will provide you with support, guidance and resources to get you going.

4) Recruiting new female players

Clubs have told us the strongest recruiter of female players is through personal, face-to-face or word-of-mouth promotion. Women and girls are more likely to try a new experience if they know someone. Invest in the people that shape the experience and can ensure female participants are welcomed, feel cared for and are regularly communicated with.

If you believe it would be beneficial, the AFL and its state bodies can assist with the provision of female role models, provide promotional materials and advice on how to connect your club to local schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of task to be completed</th>
<th>Coach</th>
<th>Administrator/Committee</th>
<th>Team Manager</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategies to set up a new all-girls NAB AFL Auskick group</td>
<td>The first few sessions need to be fun! Lots of locomotor skills such as running, jumping and agility. Plus ball control such as rolling, tapping along the ground, throwing and chasing. Leave kicking instruction until a few weeks into your program or start with a round ball. Make the sessions full of activity and less about ‘coaching’. When you introduce kicking make it about kicking long bombs rather than hitting targets or kicking technique. Let the girls experiment first. Use a variety of ball sizes and shapes to introduce players to ball control. Progress from kicking a soft round ball first so players can have early success. Give them activities they can do at home or in the park such as trying to handball or throwing their ball into a bin, jumping over their football, bouncing a ball off a tree and predict where to chase it.</td>
<td>Buddy up girls who don’t come as sisters or friends. This will help dispel any ‘newcomer’ nerves. Send a female role model to local schools to promote your group. Provide an incentive for the current players to ‘bring a friend’ such as discounted membership (two for one), give-aways to those bringing a friend/s. Organise a ‘Come N Try’ day to get players involved in a fun set of activities together with their parents. Make the day full of colour and fun such as playing music, provision of female role models, taking photos using a variety of different ball shapes and sizes. If boys turn up and want to play, include them or give them the information about your club’s male NAB AFL Auskick group.</td>
<td>Ensure there is one football for every participant so they handle the football a lot during each session. If numbers are small, combine NAB AFL Auskick with junior girls until the club has enough for separate groups. The juniors can help teach the Auskickers!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies to make club membership affordable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Seek a Seeding Grant from your league or state organisation. Provide payment plans for families. Offer family discounts. Get a mouthguard provider connected to the club to offer discounts. Seek sponsorship and implement fundraising activities. Encourage players to umpire junior grades for pocket money and fitness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5) Coaching female footballers

Up until the onset of male puberty, there are very few physiological differences as to how girls and boys participate in AFL. Once boys move through puberty, their larger bodies mean they will have enhanced physical abilities over females, for example, kicking the ball further or jumping higher at a ruck contest. Further to this, within a mixed-gender team, the skill acquisition of a non-athletic boy is greater than for a non-athletic girl. (Source: Dr Fleur McIntyre, University of Notre Dame)

Another key gender difference across any age group lies in motivations to play the game. Boys are more likely to participate for the competitive nature and the outcome of the contest. Girls tend to be more motivated by improving their skills and place greater value on how they fit into the team. Promoting the health benefits of sport is also more likely to appeal to girls than boys.

Unlike boys, girls are less likely to have progressed from NAB AFL Auskick and junior football through to youth girls. At Women’s League level, clubs are still attracting new players who have never played AFL before. Many girls will not have had the opportunity to participate in youth girls competitions, so their senior-aged club may be their first exposure to playing Australian Football. This brings with it the need to introduce the physical skills such as giving and receiving a tackle safely, while introducing the basic skills of the game.

The reasons females leave sport are due to three main factors:

1. Environmental
2. Individual
3. Societal

These factors do not work in isolation and could mean there are multiple influences on a young female’s physical activity behaviour. When designing programs or strategies to promote participation in AFL by girls and young women, it is important to consider all of these influences.

Coaches who understand these key considerations and work to support their footballers through them, will be highly successful in retaining players and providing a fun learning environment.

Key factors in detail

**Environmental factors**
- Too competitive where players prefer the social aspects over the competition
- Poor coaching
- A big jump in skills required from under-12 to the next level which makes the sport less fun to play
- Club setting is too unwelcome
- Facilities are not female-friendly

**Individual factors**
- Lack of or perceived lack of skill
- The sport is no longer enjoyable
- Lack of time – numerous competing activities impact on an adolescent’s available time, such as study, part-time work, relationships and other sports
- Body image issues – concerns about their body shape, weight management and dislike of sweating
- Cost of participation
- Injuries
- Friends no longer participate

**Societal factors**
- Pressure to conform to popular ideals of beauty and what represents femininity
- Being teased for being involved in a predominantly male pursuit
- Lack of support in transition from primary school age to young adult

The following provides ideas clubs can adopt to maximise girls’ participation. The strategies suggested are only a starting point, so it is expected clubs will explore others depending on what their female players see as relevant to their needs.

It is well documented that good coaching is the key reason young people continue to participate in a sport. Clubs should support their coaches to attend courses that will improve their skills and hence heighten the enjoyment and skills of their players.

When coaches are teaching female athletes for the first time, there are specific areas they should be mindful of to get the best out of their footballers and ensure their players return.

There are few differences between coaching male and female footballers. Coaches who stick to good coaching principles such as striving to achieve individual goals, putting development ahead of winning and allowing time for the girls to socialise, will get the best out of their footballers.

There are a number of resources and courses that can assist coaches to optimise their performance. An online module Understanding Female Footballers can be found at allcommunityfootballclub.com.au/index.php?id=81 and is especially for the first time, whether you are a female or male coach.

**Body image issues**

Adolescent girls’ concerns about their body shape, weight management and the dislike of sweating are valid reasons they leave sport as an adolescent. They want to feel and look good, so getting fit is a good selling point.

Ill-fitting apparel and a lack of confidence as their body matures cause major difficulties for many young girls.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of task to be completed</th>
<th>Coach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategies to provide positive body image support</td>
<td>Encourage all women and girls no matter their size or body shape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Invite a local dietitian or nutritionist to discuss links between food, activity and health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education on correct hydration will also be helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be flexible with clothing requirements, accommodating the needs of various cultural groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coach and staff comments to women or girls should focus on performance and/or output and never be about what they look like, even if intended to be positive. “You’re looking really fit” can be reworded to “You’re running really well”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of task to be completed</th>
<th>Administrator/Committee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide healthy food choices at the canteen/kiosk</td>
<td>Provide mirrors in the changerooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide apparel designed specifically for females</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To better understand the implications of body image issues, go to:

The Clearing House is a compilation of easy-to-read academic articles from researchers around the world who provide background about body image and recommendations to coaches. whv.org.au/publications-resources/clearinghouse-connector/che-physical-activity-and-body-image

Some 110 of the United Kingdom’s best female athletes describe the pressures they feel and the sources of these pressures to conform to a particular body “norm”: sport.bt.com/womeninsport/bt-sport-survey-body-image-insecurities-rife-in-womens-sport-81136386748465

Coaches should be mindful of players who may not be hydrating sufficiently or eating the right foods and at the right time before training and games.

State bodies conduct regular coach education sessions and specific modules on coaching female footballers. We encourage all coaches to attend courses to increase their understanding and provide the best-quality experience for themselves and their players.
### Displaying empathy when dealing with young players

Adolescence can be a difficult period in the lives of youth girls. Their body makes adjustments, they deal with changes to their maturity socially and emotionally, begin to understand their sexuality and deal with issues such as academic achievement, relationships, taking on part-time work and family tension. As they strive to make their own decisions and consolidate their sense of connection in their world, these challenges leave them vulnerable to emotional states and behaviours (Luciana, 2014). Girls in the 14-17 age groups are more likely than boys to suffer from the perception of not being good enough, perfectionism, sexual confusion, fear of failure, body image hatred and lack of self-esteem (Berger, 2014). This makes it difficult for many of them to overcome adversity while falling into a heightened state of self-consciousness and self-centredness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of task to be completed</th>
<th>Coach</th>
<th>Sports Trainer/First Aid Officer</th>
<th>Team Manager</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Displaying empathy to your youth girls/female footballers</td>
<td>Display compassion and steadfast support, especially if the girl is clearly distressed</td>
<td>Stay calm and encourage the player to do so</td>
<td>If a player is injured, assist by keeping the parents calm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collaboratively create goals, then hold the player accountable for achieving them</td>
<td>If a player is injured, clearly explain what you are going to do to help alleviate the pain and what the repair process is</td>
<td>Provide avenues for players to show their strengths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>An authoritarian coach will not be successful, particularly if a girl is in an emotional state. Authoritarian-style coaches are unlikely to be successful with any young player</td>
<td>concentrate on the players’ strengths</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concentrate on the players’ strengths</td>
<td>Cultivate trust and be open-minded</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ask players what they need to help them achieve their potential</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some issues that may arise where the player can appear to react in an ‘out of character’ manner include but are not restricted to:

- Their reaction to sustaining an injury. When girls are ‘winded’ for the first time or roll an ankle, they may get distressed and take some calming down. Or when they receive a tackle or solid bump, they may be agitated
- Seeing their daughter react in this manner may initiate distress in some parents, who have not seen their daughters react this way before
- Girls are more likely to discuss their relationships more openly than males, which may include experiencing same-sex attraction. A players’ emerging same-sex attraction and the beginning and ending of any subsequent relationships will require acceptance, support and compassion
- Feeling the player has not eaten before a game and is vomiting or feeling lethargic and nauseous
- Players don’t feel connected to the team, for example, perceiving they are not being kicked the ball or feeling socially isolated

### Catering for a player’s other interests and commitments

Girls have so many competing activities in their lifestyle that as they get older, sport tends to play a smaller role. Numerous competing activities impact on an adolescent’s available time, such as study, part-time work, relationships, religious commitments and other sports. For many girls, football is not their first sporting priority and so flexibility is required by coaches to ensure girls can include football in their sporting pursuits.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of task to be completed</th>
<th>Coach</th>
<th>Administrator/Committee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategies to help participants manage being time-poor</td>
<td>Ask the women and girls what suits their overall timetable and conduct training on those days/times</td>
<td>Provide more social physical activities that cater for different skill levels and broad range of health interests such as:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be flexible with your approach to your footballers’ commitment, encouraging them to attend at least one training session a week or play them every two weeks</td>
<td>AFL Active, AFL 9s (a ‘pay as you play’ version of AFL that requires less commitment than full-sided games); get in Zumba or yoga instructors to conduct a session at the club during the home and away season</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies to meet the girls’ desire for less competition</td>
<td>Provide opportunities for them to get fit and stay involved</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Girls have so many competing activities in their lifestyle that as they get older, sport tends to play a smaller role. Numerous competing activities impact on an adolescent’s available time, such as study, part-time work, relationships, religious commitments and other sports. For many girls, football is not their first sporting priority and so flexibility is required by coaches to ensure girls can include football in their sporting pursuits.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of task to be completed</th>
<th>Coach</th>
<th>Administrator/Committee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategies to help participants manage being time-poor</td>
<td>Ask the women and girls what suits their overall timetable and conduct training on those days/times</td>
<td>Provide more social physical activities that cater for different skill levels and broad range of health interests such as:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be flexible with your approach to your footballers’ commitment, encouraging them to attend at least one training session a week or play them every two weeks</td>
<td>AFL Active, AFL 9s (a ‘pay as you play’ version of AFL that requires less commitment than full-sided games); get in Zumba or yoga instructors to conduct a session at the club during the home and away season</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies to meet the girls’ desire for less competition</td>
<td>Provide opportunities for them to get fit and stay involved</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6) Female-friendly facilities

Club rooms are important as they are the place where training sessions start, meetings and social events are conducted and where the club’s achievements are displayed and celebrated. They say a lot about the culture and values of a club and are an important first impression to members.

Improving access for girls and women involves taking a closer look at the physical environment of the club facilities, equipment and rules. While there are ideal facilities for clubs to aspire to, it’s important to realise that girls and women will still come to the club if they are clean and hygienic and not necessarily ‘ideal’. Local government, leagues and the state football body can all assist clubs to achieve the best-possible facilities.

Many state Sport and Recreation Departments conduct a funding scheme to advise and support clubs who would like to improve their facilities. Any approaches should be done in partnership with your state football organisation, which will assist clubs.

NSW/ACT: sportandrecreation.nsw.gov.au/
Northern Territory: sportandrecreation.nt.gov.au/grants-vouchers/other-grants
Queensland: qld.gov.au/recreation/sports/funding/
South Australia: era.sa.gov.au/funding?aoa=344813
Tasmania: spacs.tas.gov.au/divisions/csa/sport/area/funding_opportunities
Western Australia: dsr.wa.gov.au/funding/facilities-(csrff)


For more information on where to seek assistance to improve your club facilities, contact your state Australian Football organisation directly. State contacts can be found at: aflcommunityclub.com.au and on the final page of the Female Club Guide.

7) Opportunities to highlight social aspects of your club

Females are drawn to a sport and stay involved because of the people. If their friends leave, they are less likely to stay involved even if they love the sport. Social opportunities therefore rank higher than skill development or the competition for females. The role of the family changes between junior girls and youth girls age groups.

Where parents were supportive by providing transport and watching games, by youth girls it is peers who provide the most support. This is a major reason why young females do not make the transition from primary school age to secondary school age sport.

For more information on where to seek assistance to improve your club facilities, contact your state Australian Football organisation directly. State contacts can be found at: aflcommunityclub.com.au and on the final page of the Female Club Guide.
Barriers can take many forms. Here are a few areas and barriers for all members.

Vilification-Discrimination-Policy.pdf

files/Respect%20and%20Responsibility/National-


found at:

and coaches to view the AFL’s Vilification Policy

into their club. For females, barriers to participation

should consider how to include everyone successfully

With this diversity in mind, coaches and administrators

may be influenced heavily by stereotypes of what

male-dominated sport, in particular where members

a strong deterrent to them getting involved in a

a player born a female who has male gender

should educate themselves on transgender issues.

some examples are based on –

A coach who hags players as they come to the

orientation. It is not uncommon for youth girls

this attraction may result in at times.

Transphobia – vilifying someone on the basis of

gender identity. Active sport administrators

and coaches, particularly at women’s league level,

should educate themselves on transgender issues.

‘Transgender’ is an umbrella term that refers to a

person whose gender identity is different to their

physical sex as recorded at birth, for example, a

player born a female who has male gender

identification and now presents and lives as a man

or a boy. When transitioning to being a boy or man

and still using the female change rooms or wishing

to continue to play in a girls or women’s league team,

may be difficult. Clubs should seek an understanding

of the legal responsibilities they have around

inclusion and be mindful to model respectful ways

of engaging and supporting a transgendered player.

For further information and guidance, go to:

Australian Sports Commission

Play by the Rules pinybodynerles.com.au

equality-network.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/

Out-

for-Sport-Report.pdf

Guideline: Transgender people and sport > Complying with the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (PDF)

humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/index.php/our-

resources-and-publication/oa-practice-guidelines/

item/12153-guide transgender people and sport-

complying-with-the-equal-opportunity-act-2010

Women are significantly under-represented across

coaching, management, media, commercial sporting

activities and in bodies responsible for local, national,

regional and international-level sporting events.

In addition to providing role models, sport can provide

girls and women with leadership experience that they

can apply in other domains, such as employment,

 civic leadership and advocacy.

The composition and manner in which a board

or committee operates, fundamentally impacts the

operations of the club. Only a board operating under

sound principles will be effective and facilitate the

success of the club. It is well documented that diversity

in decision-making has a positive financial impact

on organisations. For a sporting club, that can mean

more vibrant in membership and social events,

a greater pool of volunteers and a sustainable

and engaged membership.

Barriers can take many forms. Here are a few areas to consider:

1. Gender: Females receiving trophies of lesser

value than are given to males or the club’s website

conveying images of male teams but not female ones

2. Stereotyping athletic females: Some girls relate

incidences of teasing, bullying and feelings of non

acceptance when they go to a club. This can be a

strong deterrent to them getting involved in a

male-dominated sport, in particular where members

may be influenced heavily by stereotypes of what

a female should be like. Often being a strong,

athletic female is not part of that stereotype.

3. Religious: Wearing a hijab (full head scarf) should

not exclude a player. League bylaws support the

wearing of hijabs, long sleeve jumpers and full skins

to encourage active involvement of players under

religious or cultural constraints.

4. Pregnancy: Familiarise yourself with your league’s

pregnancy policy and guidelines to assist any

players who present as pregnant during the season.

It is advisable for clubs to have a clear policy

that deals with participation by pregnant women,

because it is not helpful to anyone if the issue is

first raised when a very evidently pregnant woman

arrives to play. The requirement to sign an indemnity

may also lead to discrimination, depending on its

wording, and an indemnity may not be successful

if there was failure to take reasonable care.

It is also strongly advised that clubs ensure they

hold valid, up-to-date insurance that does not

contain exclusions for pregnant participants.

5. Sexuality: The following examples are based on –

A coach who hags players as they come to the

interchange bench. While this may be a perfect

display of this coach’s warmth, it is not an

appropriate gesture and can make players

and/or their parents feel uncomfortable.

Vilifying a person on the grounds of their sexual

orientation. It is not uncommon for youth girls

and women’s league players to be same-sex

attracted. Clubs should keep an open mind and

be understanding of the tensions and pressures

this attraction may result in at times.

Transphobia – vilifying someone on the basis of

gender identity. Active sport administrators

and coaches, particularly at women’s league level,

should educate themselves on transgender issues.

‘Transgender’ is an umbrella term that refers to a

person whose gender identity is different to their

physical sex as recorded at birth, for example, a

player born a female who has male gender

identification and now presents and lives as a man

or a boy. When transitioning to being a boy or man

and still using the female change rooms or wishing

to continue to play in a girls or women’s league team,

may be difficult. Clubs should seek an understanding

of the legal responsibilities they have around

inclusion and be mindful to model respectful ways

of engaging and supporting a transgendered player.

For further information and guidance, go to:

Australian Sports Commission

Play by the Rules pinybodynerles.com.au

equality-network.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/

Out-

for-Sport-Report.pdf

Guideline: Transgender people and sport > Complying with the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (PDF)

humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/index.php/our-

resources-and-publication/oa-practice-guidelines/

item/12153-guide transgender people and sport-

complying-with-the-equal-opportunity-act-2010

Bringing diversity to your club leadership

Women are significantly under-represented across

coaching, management, media, commercial sporting

activities and in bodies responsible for local, national,

regional and international-level sporting events.

In addition to providing role models, sport can provide

girls and women with leadership experience that they

can apply in other domains, such as employment,

civic leadership and advocacy.

The composition and manner in which a board

or committee operates, fundamentally impacts the

operations of the club. Only a board operating under

sound principles will be effective and facilitate the

success of the club. It is well documented that diversity

in decision-making has a positive financial impact

on organisations. For a sporting club, that can mean

more vibrant in membership and social events,

a greater pool of volunteers and a sustainable

and engaged membership.

What clubs can do

Some members of your club may be capable of

adding value to the committee, but may not have

the confidence to put their hand up.

Club leaders could mentor probable board members

Ensure that each meeting contains inclusion and/or

female participation as an agenda item

Encourage and support willing members to seek

relevant leadership, governance or self-development

courses to prepare them for voluntary board roles

For further assistance with governance and board

development, look to your local Sport and Recreation

Department. They often conduct workshops and

courses for developing board knowledge. See a list

on the following Further Resources and Websites page.
Further resources and website references

Australian Football League
afl.com.au
AFL Community Football
aflcommunity.com.au
Australian Sports Commission
ausport.com.au
playbytherules.com.au
Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation
wsff.org.uk

State and Territory Affiliates
AFL NSW/ACT
aflnswact.com.au
AFL Northern Territory
aflnt.com.au
AFL Queensland
afaq.com.au
AFL Tasmania
footballtas.com.au
AFL Victoria
aflv.com.au
South Australian National Football League
sanfl.com.au
West Australian Football Commission
wafc.com.au

State and Territory Departments of Sport and Recreation
NSW/ACT Office of Sport and Recreation
sportandrecreation.nsw.gov.au/
NT Sport and Recreation
sportandrecreation.nt.gov.au/
Queensland Department of National Parks, Racing, Sport and Recreation
nprrsr.qld.gov.au/
Tasmania Communities, Sport and Recreation
dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/csr/sportrec
South Australia Office for Sport and Recreation
ors.sa.gov.au/
Victoria Sport and Recreation
sport.vic.gov.au/
Western Australia
dsr.wa.gov.au/

Bibliography and Research References

Football Federation of Victoria, (2011) Increasing Female Participation
Ulster Integration Unit (2010) Moving Forward Together (available online ulster.gaa.ie)
Verve Research for the Women’s Sport and Fitness Foundation, The Ideal Sports Club for Women. (2011)