



# UNSTOPPABLE

Progress towards gender  
equality and pay equality  
in Australian sport

**CHAMPIONS OF CHANGE**   
SPORT

# Executive Summary



Thanks to a concerted effort across the entire sports ecosystem, there has been more progress advancing women in sport in the past 10 years than the past one hundred.

We are not done yet.

Together we are an unstoppable force in accelerating change.

Elizabeth Broderick AO



## Unstoppable

The Champions of Change Sport Group was conceived a decade ago with a bold vision to reshape Australian sport into an environment where women and men are equally engaged, recognised, valued and leading across the sector. This vision has become a guiding force, unifying often fiercely competitive leaders, sports and codes in its pursuit.

Over that time our Members, together with key stakeholders, have led substantial change to advance gender equality within sports administration and elite sport. Thanks to a concerted effort across the entire sports eco-system, there has been more progress advancing women in sport in the past 10 years, than the past one hundred, but we are not done yet.

Progress outlined in this report shows the transformative and inspirational impact we can have within a generation if we stay the course and continue to prioritise inclusive gender equality in sport.

Now, 10 years since the original recommendation to establish the Champions of Change Sport Group, and five years since the introduction of our progress framework: *Pathway to Gender Equality and Pay Equality in Sport*, we are focused on the necessary next steps to realise our vision. Priorities include:

- ◆ **Senior Leadership:** Identifying and solving barriers to gender equality within C-suite, board, governance, and high-performance environments.
- ◆ **Attraction and Retention:** Developing viable, long-term pathways to maintain a robust and gender equal pipeline of talent across all aspects of sport.
- ◆ **Sponsorship, Investment, and Pay:** Addressing the challenges and recognising opportunities for investing in the professionalisation of women's sports and closing gender pay gaps in the sector.
- ◆ **Culture and Inclusion:** Tackling the attitudes, behaviours, and norms that inhibit gender equality within sports, while creating safe, respectful and inclusive sports environments for all.

While much has been achieved, it is critical within this context that more leaders in the sector, and across business and society, join us in contributing to, implementing, and amplifying this work.

I extend my deepest thanks to every person involved with the Champions of Change Sport Group over the past 10 years and Members of our broader Coalition who have invested in the advancement of women in sport. I also want to especially acknowledge the incredible women pioneers who have led the way for decades, often at significant personal and professional cost. Your courage, persistence, tenacity, creativity and investment in this work has been essential to everything achieved so far.

Sport has always served as a powerful global platform for advancing gender equality, where personal and team achievements can symbolise and lead broader progress towards societies that embrace fairness, equity, respect and inclusion. I strongly believe that Australia is and can continue to lead the way on this.

My hope is that this report galvanises further energy, determination and action across the entire Australian sports ecosystem and community towards our vision.

**Together we are an unstoppable force in accelerating change.**

**Elizabeth Broderick AO**

Founder, Champions of Change Coalition  
Convenor Champions of Change Sport



# Executive Summary

Champions of Change Coalition’s vision is to achieve gender equality including pay equality in sport within a generation. Below is a high level assessment of progress so far.

Areas of focus	Progress so far	Areas for improvement	Call to action
 <p><b>Leadership</b> Advance more women into leadership, and ensure strategic focus and governance</p> <p>Create safe, respectful and inclusive sporting cultures that enable all genders to thrive</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Strategic focus</li> <li>◆ Improved governance</li> <li>◆ Robust measurement</li> <li>◆ Transparent reporting</li> <li>◆ Increased representation in leadership</li> <li>◆ Accelerated development pathways</li> <li>◆ A decade of trailblazing women in sport</li> <li>◆ Reviews into systemic, harmful behaviour</li> <li>◆ Gender-balanced and inclusive external presence</li> <li>◆ Leading on respect and inclusion through community programs</li> <li>◆ Prevention of violence against women programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ More women have a seat at the leadership table, but they rarely hold the CEO position.</li> <li>◆ ‘Traditional’ pathways to leadership continue to be barriers to women’s progress.</li> <li>◆ Leadership development programs need to evolve to focus on building capabilities for future leadership across all genders.</li> <li>◆ Women in senior leadership need better support to thrive.</li> <li>◆ The culture of sport is changing, however gendered norms remain a stubborn barrier to true gender equality.</li> <li>◆ Women’s experiences of exclusion and harassment in sporting organisations remain common.</li> <li>◆ A continued focus on inclusive and safe behaviours is required.</li> <li>◆ Women’s treatment in traditional and social media is causing significant harm.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Call to action</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Ensure continued strong governance of gender equality strategies and progress.</li> <li>➔ Strive for diverse, high calibre and high-performing governance teams.</li> <li>➔ Target women’s equal representation at the most senior levels of leadership and in high-performance roles.</li> <li>➔ Integrate gender representation and gender pay gap reporting into standard business management systems.</li> <li>➔ Develop and implement contemporary leadership programs for all genders which include a focus on inclusive leadership capabilities.</li> <li>➔ Set higher standards for inclusive leadership behaviours as a threshold for leadership positions.</li> <li>➔ Create safe, respectful and inclusive environments to ensure women can thrive across every level of sport.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Participation</b> Develop a strong pipeline of gender equal talent across all aspects of sport</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Increased participation</li> <li>◆ Redefined ‘play like a girl’</li> <li>◆ Improved facilities</li> <li>◆ Hosted major international events</li> <li>◆ Increased fan engagement across all genders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Improved facilities have not necessarily guaranteed fair access.</li> <li>◆ One solution does not work for ALL women and girls.</li> <li>◆ Women’s sport needs to be developed as a unique and differentiated proposition, rather than an imitation of the men’s game.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Call to action</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Build and sustain a critical mass of women and girl athletes at grass root level, with clear pathways through to elite level.</li> <li>➔ Provide inclusive and safe participation opportunities and environments for women and girls across all aspects of sport.</li> <li>➔ Design with intent to realise the full range of possibilities for women and girls in sport.</li> </ul>



# Executive Summary

## Areas of focus



### Pathways

Offer genuine and equitable high-performance pathways

## Progress so far

- ◆ New women's elite competitions
- ◆ Celebrated elite role models
- ◆ New pathway programs

## Areas for improvement

- ◆ Elite systems and high performance remain largely gender segregated.
- ◆ Pathways to high-performance and coaching roles for women are neither clear or visible and are rarely attainable.
- ◆ Greater consideration is required to ensure high performance is designed to support and promote women athlete's health and wellbeing.
- ◆ The lack of flexible working options in sport disproportionately impacts women.

## Call to action

- Prioritise reaching gender equality in high-performance roles.
- Map and implement clear, visible and attainable pathways to leadership.
- Focus on strategic career development towards high performance.
- Re-model current systems to embrace and support elite athletes and high-performance leaders who have caring responsibilities.



### Investment

Strive for equal or equitable investment in women and girls across all areas of sport

- ◆ Government investment
- ◆ Early commercial partners
- ◆ Redefined business case
- ◆ Greater media support
- ◆ Improved conditions and support for women athletes during pregnancy and upon returning to play

- ◆ Despite some advances, compelling commercial sponsorship opportunities remain unrealised.
- ◆ Recognition from key stakeholders that investment is required to deliver continued growth, impact and results.
- ◆ Enhanced media coverage and fan engagement remains key to the continued growth of women's sport.

## Call to action

- Activate existing gender equality advocates and leaders to invest in women's sport (e.g. more Members of the Champions of Change Coalition).
- Help brands and sponsors see the opportunities that exist.
- Encourage and incentivise increased media coverage of women's sport.
- Develop or support systems to measure and monitor gender-equal sports coverage across all media.
- Set equal or corrective targets for investment in women's sport.



### Pay and prize equality

Strive for equitable pay, prize money and conditions for women in sport

- ◆ Professional athlete careers
- ◆ Professional and equitable contracts
- ◆ Share of revenue agreements
- ◆ Increasing shift to equal prize money
- ◆ Progress closing gender pay gaps and transparent gender pay gap reporting

- ◆ Access to pay equity and prize equality is inconsistent across the sector.
- ◆ Overall earning potential is still hampered by structural issues such as pay and playing opportunities.
- ◆ A gender pay gap remains persistent across the sports sector, however the majority of Champions of Change Sport Group Members have lower gender pay gaps, in comparison to the industry benchmarks.

## Call to action

- Make leadership commitments and take action to address pay and prize inequality.
- Continue to close gender pay gaps across the sports sector at all levels.
- Expand gender pay gap reporting to include women in leadership, high performance and elite sports.



# 2014-2018

## Milestone Snapshot



2014

2015

2016

2017

2018

**Gender Equity: What Will It Take to Be the Best** released by Richmond Football Club, in partnership with Bluestone Edge, the Australian Football League, and the Australian Sports Commission recommending the establishment of a Champions of Change Sport Group



**Champions of Change Sport Group established**, Convened by Elizabeth Broderick AO

**Peggy O'Neal** in role as Richmond Football Club President

**Inaugural Women's Big Bash League (WBBL)** season

**Final project report: Gender Equity: What Will It Take to Be the Best?** Published by Richmond Football Club in partnership with the ASC, AFL and Bluestone Edge



Cricket Australia's **Growing Cricket for Girls** fund launched with support of CommBank

**No Barriers No Limits** industry working party convened to focus on gender equity across the racing industry

**NRL introduces Female Dally M Player of the Year Award**, inaugural recipient **Jenni-Sue Hoepfer**

**Champions of Change Sport** releases first standalone progress report



Champions of Change Sport launches **Sponsorship of Women Leaders** pilot

**Minerva Network established** providing mentorship to elite women athletes

**Jayne Hrdlicka** appointed Chair of Tennis Australia

**Cricket Australia announces a landmark pay deal** for both international and domestic female players with payments increasing from \$7.5 million to \$55.2 million, significantly closing the pay gap.

**Cricket Australia's first joint player MOU** for women and men players



**Football Australia announces its Women's Football Council** to increase female participation in football



**NRL Telstra Women's Premiership (NRLW)** competition launched

**Raelene Castle** in role as NRL Club CEO

Harvey Norman sponsors the **Jillaroos**

**Cricket Australia** increases its investment in women's cricket, including better contracts for female players



**Tennis Australia's** President's Women in Tennis Coaching Scholarships introduced



**Kate Palmer** appointed CEO of the Australian Sports Commission

**Amanda Elliot OAM** appointed Chair of the Victoria Racing Club

**Cricket Australia adopts equitable naming conventions** for international men's and women's teams

**Official launch of the AFL Women's (AFLW)** competition



**Cricket Australia releases first Press for Progress Report**, providing transparency and accountability to cricket's ambition to be Australia's leading sport for women and girls

**Champions of Change Sport Group releases Test the Messages**, a guide for gender-equal and inclusive representation of women in sport

**The Western Sydney Wanderers** become the first A-League club to offer women players the same minimum conditions as their male counterparts

**Women's rugby league is included in the Collective Bargaining Agreement** for the first time, with an annual allocation of elite-level funds through to 2022



# 2019-2022

## Milestone Snapshot



2019

**Champions of Change Sport Group's Pathway to Pay Equality Report released**, setting out the interconnected steps required to deliver gender equality and equal pay in sport

**Carlton Respects Workplace Charter introduced**, taking action on gender equality and contributing to the prevention of sexual harassment, and violence against women

**Football Australia releases Gender Equality Action Plan**, which outlines commitment to 40:40:20 representation

**Richmond Football Club** launches first Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan



**Racing Victoria invests \$10.5m** on upgrades or replacements to jockey rooms with a focus on women jockeys' rooms

**Swinburne University announces extension of partnership** with Richmond Football Club to include AFLW

**Belinda Sharpe** becomes the first female to referee a NRL match

**Rowing Australia marks 100 years of women's participation** in rowing, celebrating significant milestones and achievements of female rowers and leaders

**Tennis Australia secures \$12 million** Federal Government grant to support Women and Girls Strategy

**Collective Bargaining Agreement** achieves gender equality in travel and performance standards for the Matildas, with the gender pay gap significantly reduced through a tiered centralised contract system



2020

**No Boundaries for Women and Girls in Sport** released by the Australian Women in Sport Advisory Group, providing a vision for the future of gender equality in sport

**Champions of Change Pathway to Gender Equality in Sport framework** launched with Members, reporting progress against 28 key measures on gender equality and pay equality in sport



**Rowing Australia opens Hancock Prospecting Women's National Training Centre**, providing equal access to world-class facilities for female athletes

**The Women's Sports Investment Package** is announced, allocating significant funding from the federal budget to various women's sports initiatives



2021

**Legacy 23 Plan** launched in preparation to drive economic and social impact from the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023™

**W-League rebranded** to A-League Women's, alongside A-League Men's

**First all-female team** of match officials referee women's State of Origin

**Rowing Australia's Women's Pathway Program** is introduced



**Josephine Sukkar** appointed Chair of Australian Sports Commission

**Tennis Gender Equality Taskforce** formed to support the development and launch Women and Girls Strategy (2022-2027)

**NRL RISE Rookie program** introduced to ensure the next generation of female players and administrators are trained



2022

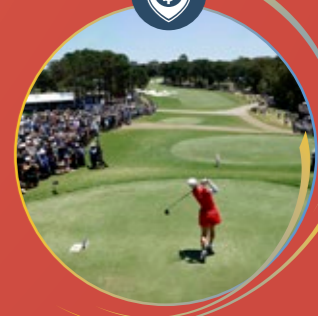
**100 years of women's tennis** celebrated at the AO with the first champion **Maude Molesworth** inducted into the Australian Tennis Hall of Fame

**Women's Cricket** secures CommBank 3 year extension of long-running sponsorship

**Redevelopment of IKON Park**—home of AFLW—shares first-class facilities for AFL and AFLW football programs

**Cindy Hook** appointed Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games CEO

**Rowing Australia** launch Women in High Performance Coaching Project



**Racing Victoria's Track Rider Development Program** introduced to provide a pathway for riders

**Basketball Australia** launches She Hoops platform and 'Huddle Up' mentoring sessions for female officials and administrators

**Women Leaders in Tennis Program** established to increase women in leadership and decision-making roles

**ASC Inclusive Leadership Program** delivered for CEO and Senior Executives in the sport sector

**Surf Life Saving Australia's** inaugural SLSA Women's Mentoring Program



**Australia hosts the UCI Cycling World Championships**, including events across multiple cycling disciplines for women

**FIBA Women's Basketball World Cup** hosted in Sydney

**Golf Australia's investment in Women and Girls** programs increases 35% since initial funding in 2018

**AFLW players pay** increases by 94% for Season 7

**2022/23 Australian Open Golf** offers equal total prize money of \$1.7m for the women and men's tournaments

# 2023-2024 Milestone Snapshot



**Pathway to Gender Equality in Sport 2021-22 Progress Report**, Champions of Change Sport Group released

**Basketball Australia She Hoops** announces Leadership & Confidence Scholarship Program for young women

**Surf Life Saving Australia introduces a Diversity and Inclusion Policy** and Commitment Statement, and completes a Gender Equity Audit

**10,000 students educated through the Carlton Respects Schools Program** and the Road to Respect initiative since inception



**Tennis Australia's #No Limits Girls squads** for girls aged 8-10 years established in clubs

**Carlton becomes first AFLW club** to move to day training

**FIFA Women's World Cup: Co-hosted by Australia and New Zealand** - one of the most significant events in women's sports - highlighting Australia's capability to host global sporting events and promoting women's football worldwide

**Federal Govt announced \$200 million investment** through the Play Our Way program to improve sporting facilities and equipment specifically for women and girls.



**Surf Life Saving Australia secures Geoffrey Evans Trust Grant** to support powercraft training for women in surf lifesaving

**Western Bulldogs unite men's and women's programs** for the first time with facilities all designed for the modern, elite athlete



**Kate Jenkins AO**, appointed Chair of the Australian Sports Commission

**Carlton's first whole-of-club**, Inclusion, Diversity, Equality and Belonging three-year strategic plan endorsed by CFC Board



**Get Into Golf introduces 17,321 Australians to golf**, with more than 80% women

**Tennis Australia achieves gender-balanced Australian Open ball kids squad**



**Racing Victoria appoints woman jockey mentor/coach** to the Apprentice Jockey Training Program as program reaches 76% female participation



**Kristen Hilton** appointed chair of the AFLPA

**Women make up 48% of Tennis Australia's Australian Open global host broadcast commentary team**

2023

**Basketball Australia launches She Hoops Girls Only Holiday Programs** in association with local clubs around Australia

**Belinda Clark's** sculpture unveiled at the SCG, the first such sculpture in the world of a woman cricketer

**The Get Into Golf Program** and Australian Golf Foundation Junior Girls Scholarship Program launches

**Golf Australia's joint men's and women's Australian Open** draws more than 50,000 people for two years in a row across 2022 and 2023



**Women's only coaching scholarship** started via the Karrie Webb Scholarship Program

**NRL Pacific Championships** is introduced, contributing to the global growth of women's Rugby League

**Rowing Australia** develops equitable high-performance pathways



**New and enhanced Collective Bargaining Agreements** across Cricket Australia, Football Australia, NRLW and AFLW include further enhancements towards pay equity and gender equality in sport

**Tennis Australia launches The United Cup** which sees men and women from 18 nations competing side-by-side in Brisbane, Perth and Sydney with equal prize money and ranking points for the first time



2024

**Australian Sports Commission Women Leaders in Sport Program** - reaches milestone of 27,000 participants over 20yrs

**Australia Government** announces new policy mandating gender balance in sport governance



**Golf Australia obtains signatories** from 100 clubs for the R&A Women in Golf Charter

**Cricket Australia Women and girls** action plan 2024-2034 launched



**The Women's State of Origin** is expanded to three matches, bringing the series to parity with the men and shatters attendance and viewership records

**Women made up 55% of the Australian team** at the Paris Olympics, winning 32 medals representing 60% of Australia's total medal tally



**Women made up 50% of the Australian team at the Paris Paralympics, winning 24 medals** representing 38% of Australia's total medal tally

# Thank you to everyone involved in the Champions of Change Sport Group

This report describes progress that would not have been possible without the many leaders who have stepped up during the past decade to lead in pursuit of gender equality in sport. All our experience shows that sustainable change cannot be achieved unless whole sectors work collaboratively towards this goal.

We sincerely thank every leader who has invested in and contributed to this work, including CEOs, Boards, executive teams, Implementation Leaders, administrators and athletes. You know the contribution you have made and are making.

Most importantly, we recognise the trailblazing women who have sacrificed so much, personally and professionally, in the pursuit of gender equality in sport. We honour what you stand for, what you have achieved and your unwavering belief in a better, fair and equal Australia.



## Champions of Change Sport



**Andrew Abdo**  
CEO  
National Rugby  
League



**Ameet Bains**  
CEO  
Western Bulldogs  
Football Club



**Brian Cook**  
CEO  
Carlton Football  
Club



**Sarah Cook**  
CEO  
Rowing Australia



**Shane Dunne**  
CEO  
Richmond Football  
Club



**Marne Fechner**  
CEO  
AusCycling



**Brendon Gale**  
Former CEO  
(2009 – 2024)  
Richmond Football  
Club



**Nick Hockley**  
CEO  
Cricket Australia



**Cindy Hook**  
CEO  
Brisbane 2032 Olympic  
and Paralympic Games  
Organising Committee



**James Johnson**  
CEO  
Football Australia



**Aaron Morrison**  
CEO  
Racing Victoria



**Kate Palmer AM**  
Non-Executive  
Director



**Kieren Perkins OAM**  
CEO  
Australian Sports  
Commission



**Matt Scriven**  
CEO  
Basketball Australia



**James Sutherland**  
CEO  
Golf Australia



**Craig Tiley**  
CEO  
Tennis Australia



**Adam Weir**  
CEO  
Surf Life Saving  
Australia



### Convenor

**Elizabeth Broderick AO**  
Founder  
Champions of Change Coalition

Note: The Australian Football League (AFL) has been a Member of the Champions Change Coalition's National 2015 Group since its inception.





# *UNSTOPPABLE*

Progress towards gender equality and pay equality in Australian sport

The Champions of Change Coalition includes CEOs, secretaries of government departments, non-executive directors and community leaders who believe gender equality is a major business, economic, societal and human rights issue. Established in 2010 by Elizabeth Broderick AO, our mission is to achieve inclusive gender equality across our workplaces by 2030 and a significant and sustainable increase in the representation of women in leadership.

[championsofchangecoalition.org](http://championsofchangecoalition.org)