

Elevating Women and Girls in Umpiring

Western Football Netball League establishes a Women and Girls Umpire Academy in Melbourne's West as part of the Champions of the West project.

Champions of the West is a project led by GenWest which aims to prevent attitudes that support and condone gender-based violence from flourishing in professional and community sports clubs.

While 32% of AFL participants are women, only 10.8% of AFL umpires nationally and at all levels are women. In May 2023, the *Champions of the West* program delivered an advancing gender equity workshop run by The Men's Project and Safe and Equal, to around 100 members of the Western Football Netball League (WFNL) Umpires Association.

Indicative of the gender equality challenges faced by the WFNL Umpires Association only two women attended the workshop – one umpire and one administrator. This session highlighted the systemic and institutional barriers that exist in supporting women and girls to become umpires and the opportunity for real change.

THE PLAN

Throughout the workshop, Director of Umpiring, Steve Keating recognised the need for further change and moved to establish the WFNL **Women and Girls Umpire Academy** in January 2024.

Led by AFLW Boundary Umpire and 2023 AFLW Umpiring Rising Star, Melissa Sambrooks, women and girls over the age of 12 were invited to participate in the academy and engage in umpiring and leadership activities across the season.



“We are committed to having more women and girls involved across every aspect of our league – not just playing but also looking to boost our numbers of women and girls in umpiring roles this upcoming season!”

Steve Keating, Director of Umpiring, WFNL

THE OUTCOME

31% increase of WFNL umpires who are women and girls in 2024.

The WFNL have committed

To understanding the barriers and facilitators for women and girls across umpiring, playing, and leading in local footy. In 2024, the WFNL held its first Women and Girls Forum which featured;

- **AFL Hall of Famer Debbie Lee** – AFL National Women and Girls Football Lead
- **Georgia Case** – AFL Women and Girls Community Football Lead – Victoria
- **Beth Cook** – AFL Women and Girls Community Football Coordinator – Victoria.

To extend their commitment

The WFNL will undertake a gender audit in 2025 to develop a WFNL Gender Equity Action Plan.

The Champions of the West project draws upon ideas and advice from the **Safe and Inclusive Sport Guide**.

Read the Guide

View more case studies at sport.vic.gov.au

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