**Guidelines for Preventing Violence Against Women: Taking Action Through Community Sport**

**Acknowledgements**

The Guidelines for Preventing Violence Against Women were developed by Sport and Recreation Victoria in partnership with the Office for Women.

The Victorian Government proudly acknowledges Victorian Aboriginal people as the First Peoples and Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and water on which we rely. We acknowledge the ongoing leadership role of the Aboriginal community on gender equality and the prevention of violence against women. As First Peoples, Aboriginal Victorians are best placed to determine a culturally appropriate path to gender equality in their communities.

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# Guidelines for Preventing Violence Against Women: Taking Action Through Community Sport

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# Message from the Minister for Women and Prevention of Family Violence and the Minister for Community Sport.

Victorians love sport. It is a driver for inclusion and equality, the ‘great leveller’ that breaks down prejudice and fosters common understanding between people with vastly different experiences – in club rooms, training grounds and stands across our state.

When it comes to preventing family violence and violence against women, we have seen time and time again that supporting the community sport sector to challenge outdated attitudes and behaviours around gender has benefits that reach far beyond the ground, court or pitch.

For this reason, the Victorian Government is proud to introduce the new *Guidelines for Preventing Violence Against Women: Taking action through community sport*, which will further support the community sport sector to develop and implement strategies to champion equality and prevent gendered violence.

The guidelines build on the Victorian Government’s recent increased investment in professional women’s sport, including cricket, netball’s Super League and the AFLW, which has led to record numbers of women and girls signing up to play for their local clubs and follow in the footsteps of their sporting heroes.

You can’t be what you can’t see – and so by celebrating our women sporting heroes and making community sport more accessible for all women and girls, we are progressing gender equality.

And these guidelines will help us to continue this progress. They are the product of a four-year collaboration between the Office for Women, Sport and Recreation Victoria and community sports clubs and organisations – designed to be used by State Sporting Associations, councils and the women’s health sector, and adapted to the unique needs and strengths of local clubs.

The Guidelines are split into two parts. The first part guides organisations on how to make a case for change, plan partnerships and report on program success. The second part details practical steps on how to work with sporting communities on areas for improvement and drive cultural change.

We are excited that these guidelines will help us further progress *Victoria’s landmark Safe and Strong and Free from Violence strategies*, and Change our Game, Victoria’s campaign for increasing participation for women and girls in community sport.

Thank you to our sector partners for collaborating with us on the development of *Guidelines for Preventing Violence Against Women: Taking action through community sport.*

We urge all Victorian sporting organisations to use these guidelines as a starting point in your work to make community sport inclusive, safe and equitable for every Victorian.

Together, we can continue to progress gender equality, support better outcomes for women across Victoria and change the attitudes and behaviours that lead to family violence – to stop it before it starts.

Gabrielle Williams MP – Minister for Women and Prevention of Family Violence

The Honourable Ros Spence MP – Minister for Community Sport

# Introduction and Background

**About the Guidelines**

The Guidelines for Preventing Violence Against Women - Guidelines for taking action through community sport have been created for work with the community sport sector as we move towards a Victoria free from violence. The Guidelines have been developed to guide State Sporting Associations, Regional Sports Assemblies, local councils, Women’s Health Services and community health organisations to develop and implement projects to take action through community sport to prevent violence against women.

The Guidelines support compliance with the [Change Our Game](https://changeourgame.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/39062/final20_20recuit20and20retent20guidelines.pdf) suite of initiatives and the [Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic)](https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/about-gender-equality-act-2020), and support sports clubs and organisations to act, as leaders in their communities, to prevent violence against women.

**The Guidelines are a tool for your organisation to work more effectively with clubs and volunteers to drive cultural change in community sport.**

The Guidelines have been developed by leading sport and gender equality experts from Swinburne and La Trobe universities, tested through nine pilot projects across Victoria and evaluated by leading experts from Monash University. The Guidelines provide a range of examples and case studies of how the pilot projects worked with community sport on the prevention of violence against women.

The nine pilot projects that tested the Guidelines were from three Regional Sports Assemblies (Leisure Networks, Sports Central and Valley Sports), three local councils (Maroondah City Council, Monash City Council, Wyndham City Council), two State Sporting Associations (Golf Australia and Tennis Victoria) and the Aboriginal Advancement League in partnership with Spark Health.

**Key points:**

* The aim of this work is to support gender equal, inclusive and respectful community sports, while contributing to a Victoria that is free from violence.
* This resource has been designed for use by organisations such as:
  + State Sporting Associations
  + Regional Sports Assemblies
  + Local Councils
  + Women’s Health Services
  + Community Health Organisations

**How to use the Guidelines**

The Guidelines provide an evidence base and range of ideas and suggestions from across the sector about how to practically embed gender equity in community sports and, in doing so, prevent violence against women. Reflecting there is no one-size-fits-all model, and that each organisation, sport and club is different (with different histories and cultures), it has not been designed to be prescriptive. Instead, it provides information about the issue of violence against women, approaches to preventing this and directs you to where you can learn more about how to build sporting cultures that are safe and respectful.

The Guidelines are written with the consideration that some of you will be new to this space while others will have worked in it for a long time. The document is not intended to be exhaustive and has been designed to be read in conjunction with the key resources listed throughout. This is an emerging area of practice and the evidence base for this work is continuously expanding. However, what we do know is that violence against women and the gendered drivers that underpin it still exist and, together, our sporting communities can do something about it.

The Guidelines have been split into two sections which complement each other and overlap because cultural change is never linear, and organisations will need to be flexible and revisit steps over time.

The term ‘project’ is used throughout the document – however, actions undertaken in line with these Guidelines should not be thought of as one-off. Instead, whatever actions you take should aim to be long-term, ongoing and sustainable. This is particularly important in community sport, where there is a high turnover of administrators, players and volunteers.

**Section 1: Project planning and governance**

This section relates to the project planning and governance that you should consider to ensure your organisation is in the best position to work directly with community sport clubs to support them to undertake cultural change and embed gender equity.

1. Establish a case for change
2. Commit to adopting a whole-of-sport approach and secure support from leadership in your organisation
3. Planning, governance and partnerships
4. Evaluation
5. Develop and implement appropriate responses to instances of disrespect and violence towards women and gender diverse people
6. Expect and prepare for resistance
7. Engage men but ensure women and gender diverse people are central to the work
8. Share knowledge and learn from experts and each other

**Section 2: Implementation**

This section is a set of guidelines for project workers and organisations working directly with community sport clubs. It provides practical examples and advice for working with clubs.

1. Work with club leadership first and secure their support
2. Build on strengths and identify gaps – ideas for implementation
3. Skill development and education for clubs
4. Share and celebrate successes

**Key terms**

To begin, there are a number of key terms and concepts that support work to drive gender equity initiatives.

**Gender equity** is about acknowledging that we all start in different places because of social, cultural and historical factors. It entails the provision of fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities on the basis of gender[[1]](#endnote-2). Put simply, some people have more than others, some less, and these imbalances need to be identified and addressed for there to be a level playing field. Gender equity actions are the things we do to achieve gender equality.

**Gender equality** focuses on the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women, men, transgender, gender diverse and intersex people. Equality does not mean that everyone will become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on their gender[[2]](#endnote-3).

**Transgender** (or trans) refers to a person whose gender identity, gender expression or behaviours does not align with their sex assigned at birth. At birth in Australia, children are classified male or female. Male children are raised as boys and female children are raised as girls. A person classified as female at birth who identifies as a man may use the label trans, transman or man. Similarly, a person classified as male at birth who identifies as a woman may use the label trans, transwoman or woman[[3]](#endnote-4).

**Intersex** refers to the diversity of physical characteristics between the stereotypical male and female characteristics. Intersex people have reproductive organs, chromosomes or other physical sex characteristics that are neither wholly female nor wholly male. Intersex is a description of biological diversity and may or may not be the identity used by an intersex person.

**Gender diverse**. In the same way that sexual orientation and gender expression are not binaries, gender identity is not binary either. It is important to challenge our thinking beyond the binary constructs of male and female. Some people may identify as gender fluid (having no fixed gender), a-gender (having no gender), bi-gender (both a woman and a man) or gender non-binary (neither woman nor man). There is a diverse range of non-binary gender identities and it is important to be aware that language in this space is still evolving[[4]](#endnote-5).

Women, men and gender diverse people have different needs and experiences and these differences need to be acknowledged and accommodated. Gender equity aims to level the playing field for everyone. Equity is essential to achieving true equality.

This resource uses ‘gender equity’ throughout when talking about actions to address inequality, recognising that many sports and sports clubs have historically been set up with the needs of men and boys in mind and therefore benefit men and boys and disadvantage women, girls and other genders.

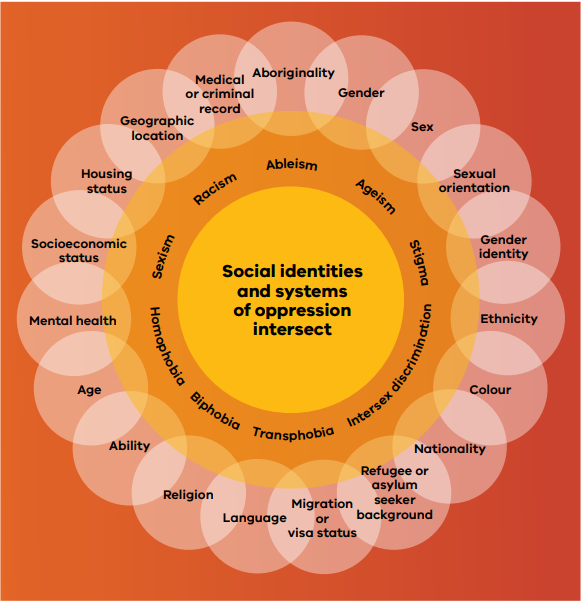
It is important to consult with people who are underrepresented in sport about what they need to achieve equality. Giving women/girls, gender diverse and men/boys equal treatment, resources and opportunities (for example, equal prize money or allocation to grounds) is fair and appropriate at times, but equal treatment will not always reach the same outcomes for men and women due to their different starting positions. This is why equity and consultation are important.

For example, in some clubs, girls will want the opportunity to train with the boys as an opportunity to normalise respectful relationships on the field. Others will want girls-only skills or training sessions to develop skills they have not previously had the chance to develop due to fewer opportunities being available. This will depend on the sport and the individual, but it is important participants are consulted and their needs understood.

Gender inequality includes inequality experienced by women because they are women but it also includes negative behaviours and attitudes toward those who do not conform to dominant gender stereotypes or those who do not conform to rigid gender roles. Examples of this could include men and boys being actively discouraged from playing female-dominated sports such as netball or experiencing negative repercussions after expressing their emotions. Rigid attachment to and promotion of gender stereotypes, masculinity and femininity are also harmful for gender diverse or non-binary people as these stereotypes perpetuate the myth that there are only two genders.

By addressing gender inequality there will be multiple benefits and positive impacts for all in our community. By undertaking actions to support gender equity, we move towards a gender equitable society where women, men, and gender diverse people are not disadvantaged or rewarded based on conforming to strict or traditional gender norms.

**Intersectionality** is the consideration of how characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, sex, gender identity, religion, race, age or location can compound and interact on multiple levels to create overlapping forms of discrimination and power imbalances. People who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and disadvantage may be at an increased risk of experiencing gendered or family violence.[[5]](#endnote-6) It is important when undertaking gender equity work to consider and address the impact of gender alongside these other characteristics and how they may compound and interact.

For example, a woman who uses a wheelchair may encounter discrimination based on her gender and her disability. Therefore, developing a program that only considers her gender will not meet all her needs. When developing programs and initiatives, we need to consider intersectionality to better understand and meet the needs of people who are underrepresented in community sport.

**Image Description:** Image shows 18 small overlapping circles layered on top and around of a large orange circle. The large orange circle contains a yellow inner core with the words, ‘Social Identities and systems of oppression intersect’. Outer rim of the large orange circle contains 10 words spaced around the rim, these words in clockwise order are ableism, agism, stigma, intersex discrimination, transphobia, biphobia, homophobia, sexism and racism. The 18 small overlapping circles each contain one word, these words in clockwise order are, Aboriginality, gender, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity, colour, nationality, refugee or asylum seeker background, migration or visa status, language, religion, ability, age, mental health, socioeconomic status, housing status, geographic location and medical or criminal record. As a whole this image represents the overlapping and interwoven nature of intersectionality.

**Using a gender lens** helps bring to light our biases and how our actions (or inactions) may be affecting different genders. Gender equality is not just about increased participation by women and girls on the field (although this is important). Increased participation does not always amount to gender equity and retention of women and girls at the club. For example, a football-netball club may have the same number of men and women players, but the facilities may not be shared fairly between the two groups or there may be limited or no representation of women and gender diverse people in the club’s leadership or executive bodies.

Applying a gender lens is an important strategy for making sure everyone’s needs and experiences are taken into account by assessing and then addressing the effects that policies, programs or services may have on people of different genders. We need a gender lens to ensure our work does not inadvertently disadvantage people based on gender.

**Unconscious biases** are social stereotypes (including gender stereotypes) that individuals form outside their own conscious awareness. They are triggered by our brain making quick judgements and assessments of people and situations, influenced by our background, cultural environment and personal experiences. Applying a gender lens will assist us in identifying and addressing our unconscious biases.

**Violence against women** is any act of gender-based violence that causes or could cause physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of harm or coercion, in public or in private life.[[6]](#endnote-7) It is underpinned by a range of gendered drivers.

**Gendered drivers** are the actions, behaviours and attitudes underpinning family violence and all forms of violence against women resulting from a state of gender inequality. These drivers include (1) condoning of violence against women, (2) men’s control of decision-making and limits to women’s independence, (3) stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity and (4) disrespect towards women and male peer relations that emphasise aggression.[[7]](#endnote-8) By addressing these gendered drivers of violence we can work towards a state of true gender equality and prevent family violence and all forms of violence against women.

**Key Points:**

* “If we don’t actively and intentionally include women, the system will exclude them.” Elizabeth Broderick, former Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner
* “I love everything about sport. However, it’s important to me that aspiring female sports stars can see people like them reflected in the game.” Sabrina Frederick, AFL player
* For many people, the impact of gender inequality is compounded by the way that gendered barriers interact with other forms of disadvantage and discrimination.
* Gender equality and inclusion in sport is not about women, girls and gender diverse people slotting or fitting into the boys’ and men’s game. Rather, it is about everyone in the sport working together to ensure it has an inclusive culture.
* Nearly half of all players in the study heard sexist language used within their sporting clubs, and nearly one in five men in the study thought it was acceptable to make jokes about LGBTIQ+ people and women if they weren’t present in the room at the time.
* Findings from Monash University’s 2020 report ‘Evaluating LGBTI+ Inclusion within Sport and the Pride Cup Initiative’.
* Applying a gender lens is not about excluding men and boys but rather including everybody.
* For more about equity, inclusion and intersectionality go to [Everybody Matters Inclusion and Equity Statement](https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-05/Everybody-matters-inclusion-and-equity-statement.pdf)
* Under the [*Gender Equality Act 2020*](https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/about-gender-equality-act-2020) *(Vic)* local councils and public sporting bodies are obliged to apply a gender lens and conduct [gender impact assessments](https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/gender-impact-assessments) to understand how policies, programs and services can impact people of different genders in different ways, and ensure inequalities aren’t being reinforced.

**Understanding action**

A ‘Club Gender Audit Tool’ is provided at Appendix 1 of these Guidelines. The Tool has been developed to support you to work with clubs to put a gender lens on their practices and identify actions for gender equity across five areas:

* Governance and Leadership
* Club Culture
* Participation
* Promotion and Recruitment
* Facilities

You should adapt the Club Gender Audit Tool to the sport or club you are working with. The tool has been developed with the actions to prevent violence against women in mind and will assist to address unconscious bias and inequities.

**What’s sport got to do with preventing violence against women?**

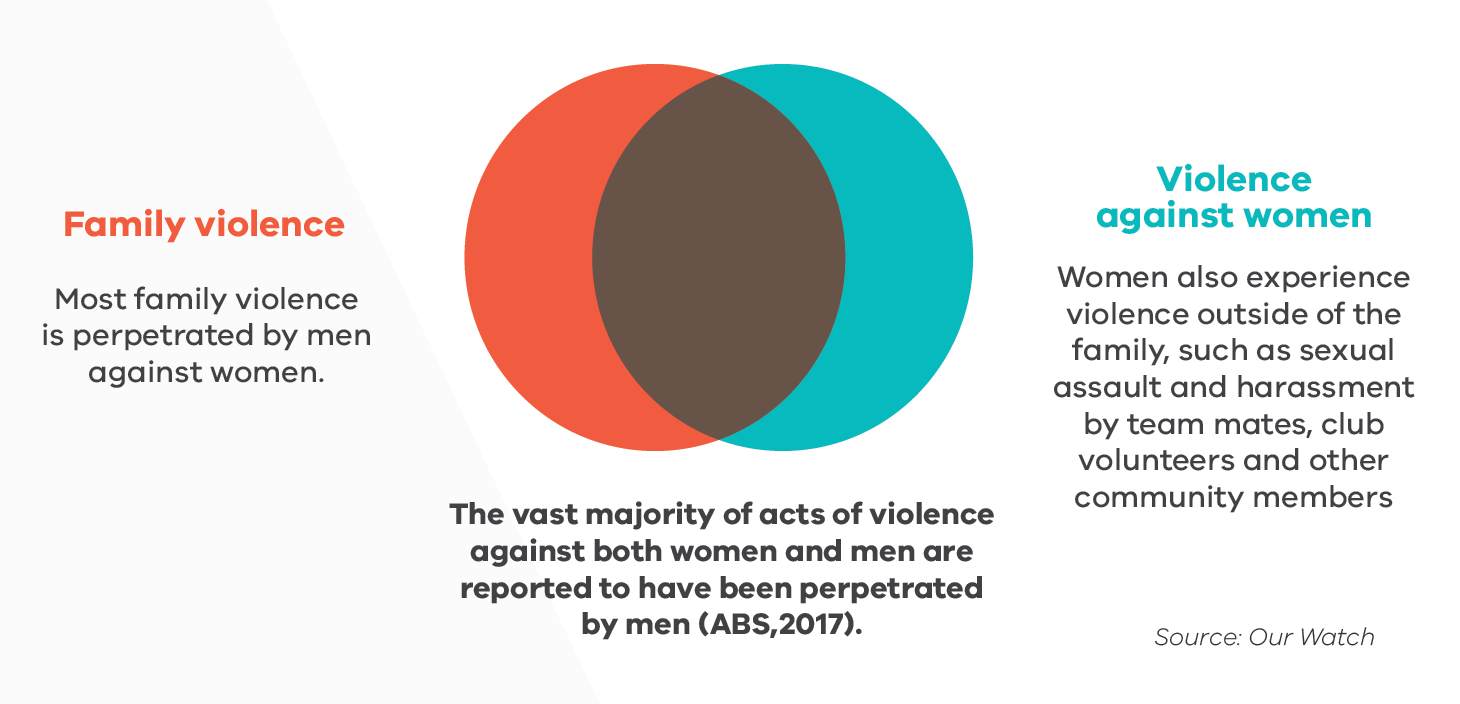
On average, at least one woman is killed by a partner or former partner each week in Australia, and one in three Australian women has experienced physical violence since the age of 15.[[8]](#endnote-9) Domestic violence is the leading contributor to death, disability and illness in women aged 15 to 44 years,[[9]](#endnote-10) more than well known risk factors like tobacco use, high cholesterol or use of illicit drugs.

Violence against women encompasses many different things, including domestic or intimate partner violence, family violence, sexual harassment, sexual assault and online abuse. It can occur in all areas of our community including the home, workplaces, schools, online and in sporting clubs.

Violence against women is serious and prevalent in our community, however, it is preventable. The Victorian Government is committed to stopping this violence through a ‘primary prevention’ approach. Primary prevention of family violence and all forms of violence against women efforts focus on stopping this violence before it starts. To prevent violence against women we need to address the underlying social conditions that allow it to occur – gender inequality and the gendered drivers that underpin and lead to this violence.

Violence against women is much more likely when men and women are not treated equally and when women are valued and respected less than men. By addressing these factors, primary prevention can ultimately influence and create intergenerational cultural, attitudinal and behavioural change.[[10]](#endnote-11)

[*Free from violence*](https://www.vic.gov.au/free-violence-victorias-strategy-prevent-family-violence) is Victoria’s strategy to prevent family violence and all forms of violence against women through primary prevention. To prevent violence against women, we need to engage and educate the whole community where they ‘live, work, learn, socialise and play’.[[11]](#endnote-12) *Free from violence* identifies sporting communities as a key setting to lead conversations and work about cultures of respect, gender equality, fairness and preventing violence against women.



**Image Description:** Two images overlap, one image is orange and the other is blue. The orange circle is connected to text that reads, ‘family violence: most family violence is perpetrated by men against women’. The blue circle is connected to text that reads, ‘Violence against women: women also experience violence outside of the family, such as sexual assault and harassment by colleagues or clients.’. Text at the bottom of the image reads, ‘The vast majority of acts of violence against both women and men are reported to have been perpetrated by men (ABS, 2017).’.

Despite increasing participation rates over recent years, statistics show that women and girls remain underrepresented in sport in on- and off-field positions, including in media coverage and leadership positions. Between 2014-19 in Victoria 30.2 million words were written in sports reporting about men while only 3.3 million words were written about women.[[12]](#endnote-13)

Sport settings are places where people gather as players, coaches, administrators, officials, spectators and volunteers, so they provide a strong platform for cultural change. Sport is an important setting where gender inequality and its drivers can be challenged, and equality championed. Sporting clubs are influential leaders within local communities, especially in regional and rural areas, providing a valuable point of connection and belonging. They are well placed to influence the attitudes and beliefs we have around gender.

By challenging gender inequality in community sport, we can create inclusive, equitable, healthy and safe environments for women, men, girls, boys and gender diverse people. This helps to prevent violence against women.

Our Watch, the national organisation for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children, provides us with a framework called [Change the story](https://www.ourwatch.org.au/change-the-story/) that describes the gendered drivers of violence, factors that reinforce the drivers and outlines the key actions to take to prevent it.

Prevention focuses on addressing gendered drivers (or underlying causes) of violence, and actions to address these drivers and prevent violence.

The gendered drivers of violence are often experienced in combination with other forms of discrimination and inequality, such as racism or homophobia, which increase the frequency or severity of violence. Taking an intersectional approach to this work means projects need to address the intersections of gender inequality and other types of inequality.

There is a clear opportunity for sporting organisations and clubs to play an active and positive part in preventing violence against women. An overview of the gendered drivers of violence and examples of what actions to prevent violence against women might look like at a community sports club level are in the following table:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Gendered driver of violence against women** | **Explanation of the gendered driver** | **Action to prevent violence against women** | **Examples of what positive actions look like a club level** |
| **The acceptance or condoning violence against women** | When violence is excused, trivialised, downplayed, justified, ignored or denied allowing people to think violence is excusable or acceptable. Another example of this driver is where blame is placed on the victim rather than responsibility resting with the perpetrator. | **Challenge disrespect and violence against women** | The club’s values and/or code of conduct communicates the club’s support of gender equality and zero tolerance of: sexist language, jokes and comments; verbal abuse; online misconduct; sexual harassment; sharing of offensive or inappropriate images; and all forms of violence against women (including coercive control).    The club actively promotes and supports campaigns that demonstrate its commitment to gender equality including through partnerships with local women’s and primary prevention of family violence organisations or networks. E.g. International Women’s Day, 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence (beginning 25 November annually).    The club endorse Respect Victoria’s [Call it Out campaign](https://www.respectvictoria.vic.gov.au/campaigns/sexism-and-sport-call-it-out) and engages players, coaches, support staff, volunteers, the committee and members in the resources and content in a meaningful and sustained way. |
| **Men’s control of decision making and limits to women’s independence** | When women’s freedom or independence is constrained in public or private life. This can look like an undermining of women’s decision-making and leadership in public life, or relationships where men control a woman’s independence (including financially and socially). | **Empower women and girls** | The club has targets to increase women leaders and there is a plan to recruit, train and retain women for leadership roles at all levels and areas of the club such as president, board/committee member and coach.    Women are well supported to coach men/boys’ teams as well as women/girls’ teams, for example through mentoring relationships and professional development opportunities.    The club annually reviews how equal, safe, welcoming and inclusive it is for everyone at all levels via an anonymous member survey (including at player, staff, leadership, official, parent, volunteer and member/spectator level) and identifies areas for improvement.    The club is aware of small grants to showcase and celebrate the role of women and girls in the club including the [Change Our Game](https://changeourgame.vic.gov.au/) [Community Activation Grants](https://changeourgame.vic.gov.au/the-initiative/change-our-game-grants) and partners with local gender equality and/or primary prevention of family violence organisations to submit proposals for competitive, impactful and evidence-based initiatives. |
| **Rigid gender roles and stereotypes about what it means to be a man or a woman** | Simplistic generalisations about the roles of men and women and the roles they should play in our society (e.g. men are better leaders or women are more nurturing and caring than men). | **Challenge gender stereotypes and roles** | Volunteer and paid positions in the club do not reinforce gender stereotypes e.g. only women are in the canteen or men are coaches.    The club has a commitment to increase the gender diversity of coaches and all senior leadership roles and ensures that people underrepresented in coaching and leadership positions know about the support it provides for them to become accredited coaches (e.g. subsidising coaching courses for women) or committee role holders.    The club aims to increase engagement of different genders in all sports associated with their club, including those traditionally dominated by men and boys or traditionally dominated by women and girls. |
| **Male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women** | When men and boys form relationships and bond with each other by proving their masculinity through actions that are sexist or disrespectful towards women. An example of this driver is ‘locker room talk’. | **Strengthen positive, equal and respectful relationships** | The club holds gender equality training facilitated by a professional facilitator (ideally with strong connections to the club or local community at large) to all volunteers/players/umpires/coaches on a yearly basis irrespective of gender.  The club identifies and acts on opportunities to promote positive and respectful mixed gender participation on the field or in training where appropriate (e.g. doing mixed gendered warm-ups or drills together at training).    The club gives the same trophies to men/boys and women/girls, and there are equal displays of pictures, trophies and awards of both the men/boys and women/girls teams. |
|  |  | **Promote and normalise gender equality** | The club normalises gender diversity in leadership. For example, organising women role models (including women internal and external to the club) to speak to all teams/members including the men/boy’s teams.    The club integrates its actions and initiatives to prevent violence against women (such as those listed above) within its standard operations, rather than in a discrete, short or optional event. |

*Change the story*also outlines a series of *reinforcing factors*– a set of factors that **while not sufficient in and of themselves to predict violence against women**, *interact*with the gendered drivers of violence to **increase**the**probability, frequency**or**severity**of such violence. Being aware of these factors is important addressing them alongside the gendered drivers through positive actions towards gender equality is the best way to limit their impact. The reinforcing factors include:[[13]](#endnote-14)

* Condoning of violence in general
* Experience of, and exposure to, violence
* Weakening of pro-social behaviour, especially harmful use of alcohol
* Socio-economic inequality and discrimination
* Backlash factors (when male dominance, power or status is challenged)

**Quotes:**

* “On average, at least one woman is killed by a partner or former partner each week in Australia.”
* “Violence against women in Australia is a prevalent and serious issue.”
* “We all have an important role to play to support gender equality and prevent violence against women.”
* “Women belong in all places where decisions are being made. It shouldn't be that women are the exception.” - Ruth Bader Ginsburg

**Key Points:**

* Our Watch’s [Change the Story Framework](https://www.ourwatch.org.au/resource/change-the-story-a-shared-framework-for-the-primary-prevention-of-violence-against-women-and-their-children-in-australia/) and [short video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fLUVWZvVZXw) explain the link between gender equality and preventing violence against women.
* Women’s Health Victoria have developed a free, short i[ntroductory course on the prevention of violence against women](https://whv.org.au/training/introduction-prevention-violence-against-women#https://womenshealthvictoria.otrainu.com/) that further explains the gendered nature of violence against women, the evidence, gendered drivers and the primary prevention approach.
* Our Watch’s [Changing the Picture](https://d2bb010tdzqaq7.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/09/20231759/Changing-the-picture-Part-2-AA.pdf) contains a set of clear actions that are needed to address the many drivers of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.
* Rainbow Health’s [Pride in Prevention: A guide to primary prevention of family violence experienced by LGBTIQ communities](https://www.rainbowhealthvic.org.au/news/launch-pride-in-prevention-evidence-guide)  summarises the currently available evidence on the drivers of family violence experienced by LGBTIQ+ communities and provides essential actions to address these drivers.
* Our Watch’s [Equality and Respect in Sport](https://sport.ourwatch.org.au/) website helps sporting organisations embed gender equality and respectful relationships into their networks and communities, and build cultures that help prevent violence against women and their children. Their resources, including useful videos, illustrate the important role that sport can play in promoting gender equality and respect to help change the story about violence against women in Australia.
* Learn more about the gendered drivers of violence against women [here](https://www.partnersinprevention.org.au/pippublications/gendered-drivers-tip-sheets/). These tip sheets from Partners in Prevention provide a range of examples of what each gendered driver can look like within different settings where people live, learn, work, socialise and play.

**The Impacts of Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

The COVID-19 pandemic began in Australia in 2020 and has had a significant negative impact on community sports and life in general, contributing to a number of challenges for gender equality and family violence. The impacts of COVID-19 are highly gendered, with existing gender inequalities being further entrenched[[14]](#endnote-15) and violence against women increasing in frequency and severity.

The pilot projects (whose case studies feature throughout this document) continued to work throughout 2020 to advocate for gender equality in sport and calling for a ‘*New Start, Not Restart’* in the ‘COVID-normal’ period by advocating for gender equity measures to be embedded in the return to play.

During this period the nine projects:

* Supported their organisations and clubs to use the shutdown period as an opportunity to review their policies and practices and place a gender lens on all their work
* Upskilled staff who would otherwise be focused on the day-to-day running of sport on the topics of gender equity and preventing violence against women
* Advocated for women’s and girls’ sport to remain on the agenda and not to lose the gender equality progress that had been made pre-COVID-19.

Some of the project’s reflections during this period included:

* The importance of social sport for engaging with new or non-traditional participants. As some sports missed their seasons and others held shorter seasons, social sport was prioritised allowing for different participation experiences (e.g. social tennis).
* The COVID-19 lockdown restriction periods reiterated the importance of sport for belonging and a strong healthy community.
* Some projects/clubs found there was increased engagement by women as committee meetings and workshops became online meetings. Some of these groups have committed to maintaining online meetings in the future as it allowed more women and/or people with children to attend. This was especially true in rural and regional settings where people often travel long distances to participate.

Feedback from people working in the sport and gender equity sectors, who hosted and attended online events during the COVID-19 restriction periods, was that online networking sessions were more easily attended by people in rural and regional Victoria and meant more connections were created across Victoria, supporting this work.

**Quotes:**

* "Players may be back on the pitch, but we are not going back to an old normal. We need to continue to reimagine this world and make it better… I ask people to be energized by this moment and not let up. I believe it's everybody's responsibility to advocate for change." - Megan Rapinoe, American professional soccer player

# Section 1- Project Planning and Governance

This section relates to the project planning and governance that you should consider to ensure your organisation is in the best position to work directly with community sport clubs to support them to undertake cultural change and embed gender equity.

1. **Establish a case for change**

Provide the people you are working with and the sporting community a clear argument about why gender equity is important, why change is needed and a clearly articulated goal for any proposed changes.

Develop a ‘key messages’ document communicating your case for change and the benefits of gender equality to your community. The key messages document can be developed using the messages below but should be tailored to suit the club or clubs you intend to work with. You may develop one key messaging document for your paid staff and partner organisations, and another for the community or club. VicHealth’s [Framing gender equality: Message guide](https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/-/media/ResourceCentre/PublicationsandResources/Mental-health/Framing-gender-equality---Message-guide.pdf?la=en&hash=AF111835871BFA3092C1F9DD98B3C8AA0E493295) will support you to develop your case for change.

**Benefits of gender equality in community sports**

There are numerous benefits of gender equality in community sports:

* **Women’s, girl’s and gender diverse people’s lives will improve:** Action on gender equality will improve the lives of women, girls and gender diverse people and ensure they are supported, included and have a sense of belonging at the club. It also increases participation rates, both on and off the field, which in turn builds self-esteem and confidence of women, girls and gender diverse people.
* **Healthier clubs and organisations**: Enshrining gender equality within a sports club creates a stronger club that reflects the wider community and builds a sense of connectedness. As prominent settings of leadership and community activity, this should be highly valued. Clubs that have gender diversity in leadership normalise gender equality within the club, particularly among younger people and support healthy and respectful relationships between genders. This culture of equality and respect stops violence before it starts: healthy clubs prevent violence against women, men and gender diverse people.
* **Diverse skills and leadership**: Having gender diversity in leadership positions such as committee members, coaches, players, umpires and officials can bring different skills, expertise, approaches and views to a sports club, making the club more dynamic and attracting more women, girls and gender diverse people to the club. Diversity of voices makes decision making more robust, and ensures the club has access to the best ideas in challenging times. Evidence shows that having more women in decision making is good for financial management and governance.[[15]](#endnote-16)
* **Breaking free from masculine stereotypes will support men’s and boys’ wellbeing:** Gender inequality and rigid gender roles also result in poorer outcomes for men and boys. Men and boys will feel freer to express parts of their identity that may not align with traditional ideas of masculine stereotypes (for example, men/boys playing netball or other sports traditionally dominated by women/girls). Challenging strict male stereotypes is an important part of safeguarding men’s and boys’ health, including mental health, and ensuring men and boys are safe and respected in their chosen sport and club roles.
* **Sustainability of clubs:** Clubs can find it difficult to recruit coaches, committee members and volunteers. Investing in gender diverse leadership teams and membership can lead to more support and long-term club sustainability. Gender equality can help ensure community clubs’ success into the future by increasing membership and participation. It can lead to more spectators at games, a larger pool of volunteers, and create a positive social environment. This in turn can be good for the bottom line, bring in new players and contribute to developing new talent, as well as access to funding and increased revenue.
* **Keeping in line with community expectations:** Embedding gender equity in community sport keeps the sector in line with the rest of the community. Everywhere in Victoria is working to be more gender equal – schools, workplaces, the media. As leaders within their communities, it is important that sport clubs continue to adapt and innovate in this changing environment. This will in turn maintain and grow supporter bases, attract and retain key personnel and ultimately ensure they remain a key part of their communities.
* **Preventing Violence Against Women:** Research has shown there is a link between gender equality, building respectful relationships and preventing violence against women. Gender inequality is a key driver of violence against women.

**Key points:**

* Putting together a case for establishing an equal, safe, welcoming and inclusive environment in your sport will help you to articulate a clear argument about the benefits it will bring to the sport and club.
* Action on gender equality will improve the lives of women, girls and gender diverse people across Victoria.

**Want to learn more about the benefits of gender equality for all Victorian communities and other gender equality initiatives?**

[Safe and Strong, Victoria’s Gender Equality Strategy](https://www.vic.gov.au/safe-and-strong-victorian-gender-equality) is the Victorian State Government’s strategy for increasing gender equality. It talks about the need for change, outlines the benefits and provides an overview of gender equity initiatives occurring across Victoria.

## 

1. **Commit to adopting a whole-of-sport approach and secure support from leadership in your organisation**

In their work with national sporting organisations, Our Watch calls for a whole-of-sport approach, meaning that for cultural change to be successful, sporting organisations should adopt a comprehensive and holistic approach that extends from their executive through the levels of leadership to players, staff, fans and supporters, sponsors and volunteers.

Cultural change at a community sport level can be driven by organisations that have sport as their core business and, equally, it can be driven or supported by those who understand cultural change and have relationships with the local community.

This work can be led by a range of different organisations that have different roles to play in supporting community level sport – State Sporting Associations, Regional Sports Assemblies, local councils, women’s health organisations, and community health organisations. Partnership approaches are highly recommended when undertaking work to support gender equality outcomes (see Guideline 3).

It is important that the organisations that support the work at the community sport level first build their own capacity to promote and support gender equality.

Gender equity should become business as usual and not a standalone piece of work. Sport organisations need to do internal work to ensure they ‘walk the talk’, putting a gender lens on all their practices, policies and processes.

To achieve your goal of preventing violence against women through embedding gender equity in community sport, you will need to work to influence change at a number of different levels so that all areas of sport and their community partners are working towards the same goals. For whole-of-sport change, projects can work with a variety of partners and address gender equity at a range of different levels:

* National sports governing bodies
* National and State Governments
* State and regional sport governing bodies
* Local councils
* Local sports clubs
* Individuals and their relationships (including players, volunteers, parents, fans and spectators).

In committing to take a whole-of-sport approach, projects should focus on skill development and education for staff. Train staff to understand the link between gender inequality and violence against women, and train them to use and understand the Club Gender Audit Tool (Appendix 1).

To drive and sustain long-term cultural change in community sport, staff training is important. This will ensure that workplace gender equity is embedded, and that the workers understand primary prevention and their role in supporting community clubs. Committing to increasing workforce capacity to drive gender equity is critical for the sustainability of the work – it supports gender equality to become business as usual and not just a one-off project.

Training staff to understand and implement gender equity initiatives allows them to put a gender lens on all decisions, policies and programs, in all areas and at all levels. Competency in gender equity should be built into staff position descriptions – gender influences all areas of an organisation. Staff should also be trained in managing disclosures of violence (see Guideline 5) as the likelihood of disclosures increases when we begin to talk about gender equity and prevention of violence against women.

There are a number of organisations able to assist with staff training. Begin by exploring options through local women’s health services, community health organisations and the Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria (including courses about [recognising and responding appropriately to domestic and family violence](https://training.dvrcv.org.au/course-details/?course_id=32832&course_type=w)).

Some of the key actions that can be taken by governing bodies to demonstrate leadership on gender equity in community sport include:

* Taking a strong, public stand on the importance of your sport being for everyone, and supporting equal, safe, welcoming and inclusive environments at all levels (including the national, league, association and state sporting levels).
* Develop policies and codes of conduct at an organisational level and live by them and develop codes and policies for use in regional associations, leagues and member clubs.
* Taking a strong public stand to support gender equality by developing and communicating policies, codes of conduct and resources for use by clubs and at facilities
* Adopting a zero-tolerance approach to inappropriate, disrespectful or aggressive behaviours and supporting clubs to do the same. Having clear processes for dealing with breaches of the policies and codes of conduct, and not hesitating to use them
* Developing resources such as posters and other materials that help clubs and facilities communicate with members and spectators (but remember, keep it simple and build on other community resources that are already available). For useful social media materials and templates, see Maroondah City Council’s [Equality in Action in Our Club Toolkit](https://www.maroondah.vic.gov.au/Explore/Sports-clubs-and-recreation-facilities/Equality-in-action-in-our-club).
* Placing a gender lens over ground allocation for games and change rooms to ensure equitable distribution of use and allotment.
* Developing partnerships with local media to increase locally driven coverage of women’s sport (i.e. Local radio calling of women’s games or roundup segments as is happening for men’s games)
* Celebrating small and big steps towards gender equality.

**Want to learn more about taking a whole-of-sport approach to preventing violence against women?**

* Our Watch’s [Equality and Respect in Sport](https://sport.ourwatch.org.au/) is an initiative which aims to assist national sporting organisations build their capacity to promote and support gender equality.

* Our Watch’s [Workplace Equality and Respect program](https://workplace.ourwatch.org.au/) has a focus on workplace action and is suitable for use by all workplaces including community health organisations. The [Prevention Toolkit for Local Government](https://handbook.ourwatch.org.au/localgovtoolkit/) recognises the particular role of local councils.

* VicHealth's [Take action: Empowering bystanders to act on sexist and sexually harassing behaviours](https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/-/media/ResourceCentre/PublicationsandResources/PVAW/Take-Action-Bystander_Oct2019.pdf?la=en&hash=D3150832DDE6E645A0B854AC2CD57B119E03BD22) is designed to help organisations introduce bystander initiatives as part of their work to reduce sexist and sexually harassing behaviours.

**Case study: Walking the Talk**

Regional Sport Assembly Valley Sport’s project,A Level Playing Field For All, focused on their own governance by examining internal practices, and ensuring that women and men were equally represented on the board. The organisation’s constitution was amended to provide greater governance commitment to diversity of the board. Valley Sport ensured that all of their policies and procedures were reviewed to be gender equitable and inclusive to all. These policies and procedures are now embedded within the organisation to ensure the sustainability of equity and inclusion within the organisation and its practices. Valley Sport now supports community clubs to undertake the organisational change processes it has done itself.

**Case study: Leading the way**

Golf Australia’s project, Even Par, recognised the need to create change within their organisation before promoting and supporting change at golf clubs. They started their cultural change in multiple ways. There was legal education to understand the federal Sex Discrimination Act 1984, as well as leadership training and gender equity and preventing violence against women training for staff.

The Even Par project was embedded into Golf Australia’s Vision 2025 Strategy and the CEO of Golf Australia became a Male Champion of Change (a program dedicated to supporting more women into leadership positions). Golf Australia recognised that if the leadership were not on board as active advocates and staff didn’t understand the need for gender equity, then nothing would change at a club level.

**Case study: Bringing staff along on the journey**

In the nine pilot projects, successful projects had project staff who were knowledgeable about the community sport sector as well as gender equality and gender-based violence prevention and staff who were well networked and informed. Such individuals could readily engage partners and draw on additional resources and had an overall willingness to be flexible and tailor projects to suit the clubs and sports associations they were working with.

Tennis Victoria developed the capacity of their staff by making sure they were part of the project design right from the start and played an active role in the creation of not only the process Tennis Victoria would take clubs through, but with the creation of resources and the development of potential partnerships to support that process. Tennis Victoria staff were trained to understand the link between gender inequality and violence against women.

This was extremely important and valuable as once staff understood the “why”, so they were in the best position to consider the “how”, including how to tailor resources to their sport.

Throughout the project Tennis Victoria regularly checked in with staff on the ground, gathered feedback on what was and wasn’t working and provided staff with access to ongoing training opportunities to support them in their journey.

This approach meant their gender equality work was not only embedded into individual staff work plans but into the hearts and minds of those that were delivering the program on the ground.

1. **Planning, governance and partnerships**

Strong planning and governance are crucial for gender equity initiatives. Partnering with local services or groups shares the workload, expands the reach of projects and provides a range of different expertise. Allow enough time in the planning process to make sure as many people as possible have a chance to contribute. Many local government, health and education services are already working to promote gender equality. Partnerships not only provide you with access to expertise, they can give you access to a wider community working towards preventing violence against women.

A planning process that works well is a ‘logic model’. This provides a framework for action that outlines what you want to achieve and the steps and resources you will need to get there. It also establishes measures of success and outcomes you are seeking to achieve. An excellent guide for developing logic models to address the drivers of violence against women is available [here](https://www.genvic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/GENVIC_Evaluation_Fact_Sheet_A4_FINAL_WEB.pdf). You might want to have a facilitator help you work through the process or access support through your local council or community health service.

Gender equity projects must include meaningful engagement and input from women, girls and gender diverse people at every stage. This may include building in processes to the plan such as:

* Prioritising women, girls and gender diverse people’s leadership in both the governance of the initiative and in the initiative itself.
* Putting together a gender equity advisory panel to provide advice on the project (the make-up of this panel should be women, gender diverse people or people who identify as LGBTIQ+).
* Consultation with women, girls and gender diverse people through informal conversations, member surveys, gender audits and focus groups to learn about their experiences. When consulting with women, girls and gender diverse people create a safe environment for them to share their insights.

Work to create a shared vision with your project partners (such as local councils or community health organisations) and work to align with stakeholder aims, goals, focus, objectives and individuals. For example, all local councils in Victoria are required to develop Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans which are required to outline measures that will be undertaken to reduce family violence and respond to the needs of victim survivors. A partnership to use sport as a setting to prevent violence against women would support them in their strategic goals.

Partner organisations can also support the project to identify clubs that are in a good position to make change (for example, have good governance processes in place already), and help you to establish support for the program by:

* Sending letters to clubs to express the need for change and support for the club’s participation in the project (e.g. from the local Mayor or AFL Commission)
* Using funding/leasing agreements to leverage or drive gender equity.

There is no one way to use sport to engage in the prevention of violence against women. Whatever you do, it must be practical and relevant for your sport and its members and be flexible enough to respond to the needs of the club you’re working with. Projects should have a long-term focus with short- and medium-term measured goals as cultural change takes time.

The evidence for effective change in sport suggests that:

* projects must focus on gender inequality at all levels of the community club including individual relationships, leadership, policies, use of facilities, codes of conduct and club communications
* projects must be based on an understanding about the gendered drivers of violence against women (rigid gender stereotypes, sexist cultures, gender inequality, male-dominated control of decision making) and how they intersect with other forms of discrimination
* projects should consider the diverse experiences of women in the club and consider barriers that interact with gender inequality (e.g. some women will experience sexism as well as homophobia or racism). Project partners can support an intersectional approach and ensure other forms of social inequality and disadvantage are also discussed and being addressed (for example, working in partnership with advocates and content experts such as the Centre for Multicultural Youth)
* projects should provide a learning environment where community members can learn about gender norms and unconscious bias and the effects they have on our communities and clubs
* projects should involve men and boys as allies and advocates for gender equality but not in positions of speaking for, or instead of, women or gender diverse people (see Guideline 6)
* projects should partner with other sports or associations, especially if they are using the same local facilities. It is also useful for sports to understand that they are not the only ones making changes to become more gender equal – other sports, community groups, workplaces and schools are also working towards the same goal.

**Case study**: **Combining Expertise**

Sports Central partnered with Women’s Health Grampians (WHG) to implement *Act@Play*. Both organisations had significant knowledge in different areas. Sports Central had the sport-specific knowledge and background, whereas WHG were bringing their gender equality and prevention of violence against women expertise to the table. In addition to these two major partners, the two major sporting associations involved in the program, AFL Goldfields and Basketball Ballarat, were also viewed as vital partners in the program. The program was seen as a collaborative process between the four partners, where working together was essential to ensure the program was suitable for the target-audience and addressed the drivers of violence against women.

**Case study:** **Driving change at a local council level**

In 2018, Maroondah City Council received funding from the Victorian Government to redevelop the pavilion facilities at Jubilee Park to be more inclusive for women and girls. This funding announcement prompted Council to develop a project, *Working Together to Create Inclusive and Equitable Sporting Environments,* to work with the three tenant clubs and Council‘s Assets Team to pilot a process to increase the engagement of women and girls in the design of inclusive sporting pavilions. This process ran concurrently with further work to support the tenant clubs to undertake a critical assessment of club culture, governance and opportunities. This was to ensure that the work not only addressed the physical environment but also the inclusivity of the club as a whole.

The project involved working with Council’s Assets Team to understand the importance of a gender lens, extend design timeframes to ensure a deeper level of club engagement and to consider gender when developing consultant design briefs. Council supported clubs to recruit reference groups which were representative of their club membership and the needs of women and girls.  The reference groups were utilised for facility design planning and feedback processes, undertaking club gender equity audits, and developing club gender equity action plans and gender equity policies.

**Want to learn more about practical steps towards gender equity and cultural change?**

Our Watch’s [Putting the prevention of violence against women into practice: How to change the story](https://www.ourwatch.org.au/resource/putting-the-prevention-of-violence-against-women-into-practice-how-to-change-the-story/)resource has been developed for a range of individuals who are engaged in activities that aim to prevent violence against women. It provides tips and tools for anyone working to promote safe, equal, welcoming and inclusive cultures.

**Want to learn more about building and maintaining strong partnerships?**

VicHealth’s [Partnership Analysis Tool](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/the-partnerships-analysis-tool) resource is for organisations entering into or working in a partnership whose goal is positive health outcomes. The tool can be used to assess, monitor and maximise the partnership’s ongoing effectiveness.

**Want to learn more about other resources to support equity and inclusion in sports club?**

There are a number of websites, resources and toolkits to support cultural change, equity and inclusion in sports clubs.

* There are a number of websites, resources and toolkits to support cultural change, equity and inclusion in sports clubs.
* [Everyone wins](https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/everyone-wins_clubs) is a VicHealth toolkit that specifically aims to help clubs increase the involvement of women and girls, Aboriginal people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. These are available free to everyone online.
* [Play by the Rules](https://www.playbytherules.net.au/) is a free online site that provides resources to help clubs become safe, fair and inclusive.
* The [Proud 2 Play Resources Hub](https://www.proud2play.org.au/resources)has a number of resources for the sports community to better support LGBTIQ+ inclusion.
* The Centre for Multicultural Youth’s [Game Plan Resource Kit: Supporting cultural diversity in sports clubs](http://www.cmy.net.au/resource/game-plan-resource-kit/) provides a number of helpful resources including an action plan check list that includes a section on including young women.

1. **Evaluation**

Evaluation is the process by which we judge the worth or value of something. It is more than measuring success or failure. It should involve asking questions and reflecting on the answers. It should not be an afterthought – instead, evaluation plans should start at the beginning of a program and involve an ongoing process of planning, implementation and review against the program’s goals and objectives. Understanding your aims and objectives will help in understanding what you are trying to find out in your evaluation.

There are reasons why it is important to evaluate; for example, if you receive funding you will be accountable, not only for the way you use the funds, but also the outcome or impact of the project you undertook. If you hope to receive funding again, it is important to be able to measure and understand what worked and what did not work and why, so you can learn from mistakes and build on strengths in the future.

**Who should evaluate your program?**

Whether to self-evaluate or bring in an external evaluator is the first decision. Self-evaluation can be seen as lacking integrity and external evaluation can be expensive. Some evaluators will use a modified approach called collaborative evaluation, where responsibilities are shared under the guidance of an expert. This approach can be less expensive. Regardless of the approach you use, if you are applying for funding, be sure to allocate budget for evaluation.

There is a range of evaluation tools that can be used:

* pre and post project surveys with staff and clubs
* pre and post workshop surveys
* project officer reflections
* focus groups to learn about the changes experienced and observed by the project participants
* the Club Gender Audit Tool attached to the Guidelines can be used to evaluate change at a club level if done annually. Keep records of each audit undertaken and use them to measure how actions have progressed.

It is important to collect data both before and after you start taking action in your sport or organisation to help you measure your change and impact.

Data can be collected, analysed and presented by gender at a minimum but it will also be important to analyse gender as it intersects with other demographic information. For example, your organisation might find that, while there are many women from multicultural backgrounds in your local community, there are not many playing your sport.

Evaluate your activities and share where relevant with the participants. It is also important that you document and share what works and does not work when undertaking gender equity in sport initiatives.

**Key points:**

* One of the strengths of sport is that continuous improvement in the game is a goal. This is the same goal of evaluation.
* Evaluation is essential and part of the planning process from the beginning.

**Case study: Evaluating from the start**

Monash Council thought about evaluation from the start in their project *Community Leaders United By Sport*. Focus groups with club members were an integral component of obtaining information from the club leadership regarding their experiences and challenges, and in the development of topics that required addressing in the project. The focus groups also led to information that could be directly addressed, of which the Council may not have otherwise become aware (such as the need for sanitary bins in local club toilets).

Not only did it provide data for the project officer, it also provided the opportunity for club leaders to build rapport with Monash City Council, and with other local clubs. The project officer stated “*Focus groups are obviously a part of a way to evaluate, and we found that the focus groups not only provided us with a lot of data but actually really built rapport between the champions, especially with the female players. Once they got in the room talking about this stuff it was amazing conversations and they were backing each other up and saying, ‘I’m going to have to come down to your club to see what you’re doing*.’”.

**Want to learn more about evaluating projects working to prevent violence against women?**

Gender Equity Victoria’s [Practitioner’s fact sheet for evaluating projects working to prevent violence against women](https://www.genvic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/GENVIC_Evaluation_Fact_Sheet_A4_FINAL_WEB.pdf) is a practical guide to evaluating prevention projects. It contains a sample planning template as well as information on evaluation design, collecting and interpreting data and measuring impact.

VicHealth’s [A Concise Guide to Evaluating Primary Prevention Projects](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/a-concise-guide-to-evaluating-primary-prevention-projects) has been designed to support workers in the growing field of preventing violence against women. Its nine steps cover the fundamentals of evaluation with associated tools to support the work of planning and undertaking evaluation.

1. **Develop and implement appropriate responses to instances of disrespect and violence towards women and gender diverse people**

Adopt a zero-tolerance approach to inappropriate, disrespectful or aggressive behaviours at all levels of sport, and support community clubs to also understand and implement this zero-tolerance approach. Have clear processes for dealing with breaches of the policies and codes of conduct, and do not hesitate to use them.

**Responding to disclosures**

It is important that organisational staff and club leaders feel confident to respond respectfully and safely to disclosures of violence as these can arise when undertaking prevention work. A disclosure is when someone reveals they have directly experienced or perpetrated violence. The Our Watch [Responding to Disclosures](https://d2bb010tdzqaq7.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/02/15002441/PG_Responding-to-disclosures_UpdatedFeb2019.pdf) document has a number of useful tips and directions for how to respond. There are also specific training packages to upskill staff in recognising and responding to disclosures (see Domestic Violence Resource Centre’s [recognising and responding appropriately to domestic and family violence](https://training.dvrcv.org.au/course-details/?course_id=32832&course_type=w) training).

**Case study: Taking action to address violence against women**

Women Health Grampians’ regional partnership Communities of Respect and Equality supports partners to take action in their workplaces (Act@Work) or in community sport (Act@Play) to address the drivers of violence against women. WHG are piloting tools for community clubs to use to address allegations of violence against women, and advocate for the community sport sector to develop and implement consistent, zero-tolerance responses to instances of disrespect and violence against women.

1. **Expect and prepare for resistance**

There will be many people who support efforts to promote and normalise gender equity and tackle inequality, however, some people will be resistant to change. Resistance here is defined as an active pushing back against progressive programs, policies and perspectives. It may come from individuals or collectively, and from both men and women. Keep in mind that values and attitudes about gender roles do not split neatly down gender lines.

It is likely that people who are resistant to change will be present in the sport or club you’re working with or in your workplace and, rather than backing down, experts suggest the following ways of addressing resistance:

* Prepare for resistance early and practice how to respond with your colleagues.
* Use positive language when talking about change – focus on potential gains rather than possible losses.
* Share stories about examples of change programs in sport that are already working well and highlight role models, for example, elite sports people who stand up for gender equity, inclusion and preventing violence against women.
* Understand that cultural change is a long-term project. You don’t need to convince everyone at once – some people will take longer to understand the need and benefits of gender equity. Create spaces where these discussions can occur and people can share their reservations (for example there’s not enough time to implement change or actions are not seen as a priority). Once you understand people’s motivations it’ll will be easier to address them.
* Don’t focus on those whose opposition to gender equality is entrenched, at the expense of the broader club community. Instead, work with people already committed to the cause to support those in the ‘moveable middle’. The ‘moveable middle’ are those people who are unconvinced or curious but open to learning about the benefits of gender equality. This principle is relevant for individuals, but also works for community clubs when deciding which clubs to work with. Work with the strongest clubs first and use them as examples to support and influence the ‘moveable middle’.
* Understand who the blockers or resisters are and why they might be resistant. If it is important that this person be an ally to the project, look to tailor your messaging to them. They might be more swayed by arguments about preventing violence against women, or the health benefits gender equality brings for everyone, including men and boys. Once they are onboard you can begin to expand your messaging.

Not everyone in your sport may be ready for change but it is possible to bring people along with you by creating an environment where ideas can be discussed, and knowledge and information shared respectfully. Having a strong case for change, a ‘key messages’ document and whole-of-staff training will assist with resistance. While resistance is challenging – don’t give up! The hard conversations can be a space for change.

If you encounter resistance and are unsure how to cope or deal with it you can contact your local [women’s health service](https://whv.org.au/about/our-sector). Experts in these organisations can assist you to develop possible ways to tackle resistance.

**Case study: supporting community members to manage resistance**

At the request of the participants in the Rural Challenge Gender Equality Leadership Program the project officer ran a workshop entitled: *Talking about gender equality with other people and dealing with resistance – a learning and sharing workshop.* The Rural Challenge Program consisted of gender equality workshops, gender audits, member surveys and developing Gender Equity Action Plans. When presenting their Gender Equity Action Plans to their broader club membership, participants found that they first needed a space to practise talking about the benefits of gender equality and develop skills for managing resistance and backlash.

Staff from the Rural Challenge Gender Equality Leadership Partnership also attended and participated in the workshop.

The workshop included comments from case studies such as ‘the club committee has decided to make a roster to make sure men are equally participating in canteen duties’ or ‘the local football-netball club is undertaking member consultations around gender equality, but the netball side of the club is not interested in participating in the consultation’. Participants worked together to brainstorm how they would explain the need for change, what resistance might look like, who might be resistant, and how they might handle it.

One of the main benefits of the workshop for participants was the acknowledgement that they will face resistance and have many difficult conversations, and that they are not alone in experiencing these challenges. As expressed by the participants: “I learnt that there is a lot of like-minded people out there and we can support each other” and “Everyone faces the same challenges and has to overcome the same hurdles when starting to deal with gender inequality.”

**Want to learn more about managing backlash and resistance when working on gender equality initiatives?**

VicHealth’s [(En)countering resistance Strategies to respond to resistance to gender equality initiatives](https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/-/media/ResourceCentre/PublicationsandResources/PVAW/Encountering-Resistance-Gender-Equality.pdf?la=en&hash=54D49CAE94D6B162A42C3FE6FC8C79600A194AE4) resource draws together some effective tools and strategies to prepare for and respond to backlash and resistance to gender equity initiatives. It’s intended to support the people working for gender equality in a range of sectors – education, sport, workplace, local government, health and media.

Women’s Health West’s [Speaking publicly about preventing men’s violence against women Curly questions and language considerations](https://whwest.org.au/resource/speaking-publicly-about-preventing-mens-violence-against-women/)resource is designed to build the capacity of people to speak publicly about preventing men’s violence against women and respond to curly questions about preventing men’s violence against women.

VicHealth’s [Framing gender equality: Message guide](https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/-/media/ResourceCentre/PublicationsandResources/Mental-health/Framing-gender-equality---Message-guide.pdf?la=en&hash=AF111835871BFA3092C1F9DD98B3C8AA0E493295) and [Framing masculinity: Message Guide](https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/-/media/ProgramsandProjects/HealthInequalities/VicHealth-Framing-masculinity-message-guide-2020.pdf?la=en&hash=5C7A0577057997705D93D71052E66DCB5F1BC685) are useful guides for understanding how to talk about gender equality and building a case for change.

1. **Engage men but ensure women and gender diverse people are central to the work**

Achieving gender equality and preventing violence against women is a whole-of-community effort. Men play a critical role in calling out sexism and disrespect and building gender equality in their everyday lives – with family, friends, teammates and in sporting clubs. Projects seeking to prevent violence against women should engage men as positive role models and advocates for gender equality from the beginning. However, it is vital that women are equally consulted, empowered and engaged to challenge gender inequalities.

Men and boys will also benefit individually and relationally from gender equality. Evidence demonstrates that projects engaging men are more likely to be effective if they explicitly address masculine stereotypes (the practices, norms and relations associated with ‘manhood’ or ideas about ‘real men’).[[16]](#endnote-17) It is important that men have the opportunity to explore outdated ideas of masculine stereotypes that constrain them and limit their choices, and a space within the project is created to discuss these issues. [The Man Box: A study on being a young man in Australia](https://jss.org.au/what-we-do/the-mens-project/the-man-box/) and corresponding video provide a good starting point for these conversations.

VicHealth’s [Framing masculinity: Message Guide](https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/-/media/ProgramsandProjects/HealthInequalities/VicHealth-Framing-masculinity-message-guide-2020.pdf?la=en&hash=5C7A0577057997705D93D71052E66DCB5F1BC685) also provides a useful tool to use when engaging men in gender equality and supporting men to consider how outdated masculine stereotypes can negatively affect their lives.

One of VicHealth’s expert tips is to spend more time talking about men’s role in the solution and less time talking about their role in the problem, in order to avoid activating shame and defensiveness.

Focusing on the benefits of gender equality for men (including the health benefits) can be a good place to start, however, these conversations need to occur alongside conversations of gender inequality and the ways women and gender diverse people are disadvantaged in sport and the community more broadly.

A key reflection from the nine projects piloting these Guidelines included the need to reframe the language from male champions to male allies, allowing for greater acknowledgment of the need to create a space where men can continuously learn about gender equality. For more information see [Working Together with Men: How to create male allies for gender equity in your community.](http://healthwest.org.au/projects/working-together-with-men/projectmomentum/)

**Case study: Remain accountable to women**

Moonee Valley Council hired a project officer with personal experience playing in male dominated sports for their *Ready, Set, Equity!* project. The project worker was able to draw on his professional work and personal experiences of being a man driving cultural change at a local football club to present eight principles for starting the conversation and changing the culture of male dominated clubs.

The eight principles for starting the conversation and changing the culture of male dominated clubs are:

1. Affirm commitment to gender equality and respectful relationships.
2. Discuss what this commitment means with the club members – highlight examples of disrespect such as derogatory language.
3. Identify male allies to help marginalise sexist attitudes and behaviour.
4. Educate and assist male allies. Include women in the conversations with male allies and legitimate their authority.
5. Normalise women having authority and positions of power. Employ a gendered co-facilitation approach to deliver messaging.
6. Highlight the benefits (including financial and mental wellbeing) of gender equity and respectful relations policies.
7. Discuss the links between gender inequality and violence against women to foster a commitment to cultural change.
8. Whilst this is an educational process, men can no longer set the cultural parameters.

**Case study: Gender equality benefits men**

Wyndham City Council’s project Gender Equality in Wyndham Sport worked to create clubs as a place of learning and a safe space to discuss issues such as mental health. Through normalising help-seeking behaviour for men and boys and emphasising an environment that was welcoming and inclusive of everyone, the project contributed to positive cultural change. The club coach, a leader in a privileged position, was considered central in the provision of support on issues around mental health and gender imbalances. The coach was supported by the project officer to play this role. Utilising sports clubs as an environment for learning and helping community members is important as sports clubs are more than just ‘a place to play sport’.

**Want to learn more about engaging men in gender equality and preventing violence against women?**

VicHealth’s [Masculinities and Health Framework](https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/-/media/ResourceCentre/PublicationsandResources/Health-Inequalities/VicHealth-Masculinities-and-health-framework-JUNE-2020.pdf?la=en&hash=3159E5BCCB29C72398B0EF6E592AD94881BE2277) is a planning tool to support people and organisations promoting health and wellbeing, particularly when working with men and boys. There is growing recognition that challenging masculine stereotypes is key to advancing gender equality and improving health and wellbeing for all Victorians.

Our Watch’s [Men in Focus: unpacking masculinities and engaging men in the prevention of violence against women](https://www.ourwatch.org.au/resource/men-in-focus-unpacking-masculinities-and-engaging-men-in-the-prevention-of-violence-against-women/) resource explores how primary prevention efforts can effectively engage men in the prevention of violence against women.

1. **Share knowledge and learn from experts and each other**

There are a number of people working in Victoria with expertise in gender equality and sport. Seek support and advice from experts and listen and learn from your peers. Remember that in this work you are not alone. Everyone is learning as they go and people working in the area will be willing to support each other.

Communities of practice can be an excellent way of sharing knowledge and learning from each other. A community of practice is a group of people with a common interest coming together to share ideas and strategies, emphasising that they are all learning together. These groups can be formal or informal. It might be a formal group of people working on similar projects who meet monthly with a facilitator, or an informal group of project workers who meet when needed to workshop challenges or ideas. Communities of practice can work well for people involved at all levels of the project.

**Case study:** **Sharing and learning from each other**

The nine projects funded by Sport and Recreation Victoria to use sport as a setting to prevent violence against women met once a month in 2020 to discuss project updates, challenges and ideas. While the projects found the community of practice extremely useful pre-COVID-19, the pandemic brought a new level of importance to joining together - "It is a great time for reflection during a very uncertain time. Hearing from the other projects just comforts us knowing the work we are doing is having an impact, and we are all facing similar challenges."

An online Gender Equality and Sport Speed Networking session was also held during the COVID-19 pandemic. Over 100 people attended from various organisations including State Sporting Associations, Regional Sports Assemblies and local councils. Small Zoom breakout rooms were used to allow participants to move continuously around the group meeting new people. Participants shared their work with new people and heard about new ideas. They were encouraged to talk about challenges they found with their work, including challenges arising from the global pandemic.

# Section 2 – Taking Action Through Community Sport to Prevent Violence Against Women – Implementation

**This section is a set of guidelines for project workers/organisations working directly with community sport clubs. It provides practical examples and advice for working with clubs**.

1. **Work with club leadership first and secure their support**

Ensure that people with authority and influence at the club are supportive and advocate for the program. If there is no buy-in from leadership, it is extremely difficult to get the rest of the club or organisation to want to make change. While having leadership on board is important, remember that there will be other key club influencers who are not necessarily those in formal leadership roles (e.g. a player’s parents may be well known and respected by many people in the club, but not sit on the committee).

Encourage the leadership group in the club to act as role models for equal and inclusive behaviours (as is done in many elite sports). The Victorian Government’s [Fair Play Code](https://sport.vic.gov.au/publications-and-resources/community-sport-resources/fair-play-code) (a code of conduct for sport and recreation in Victoria), outlines the standards of behaviour expected for everyone involved in sport and recreation and should be referred to when working with clubs.

Tips for introducing gender equity to the club leadership:

* Present clear and simple messaging to the leaders – provide a positive vision for their club, identify barriers to achieving this vision and provide them options for action. Communicate and demonstrate the support from external leadership (e.g. local council or the sport’s governing body) in which the changes and actions will be implemented.
* Support the club leaders to communicate widely about the project. Provide them with key messages and a frequently asked questions (FAQ) document that is clear and simple and that they can use in their communications. The key messages and FAQ documents should contain information that will help the club leaders answer any members questions or concerns and explain the program and the club’s commitment.
* While individuals and clubs may understand that gender equity is a positive goal for their club, many people won’t understand what it might mean in practice. When approaching clubs give a few clear examples of what gender inequality looks like at a club level and provide some simple actions to address it.
* Understand the history and values of the clubs and reflect on how projects will strengthen and build on their existing values and accomplishments. For example, a club might have participated in a preventing violence against women one-off event in the past or fielded the first ever women’s team in the league.
* As your project progresses and new clubs are recruited, use past participants to testify about the project and the positive changes it has brought about in their club. You can also use professional role models (such as [Change Our Game ambassadors](https://changeourgame.vic.gov.au/the-initiative/change-our-game-ambassadors) and [champions](https://changeourgame.vic.gov.au/the-initiative/change-our-game-champions)) to share their experiences of gender equity.
* Discuss resistance and backlash with the leaders as something they might expect and prepare for. Running a backlash and resistance workshop will support them (see Guideline 5) and give them a space to practice talking about the benefits of gender equality and the need for change.

**Case study: Using project partnerships and community figures to secure buy in from club leaders**

Monash City Council used their Mayor to advocate and promote the gender equality project Community Leaders United by Sports. After an initial Expression of Interest sent to sports clubs was unsuccessful in gaining traction, the Mayor distributed a personalised letter to local clubs, showcasing the importance of the program as a serious initiative being undertaken by the Council. A letter from the Mayor to the President of the sporting clubs resulted in a higher level of applications from sports clubs and greater support from the club leaders. The project officer for the program stated that this was because it showcased that gender equality and preventing violence against women are important agenda items for the Council, as it was coming from the top level.

**Case study: Supporting both recruitment and retention**

Wyndham City Council support their clubs to consider both recruitment and retention of women at their clubs, and it is paramount that sporting clubs first addressed cultural and environmental changes to help create safe, welcoming and inclusive environments for girls and women. The economic business case is one that clubs can relate to, however the inclusivity and how to create welcoming, positive club environments is paramount to attracting and retaining girls and women in the club. It must be made aware that clubs are required to do more than open their doors to women, cultural change is essential to encourage their involvement. To gain leadership support and buy-in, statistics around more women resulting in more people involved in the club resulting in a more successful club, with the potential for higher revenue, were presented by Wyndham City Council to local clubs in a leadership briefing. Getting more women on board would result in being a more viable club and less vulnerable to economic insecurity. However, a pivotal component of attracting more girls and women to clubs is creating safe and welcoming environments for girls and women that is representative of the community they serve.

1. **Build on strengths and identify gaps – ideas for implementation**

Positive and strengths-based language about equal and respectful relationships is more engaging than negative messaging. Communities and individuals in communities have many strengths, and it is important to recognise these and build on them in gender equity work. This means, rather than only focusing on what is wrong, the focus should be on expanding on the club’s strengths. Make these visible and value the skills, knowledge, connections and potential in the club.

Tailor a plan of action for the club, making it relevant to the club’s culture and community by taking into account the following tips:

* Form a working group to help drive the work at the club. It is best to diversify the working party as much as possible. Having a working group of people who are varied in age, experiences, background, membership level, skill and gender will provide comprehensive insight into the club and community needs. It will also provide different opinions and knowledge on how to communicate to the diversity of people within the community.
* Start with small actions and work up to bigger wins. Build a case for change and create messaging that talks about the vision or goal for the club, the barriers to achieving the goal and actions to take. Understand the club’s history, values, aims for doing the work, and develop a plan that works for them. Identify the ‘why’ in club culture and community.
* Ask the girls, women and gender diverse people in the club what needs to be done to make the club more gender equal. Expose what it’s like for women and girls – use audits, anonymous member surveys, informal conversations and focus groups to identity what gender inequality looks like at the club, including different groups of women at the club (for example, LGBTIQ+ women).
* Make it relevant to the women, girls and gender diverse people who exist in the club and community. Girls, women and gender diverse people are not all the same. Don’t just collect data about men and women – think about the wide range of people who live in the community, and ask ‘does the sport club represent the people who live in our community?’
* Discuss the club’s and sport’s values and use these values to drive the work. The value of equality needs to be embedded within all they do and needs to be a statement or goal club members can easily identify.
* Adopt a whole-of-community focus. Draw on other examples of gender equity work occurring in the community including other sports and sports clubs, and [Respectful Relationships](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/respectfulrelationships.aspx) education in local schools. Discuss how embedding gender equity in community sports complements a wide range of work occurring in our communities. Show that clubs are not alone in driving change.
* Remember that you’re working with volunteers who are most likely time poor. Keep things simple. Provide links where people can learn more, rather than giving them a lot of documents and things to read. Short videos work well here and can be shared via social media. Build in extra time for your initiative (and make the actions achievable and realistic) as working with volunteers can take time.
* Ensure the plan focuses on short-term and long-term changes and provides ongoing resources to support clubs as they introduce changes.
* Focus on both recruitment and retention of women and girls. Create an environment that supports women and girls to keep returning to the club. Have a look at the  [Change Our Game Recruitment and Retention Guidelines for Women in Sport and Recreation](https://changeourgame.vic.gov.au/leadership-centre/women-in-sport-recruitment-and-retention-guidelines) for ideas.
* Use social media, the club’s website and local news outlets to build awareness of the program and its successes. Adapt communications to represent and speak to women, girls and gender diverse people in LGBTIQ+, First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
* To support leaders to introduce change at a club level, you could make use of elite sportspeople who are championing gender equity and speaking out against violence against women. In some sports, elite athletes have been trained to deliver training or speak to groups about the importance of equality and inclusion in sport. These people can be assets upon which to draw when introducing gender equity and the prevention of violence against women at the local or regional level.

There are a wide range of methodologies you can use to support gender equity in local sport. These included:

* Gender equity workshops
* Workshops on managing resistance and backlash
* Gender audits including facility audits
* Focus groups bringing together women and gender diverse people from clubs across the region
* Member surveys
* Gender equity communities of practice or networking events
* Developing gender equity action plans
* Bystander Action Training to support whole-of-organisational change
* Advocating to local media to increase the coverage of women and girls’ sports
* Supporting decision makers to put a gender lens over game times and ground allocation
* Guest speakers and events

**Case study: Developing gender equity action plans**

When clubs join Golf Australia’s Even Par program, they begin by creating a working party. There are four main steps for this working party. Firstly, commitment - creating a leadership statement stating that the club will be involved and committed to the program. Secondly, the planning and organisation component - discussing who the club are, what the club’s strengths and weaknesses are, what does the working group want to do and finally, who will do it. Thirdly, an action plan is created to ensure the actions are developed and held to account. Lastly, it is to communicate widely to the club and community and monitor the progress. Golf Australia supports the clubs at every step including providing one-on-one advice and support.

**Case study: Consulting with women about what they need to participate in sport clubs**

Monash City Council found that building good relationships with leaders in the wider community as well as leaders in sports clubs was critical to getting more people involved and on board to combat gender inequality and violence against women. In their project Community Leaders United By Sport, the project officer engaged the Mayor early on in the project allowing the Mayor to become involved in issues that needed change. For example, through focus groups with a number of women from different clubs, the Council learnt that a girl’s rugby team had no access to sanitary bins, so the girls simply did not play when they had their period. This led to the Mayor and Council undertaking facility audits and installation of sanitary bins in all clubs.

**Case study: Start with small actions and work up to bigger wins**

In the project, A Sport for All in Every Way, Tennis Victoria worked with clubs to address some ‘quick wins’, such as posters to display a welcoming environment, with simple language and imagery. This was further implemented on websites, where the language and images were amended. To support the clubs in taking action, Tennis Victoria provided grants to the clubs involved, and after a gender audit, focussed on making some changes, instead of changing everything at once. The purpose of keeping it simple is to consistently reinforce that the club is a welcoming, inclusive space, supporting gender equality and working towards the elimination of gendered violence.

**Case study: Understand the club’s values and build on them**

In the project Shining Stars – Strengthening Indigenous Women Through Sport, Culture and Community, the Aborigines Advancement League created a simple slogan for the Fitzroy Stars Football Netball Club, ‘What’s deadly for the boys, is deadly for the girls, is deadly for the club!’ This slogan was created to communicate values widely with the club and community, and as a reminder that practices within the club need to be gender equitable. The slogan reinforces the message that there needs to be the same opportunities for men and women in the club. This slogan was placed on a large poster when entering the club so that both club members and visitors to the club could be reminded of the message and values of the club. The Shining Stars project officer stated that the slogan is a great ‘call to action’ for the club to be consistently reminded of what they are trying to achieve and a ‘call to action’ for the club to question practices. For example, the project officer stated that the slogan, “really got people to question, ‘Oh the boys have got a sponsorship package, the girls don’t. The boys are paid, the girls aren’t. The boys get to go on camp, the girls don’t’. So that was really important that that call to action existed in a slogan.”

**Case study: Using club successes to encourage new clubs to join**

Tennis Victoria created a [video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6vfFs5WgSg8) showcasing Cranross Tennis Club, one of the clubs involved in the gender equality program A Sport for All in Every Way. Presented by leaders in the club, the video displayed some of the small changes that were being made across the club, to help with creating an inclusive and welcoming environment and provide opportunities for women to become coaches. The video also uses a well-known tennis athlete, Jelena Dokic, to state the importance of such a program. The video used to promote the gender equality program to other clubs and was promoted on the [Clubhouse](https://www.tennis.com.au/vic/clubs/the-clubhouse) website, a website dedicated to the requirements of tennis clubs in Victoria. Other resources were also created, such as videos on ‘how to create female-friendly environments’, ‘what makes a female program successful’ and personalised flyers, posters and social media tiles. Tennis Victoria provided three case studies examples, one metropolitan, one regional and one professional to cater to varying contexts.

Tennis Victoria stated that the reasons for the video were two-fold; “it was able to capture for those clubs who participated in the project what had happened, but it was also useful for us to be able to use the video to inspire others and provide examples of the impact it could have.” Having a clear, simple, engaging video that can be distributed widely is a great way to promote awareness of the program and message and encourage new clubs to join the journey.

1. **Skill development and education for clubs**

Providing club members opportunities to learn from each other and from experts is key to developing their skills to drive gender equity changes. Education can occur via informal conversations, focus groups, gender audits, guest speakers, sharing via social media and networking sessions.

Peer learning is important, and clubs benefit from being brought together to talk about similar challenges and learn what strategies are working for others. Clubs also benefit from opportunities to hear from the women, girls and gender diverse people in their club about their experiences and ideas. To do this work safely, a safe learning space needs to be created with an acknowledgment that many of us are unlearning harmful ideas about gender and recognising unconscious bias.

Educate in short, sharp blocks. Conversations or educational training can be attached to committee meetings (include gender equity as a standing agenda item), training sessions or regular club dinners.

Bystander Action Training empowers people to be active bystanders to violence against women and gives them skills to take action after witnessing or hearing about an incident of sexist or sexually harassing behaviour. Bystander Action Training is important (and many clubs enjoy it), but note that this training must be in conjunction with a whole-of-club or -sport approach. If members are trained to call out sexism and disrespect, there must also be an authorising environment to do this, avenues to raise issues, and clear dispute resolution processes if the issue needs to be taken further.

Ensure the club has a Member Protection Information Officer and their [training](https://www.playbytherules.net.au/online-courses/mpio-online-course) is up to date. Run training with leaders and the club’s Member Protection Information Officer on how to respond to disclosures of violence, as these are likely to occur as club leaders openly discuss gender inequality and preventing violence against women (see also Guideline 5).

External facilitators can be employed for gender equity training, bystander action training and preventing violence against women training. However, trainers must understand sports contexts and ensure the training is relevant to sport.

Training may also be appropriate for community club leaders to prepare them for not only leading change in their club but also ensuring that changes are sustained beyond their tenure. Many sports have also included respectful behaviours education sessions for young members and players and this has been successful when elite sportsmen and women have played a leadership role. These kinds of sessions can contribute to school Respectful Relationships programs, and so reinforce the importance of primary prevention.

Adults learn best when the approach is flexible, participatory, and appropriate to the context. Participants’ own expertise and knowledge should be respected and drawn on, and discussion and questioning encouraged.[[17]](#endnote-18) Training should not take the form of slide shows or lectures but should instead use adult learning principles. All activities must be evaluated to find out what works best for clubs and communities.

**Key point:**

* Education for club members does not just come in the form of workshops – training is important, but it is only one part of promoting equal, safe, welcoming and inclusive environments in sport.

**Case study: Using gender audits to facilitate important learnings**

In the project Act@Play, Sports Central and Women’s Health Grampians (WHG) staff conducted gender audits with the action groups of the two sporting associations they were working with. The gender audits provided an opportunity for women and men to have open discussion about topics or experiences that they may not have otherwise had the opportunity to discuss or felt safe to reveal. One example included problematic language, both at events held by the association and in daily work contexts. At the events, harmful language would often be present which became both uncomfortable and threatening for the women. Additionally, some inappropriate language was used at work to ‘get a laugh’ from colleagues. By having open discussions, facilitated by WHG and Sports Central, on the harm and problems associated with this form of language, it gave the men at the association the realisation that their behaviour was not acceptable. It also provided a safe space for the women to voice their experiences on what may be a challenging conversation.

It was important that this process was facilitated by people with expertise of this topic. As some people are opening themselves to vulnerability and others may not realise the harm they are causing with behaviours, a facilitator who can encapsulate both sides and allow voices and learning experiences on the harm is vital for this to function. In this case, WHG were able to facilitate with extensive knowledge in violence against women and the harm that language can cause.

1. **Share and Celebrate Successes**

Make sure you celebrate your successes, no matter how big or small! When you have achieved a goal, noticed positive changes or received external recognition for your work, share that with club members and the wider community (via social media or local media). Sharing your successes will enhance the club’s and the sport’s profile, highlight its strengths and provide ideas and inspiration for others. Some programs host forums or celebration dinners to mark events such as the development of gender equity action plans.

**Case study: Celebrating success!**

Leisure Network’s project, the Barwon Game Changer, worked directly with almost 30 clubs on developing strategies and actions to build gender equality through the development of leadership skills and capacities, and opportunities for women and girls to take up leadership roles in their clubs.

The outcomes of the Barwon Game Changer project were celebrated as part of the City of Greater Geelong Council’s 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence in 2020. A social media campaign profiled local women and girls, celebrating the work being done to grow the number of women and girls in local clubs and develop their capacities on and off the field.

# Final Note

People get involved in sport – whether as a leader, manager, player, club member, official or volunteer – because it is a meaningful experience that connects them to something bigger than themselves.

As preventing violence against women work is focused on the whole community it is important we bring everyone on the journey. One way to do this is by celebrating and normalising gender equality in every aspect of our lives.

As more people get involved and see the value of gender equality and respectful relationships to their social lives and their sport, the more they will pass this on to others and do their bit to bring about change in their families and broader community.

Together we can end violence against women.

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# Appendix. Supporting Documentation

## Appendix 1: Club Gender Audit Tool and Club Gender Equity Action Plan Template

The Club Gender Audit Tool and Club Gender Equity Action Plan template have been designed for project workers to use with community sports clubs. The tools have not been designed for clubs to use on their own, as the project worker will need to tailor the audit to suit the club or sport, and to facilitate difficult or complex conversations.

**The Club Gender Audit Tool is extensive, so project workers should shorten it and make it relevant to the club/sport/community before using it with a club. Not all audit statements will be relevant to all clubs/sports/communities. Clubs don’t have to do everything at once – focus on supporting them to choose a range of actions that can be done in the short, medium and long term.**

Key points:

* Undertaking the audit will lead to a range of ideas of what actions clubs can take to promote gender equity. Once ideas are agreed upon, they can be added to the Club Gender Equity Action Plan template.
* The audit process should be facilitated by the project worker or an external party (e.g. someone from the local council) and can be used to elicit conversations within the group. The facilitator should understand both the sporting context and gender equity.
* The audit process should also be done with a range of different people from different areas of the club (e.g. senior and junior teams, men’s and women’s teams, coaches, committee members, parents and players) with an understanding there is diversity within women and gender diverse people and their experiences.
* There may be people who don’t feel comfortable discussing their opinion in front of the group so an anonymous member’s survey should also be run.
* This audit tool can be used for evaluating change in clubs if done annually. Keep records of each audit undertaken and use them to measure how actions have progressed.

**Note to facilitators:**

**Open the discussion on participation with the question ‘Are the people who participate in the club an accurate reflection of the community you live in?’ These questions should be approached with a diverse and intersectional lens – supporting participants to consider whether this is the case for all women and what measures can be used to support the participation of women from different groups. The aim is to ensure all women, gender diverse people and girls will benefit from your gender equity initiatives. Below are some of the barriers to ‘gender equality’, but what are the additional barriers faced by women, girls and gender diverse people who may also be experiencing racism, ableism or homophobia at the club?**

**The table below collects data on gender, but data on other socio-cultural should also be collected if possible (for example, information on cultural diversity within the club).**

**Who’s at your club?**

(Please complete using numbers)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Men/boys | Women/girls | Gender diverse/Non-binary/other gender |
| Coaches |  |  |  |
| Players |  |  |  |
| Volunteers |  |  |  |
| Umpires |  |  |  |
| Other officials (e.g. Administrators, Committee Members) |  |  |  |

**Club Culture**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Yes, we always do this** | **Yes, we sometimes do this** | **No, we need to work on this** | **N/A** | **Comments or examples** |
| **Equality in treatment** | | | | | |
| The club gives the same trophies to women’s/girls’ and men’s/boys’ teams and there are equal displays of pictures, trophies and awards of all the teams. |  |  |  |  |  |
| There is equal reward and recognition of players, members, and volunteers of all genders. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our club launches all the seasons at the same event (e.g. launching the women’s season with the men’s). |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our club looks for opportunities for mixed gender participation on the field or in training/social events where appropriate. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our club provides equal allocation to the best facilities, to prime playing and training times, and trainers/first aid to the women’s/girls’ and men’s/boys’ teams. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our facilities (toilets, change rooms and shower etc) are allocated equitably to all players, umpires and coaches and are suitable for those using them (e.g. sanitary bins, accessible toilets, number of toilets, stocked and cleaned regularly). |  |  |  |  |  |
| Men, women and gender diverse people are paid the same to do the same roles, including playing, coaching and other game day staff/officials. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our social activities (including weekly dinners) and fundraising activities are inclusive of all members and do not reinforce gender stereotypes. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Money raised by fundraising activities is spent in a fair and equitable manner (e.g. if your trivia night raises $1000, is it spent on equipment for both the men’s and the women’s teams?). |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our club supports responsible alcohol management e.g. Good Sports Club. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our social calendar is varied and accessible for all (including family-friendly events and diversity awareness rounds) and developed with the input of different groups for balance. |  |  |  |  |  |
| The name of our club is inclusive (e.g. If the football and netball clubs have amalgamated, the netball team is represented in the club name). |  |  |  |  |  |
| We regularly undertake an equipment audit to ensure the equipment is being shared equitably among all the teams. |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Education and influence** | | | | | |
| We have an action plan that demonstrates how we are implementing practical and strategic actions to support gender equality, including a user-friendly version that can be shared with our community and members. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our club leaders (including senior players) understand that they are role models for younger people in the club. |  |  |  |  |  |
| The club offers gender equality training to volunteers/players/umpires/coaches on a yearly basis, irrespective of gender. |  |  |  |  |  |
| The clubs offers ‘Preventing Violence Against Women training’ and ‘Recognising and Responding to Family Violence training’ to leaders in the club on a yearly basis and our leaders understand their role in preventing violence. |  |  |  |  |  |
| The club offers Bystander Action Training to volunteers/players as part of our whole-of-club approach to preventing violence against women. |  |  |  |  |  |
| We draw upon a range of role models (including women and gender diverse people internal and external to the club) to speak to all teams/members, including the men’s/boys’ teams. |  |  |  |  |  |
| We are aware of and regularly apply for small grants to showcase and celebrate the role of women, girls and gender diverse people in our club, including the *Change Our Game* Community Activation Grants. |  |  |  |  |  |
| We actively promote and support campaigns that demonstrate our club’s commitment to gender equality e.g. International Women’s Day, 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence. |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Supporting a positive culture** | | | | | |
| Our club promotes and complies with the [Fair Play Code,](https://sport.vic.gov.au/publications-and-resources/community-sport-resources/fair-play-code) which sends a clear message that poor behaviour, violence and discrimination has no place in sport and recreation in Victoria. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Sexist behaviour (such as sexist or disrespectful language or unfair treatment based on gender) has occurred at a club event, game day or meeting in the last 12 months. |  |  |  |  |  |
| When sexist behaviour occurs (such as sexist or disrespectful language, or unfair treatment based on gender), the club leaders would know how to take action and are confident to do so. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our club values and/or code of conduct communicates using strong language our support of gender equality and zero tolerance of: sexist language, jokes and comments; verbal abuse; online misconduct; sexual harassment; and offensive or inappropriate images. |  |  |  |  |  |
| All members (including parents, officials and volunteers) are required to sign the Code of Conduct at the start of each season and the club values are referred to regularly. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Practices from all cultures are respected and welcomed in the club, and our club communicates that all offensive comments and jokes about gender, sexuality, age, religion, race or disabilities are not tolerated. |  |  |  |  |  |
| The club is aware of Respect Victoria’s [Call it Out campaign](https://www.respectvictoria.vic.gov.au/campaigns/sexism-and-sport-call-it-out) and discusses the resources/content with the club community. |  |  |  |  |  |

**Governance and Leadership**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Yes, we always do this** | **Yes, we sometimes do this** | **No, we need to work on this** | **N/A** | **Comments** |
| There is gender diversity on our board or committee (and at least 40% women). |  |  |  |  |  |
| The club has targets to increase gender diversity in leadership in the future and there is a plan to recruit, train and retain women and gender diverse people for leadership roles such as president, board/committee member, coach. |  |  |  |  |  |
| The club is aware of how greater diversity in leadership improves performance – including input from a diversity of different women, girls and gender diverse people. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our club officials actively encourage women and gender diverse people to join the committee each year. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our club consults with women and gender diverse people to ask how best to support them to become committee members. |  |  |  |  |  |
| The club has mentors to assist women, girls and gender diverse people to move into leadership or coaching roles. |  |  |  |  |  |
| When recruiting for leadership positions, 50 per cent of the selection panel are women and/or gender diverse people. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our club annually reviews how equal, safe, welcoming and inclusive our club is for women, girls and gender diverse people via an anonymous member survey and identifies areas for improvement. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our members are regularly consulted, and their feedback is taken on board. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our club ensures women, girls and gender diverse people are actively involved in all planning and decision making. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our policies and procedures consider women, girls and gender diverse people from different social and cultural backgrounds (e.g. Acknowledgement of Country, written material/signs in different languages, cultural competency training for leadership, measures to support access for all abilities). |  |  |  |  |  |
| Committee positions can be shared (e.g. two people can be president or treasurer). |  |  |  |  |  |
| We provide training opportunities for all genders to build their leadership skills. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our club is familiar with Change Our Game leadership scholarships and advertises them to the women, girls and gender diverse people in our club in a timely manner. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our club is familiar with the Member Protection processes for complaints and has a Member Protection Officer to support members with issues and concerns and to protect their best interests in the event of an issue. |  |  |  |  |  |

**Participation**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Yes, we always do this** | **Yes, we sometimes do this** | **No, we need to work on this** | **N/A** | **Comments** |
| The club provides opportunities and pathways for women, girls and gender diverse people to participate at all levels of the sport, including as players, coaches, umpires, volunteers, members or on the committee. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Participation is encouraged in a range of different ways including social sport opportunities, introductory sessions and skill development, and we consider participation options for women and gender diverse people from a range of different backgrounds. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Women/girls and gender diverse people are consulted about whether they want to train with the men/boys or separately (or a mix of both). |  |  |  |  |  |
| Transgender or gender non-binary people (including young people and children) are given the option of which team they want to play/train with and are supported in their choice. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our club provides information in other languages as needed (including promotional materials and signage in plain/clear English with enlarged text). |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our club reduces barriers to women, girls and gender diverse people’s equal involvement in all club related activities and roles, such as considering the time activities are held. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our club reduces barriers to everyone’s equal involvement in meetings by considering the time, length and safety of meetings, and provides online options. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our club takes practical steps to allow people with parental responsibilities to participate, e.g. providing a secure space for children with books and toys, and scheduling games and training sessions at suitable times. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our club understands and addresses barriers to access for members, e.g. language, uniforms, equipment, travel, and finances and provides payment plans for membership, fees and other costs. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Volunteer and paid positions in our club do not reinforce gender stereotypes, e.g. only women are in the canteen or men are coaches. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Everyone participates equally in the organising and cleaning up of club functions. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our club aims to increase the gender balance in all club roles. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our club provides clear and inclusive position descriptions for all roles, so every member understands the responsibilities for each club role. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our club has a commitment to increase the gender diversity of coaches and ensures that people underrepresented in coaching positions know about the support it provides to them to become accredited coaches, e.g. subsidising coaching courses for women. |  |  |  |  |  |
| When our club is planning for next season’s coaches, we approach and support underrepresented people to be involved. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our club leaders strive to be positive role models to children and young people by showing that everyone plays an active role at all levels of our club. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our club aims to increase engagement of men/boys in sports traditionally dominated by women/girls and vice versa. |  |  |  |  |  |
| We work to ensure that people can participate in ways appropriate to their culture and faith. |  |  |  |  |  |

**Promotion and recruitment**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Yes, we always do this** | **Yes, we sometimes do this** | **No, we need to work on this** | **N/A** | **Comments** |
| Our club aims to recruit more women, girls and gender diverse people to all roles. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our leadership group is familiar with the [Change Our Game Recruitment and Retention Guidelines.](https://changeourgame.vic.gov.au/leadership-centre/women-in-sport-recruitment-and-retention-guidelines) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our club uses communications, marketing and events to demonstrate our commitment to gender equality, including sharing good news stories about women, girls and gender diverse people through local and social media, newsletters and our website. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Publications, e.g. social media, website, newsletters, show equal numbers of images of women/girls, gender diverse people and men/boys of all ages, cultures, abilities and fitness levels. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our club regularly uses the Social Media Checklist from the [Change Our Game Women in Sport Communication and Marketing Guidelines.](https://changeourgame.vic.gov.au/leadership-centre/women-in-sport-recruitment-and-retention-guidelines) |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our club has a welcoming officer who is responsible for welcoming new members and providing them with club and membership information, including the club’s support of gender equality. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Fundraising events celebrate women’s sport and include women athletes, leaders and commentators as guest speakers. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our club alternates the announcement of teams each week (e.g. announcing the men’s team first one week, and the women’s team first the next), and the results and achievements of men’s and boys’ competitions are reported equally to men and boys. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our club uses strategies to recruit women, girls and gender diverse people such as ‘come and try days’, ‘bring a friend days’ or offering a ‘buddy’ to new members. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our club’s marketing material highlights ways in which women, girls and gender diverse people of all abilities can participate. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our club’s marketing material highlights a range of physical and social benefits our sport delivers for everyone. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our club aims to recruit more women, girls and gender diverse people to all roles. |  |  |  |  |  |

**Facilities**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Yes, we always do this** | **Yes, we sometimes do this** | **No, we need to work on this** | **N/A** | **Comments** |
| People in wheelchairs or using prams are able to fully access all the club’s facilities and buildings. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our car park has disability parking or parking for people with prams/young children. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our club has baby change and feeding areas that are accessible by everyone who needs them. |  |  |  |  |  |
| All the lighting at our facility is working and we have sensor lights and doors where appropriate. |  |  |  |  |  |
| The lighting is on for the women’s training in the evenings. |  |  |  |  |  |
| There is enough lighting in the car park for everyone to feel safe when using the facilities after dark. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our change rooms are clean and tidy. |  |  |  |  |  |
| There is a sanitary bin in every cubicle. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our facility has all-gender toilets available for the public to use. |  |  |  |  |  |
| Our facility has change rooms with toilet and shower facilities that can be allocated to players, umpires and coaches of all genders. |  |  |  |  |  |
| We ask women and gender diverse people about feelings of safety at our facilities in our member survey. |  |  |  |  |  |
| The club has a policy/procedure for ensuring all members leave the facility safely after late training/meetings. |  |  |  |  |  |

## Appendix 2: Club gender equity action plan template

**Club culture**

**Our Club aims to:**

Choose 1-3 of these goals for your club or make your own.

* Show consistent and clear leadership by setting the standard of zero tolerance towards sexist attitudes, language and discriminatory behaviour in our club
* Value and promote good sporting behaviour, equality and respect on and off the field
* Support our members to act responsibly on and off the field by refusing to engage in sexist, racist or homophobic behaviour
* Support all people (including men and boys) as they work to promote gender equity in the club and understand the broad range of benefits gender equality has for our club (including the prevention of violence against women)
* Be vocal and firm in discouraging disrespect against men and boys who don’t perform to notions of a ‘real man’

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Actions to achieve these goals** | **Timeframe** | **Responsibility** | **Indicator of success** | **Who can help?** |
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**Leadership and Governance**

**Our club aims to:**

Choose 1-3 of these goals for your club or make your own.

* Promote women’s, girls’ and gender diverse people's voices and perspectives equally with boys’ and men's on and off the field
* Have gender diversity in leadership, including coaching positions
* Regularly review how equal, safe, welcoming and inclusive our club is for women, girls and gender diverse people, and take action to improve our club and make gender equality ‘business as usual’

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| **Actions to achieve these goals** | **Timeframe** | **Responsibility** | **Indicator of success** | **Who can help?** |
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**Participation**

**Our club aims to:**

Choose 1-3 of these goals for your club or make your own.

* Provide opportunities and pathways for everyone to participate in all aspects of our club and sport
* Value women’s, girls’ and gender diverse people’s involvement and promotes their participation in all roles
* Provide opportunities for men and boys to challenge gender stereotypes in their participation in our club
* Be a positive role model to children and young people by showing and celebrating all genders playing an active role at all levels of our club
* Increase participation and respectful relationships in our club by providing multiple ways to participate, including opportunities for mixed-gender training and games
* Recognise that not all women and gender diverse people are the same and that some face multiple barriers to participation based on factors other than gender. Our club commits to supporting all women and gender diverse people to participate, including Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander, older, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds, women/girls with a disability, women who identify as LGBTIQ+

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| **Actions to achieve these goals** | **Timeframe** | **Responsibility** | **Indicator of success** | **Who can help?** |
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**Promotion and Recruitment**

**Our club aims to:**

Choose 1-3 of these goals for your club or make your own.

* Use our internal and external communications, social media, marketing and events to demonstrate our club's commitment to gender equality
* Ensure our communications are gender neutral or gender balanced, for example, letters to members, websites, social media, newsletter

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Actions to achieve these goals** | **Timeframe** | **Responsibility** | **Indicator of success** | **Who can help?** |
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**Facilities**

**Our club aims to:**

Choose 1-3 of these goals for your club or make your own.

* Provide facilities that are suitable for people of all genders and abilities
* Use the facilities we have in a fair and equitable manner
* Ensure our facilities are safe, welcoming and inclusive

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Actions to achieve these goals** | **Timeframe** | **Responsibility** | **Indicator of success** | **Who can help?** |
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