

A stylized graphic of a soccer field and a ball, rendered in light blue lines on a solid blue background. The field lines are perspective-oriented, and a soccer ball is positioned in the center. The overall design is clean and modern.

**WOMENS
FOOTBALL
STEERING
COMMITTEE**

REPORT

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BACKGROUND

Football for girls and women is **a core and growing activity for Football**. Our aim is to increase the percentage of females playing the game and being involved as coaches, referees, administrators, volunteers and supporters.

Hosting the **FIFA Women’s World Cup** in Australia in 2023 has captured the imagination of people all over Australia, both inside and outside the game, and attracted tremendous support from governments at all levels.

Women’s football is at a **different development stage** to men’s football and differs in other important respects on and off the field hence it requires special focus and expertise to thrive.

Expertise in women’s football is a valuable and unique skill set. Such experts should be involved in all key decisions about the women’s game.

Establishment of the Women’s Football Steering Committee follows an all-club Female Football Forum in September 2022 and Registered Player Surveys shortly after.



PURPOSE OF THE COMMITTEE

The objective of the Women's Football Steering Committee (**WFSC**) is to lay out framework for developing the women's game, both on and off the pitch, at all levels.

The Steering Committee is intended to give all stakeholders confidence that the review process is robust, considered, transparent and accountable. The committee will report back to the CCF Board throughout 2023, with findings & recommendations to be announced mid-year for 2024 implementation and beyond.

APPOINTMENTS

Name	Club	Role & Experience
Hayley Routledge	Avoca	Player 20+ years, Womens Coordinator
Donna Foster	Woy Woy	Player 30+ years, Manager & Committee
Catherine Higginson-Smith	Southern	Player 20+ years, Coach & Womens Representative
Robyn Burkett	Wyoming	Coach, Player 13+ years & Mentor
Nicole Stammers	Gosford	Womens Coordinator, Parent & Manager
Janene Flick	Kariong	Club Secretary, Player 5+ years
Diane Fathers	CCF	Board Member
Alex Burgin	CCF	CEO

FOCUS OF THE GROUP

Within the overall goals of enabling growth and creating a vision for female football relating to both participant (i.e., players, coaches and referees) and overall association development, the WFSC will be tasked primarily to:

- Understand and assess the current competition models and participation trends
- Consider optimal competition structures & specifically evaluate the WPL Competition
- Reflect on the impacts of change from the 2023 Women's World Cup + Legacy fund
- Assess the participation & engagement of females in non-playing roles;
- Consider the impact of external factors, including the Liberty W-League / External academies / NPLW.
- Propose what changes, if any, to further improve outcomes for CCF participants

Other relevant areas such as facilities, futsal, schools, regulations and private providers will not be a priority of this review but will be considered by the WFSC to ensure decisions within this review are not contrary to the objectives of such and allow for future flexibility.

MEETING SCHEDULE

Description	Date	Notes
WFSC Workshop 1 Welcome & Introduction	22nd March	Participation Data Overview, Member Pre-Reading, Meeting Breakdown.
WFSC Workshop 2 Creating a Vision, Exploring Opportunities and Barriers	5th April	Key priority areas, barriers and opportunities that can be addressed.
WFSC Workshop 3 Defining Success	19th April	How can the WFSC create measurable outcomes & how do we bring others along on the journey.
Female Coach Workshop (Shaun Mielekamp & Dan Barrett)	22nd May	Creating an inclusive environment for all female players
Stakeholder Forum North (Wyong Leagues)	N/A	<i>Cancelled - Lack of response.</i>
Stakeholder Forum South (James Browne)	N/A	<i>Cancelled - Lack of response.</i>
Stakeholder Forum Central (Pluim Park)	Approx 35pax 9/24 Clubs	Understanding Barriers Optimal Comp Structures CCF Priorities
Stakeholder Survey Online - Socials & EDM	Sent to 3500+ 799 Responses 24/24 Clubs	Board Spectrum Participation based question set.

The purpose of the stakeholder survey is to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences, perceptions, and motivations of those involved in women's and girls' football.

20,000+ SOCIAL REACH 799 RESPONSES 24/24 CLUBS

The survey aimed to capture a broad range of views on various aspects of participation, including the reasons for participating in football, the factors that may discourage

participation, the perceived inclusivity of the volunteer environments and the views of the football public on the future of our Premier competitions.

By understanding the factors that encourage and discourage participation, the survey can help inform strategies and initiatives to promote greater participation in women's and girls' football. The insights from the survey can be used to address potential barriers to participation, create more inclusive environments, and enhance the overall experience for players.

KEY DATA POINTS

CCF Overall Female Participation

Across all roles, the data shows that while there have been slight decreases in some areas (Players), there have also been increases in others (Coaches).

The percentage of women's participation as Players has remained fairly stable at around 22-23%, which remains lower than the state average of 27%, and a significant step away from those associations who are leading the way (e.g. Manly - 35%)

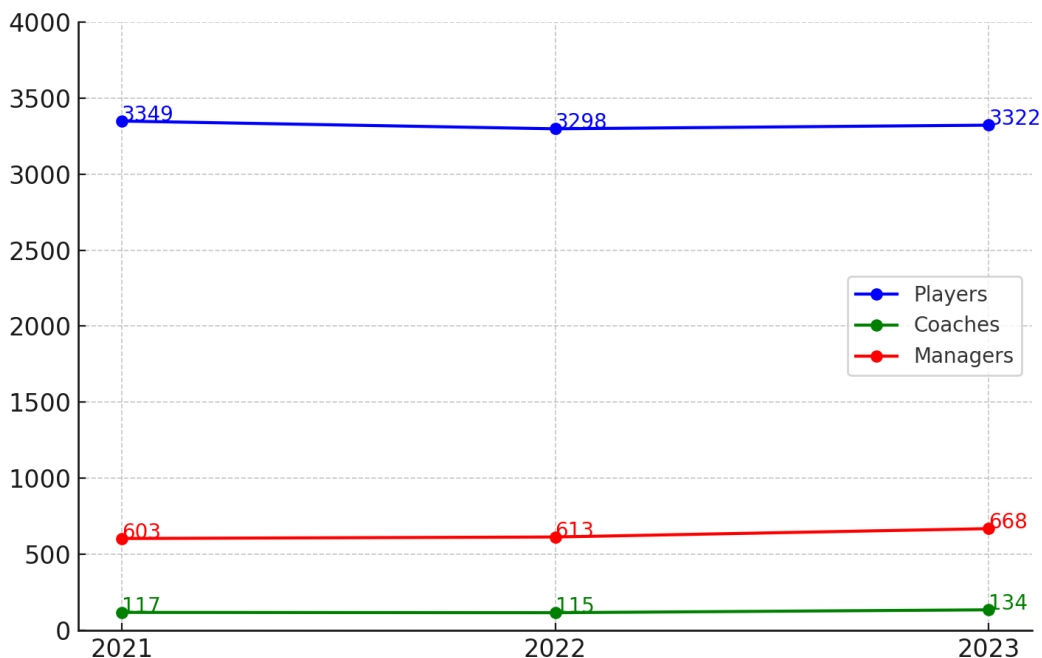


Fig.1 Participation rates for Big 3 Categories of Female registrations

It is likely that there are a range of factors contributing to a potential undercounting of female participation. Not all participants, especially volunteers and coaches, may register with MyCompApp and as such tracking participation can be challenging if the data collection does not account for these fluctuations.

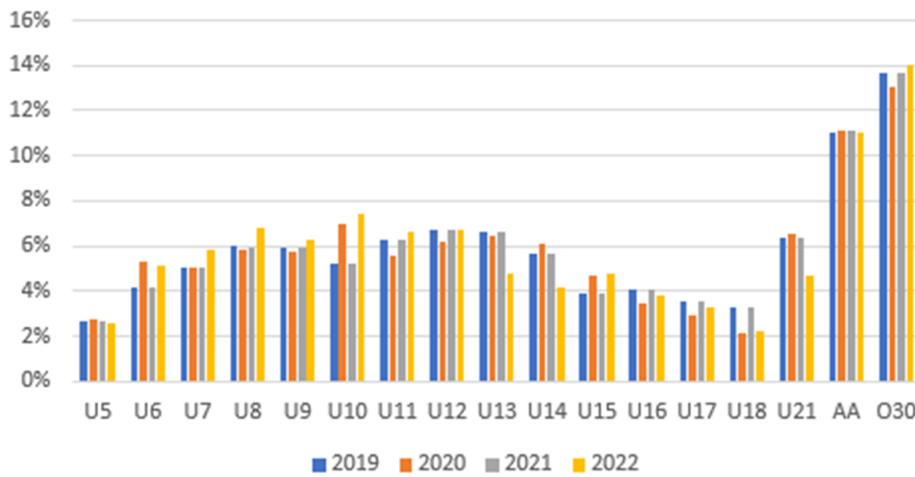


Fig.2 Age distribution as a percentage of total female players - CCF

CCF female participation follows a common trend to that of males, being accumulated registrations between Under 7-14 age groups, with a steep drop off to Under 18's. The significance of All Age and Over Age registrations making a large proportion of the total registrations shows an opportunity for further promotion and development.

Survey Demographics

The majority of respondents are current players, underscoring the high level of active participation and engagement within our clubs and competitions. Parents make up the second-largest group of respondents, filling out the form on behalf of their Junior & MiniRoos aged children.

In terms of age distribution, the majority of respondents fall into the 40-49 and 50+ age brackets. This suggests a mature audience with likely long-standing associations with the sport. Club affiliations are distributed across various CCF clubs, with Terrigal, Umina and Avoca being the most represented.

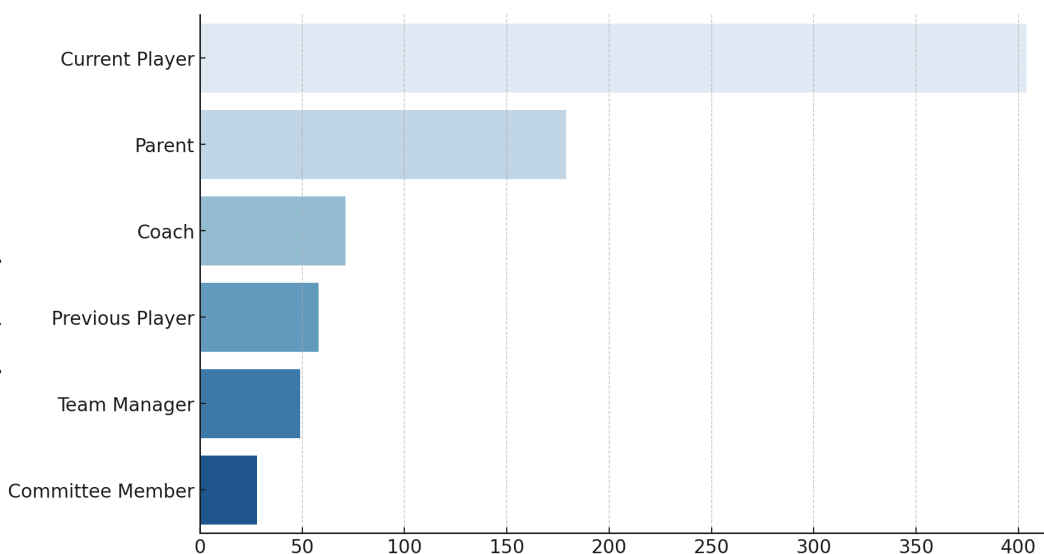


Fig.3 Survey Responses by Primary Role

Participation

The survey data suggests that the primary reasons for participation in football revolve around personal enjoyment and health benefits. “Love for the Game“ is consistently the top reason across different groups of respondents, indicating that intrinsic passion for the sport is a key driver of participation.

This is closely followed by “Teamwork & Social Interaction“ highlighting the social and cooperative aspects of football that attract players, “Physical Fitness and Health“ also ranks highly, emphasizing the role of football in promoting active lifestyles.

Interestingly, competitive spirit and achievement, often associated with sports participation, rank lower on the list, indicating that the enjoyment and health benefits of football may be more significant motivators than the desire for competition.

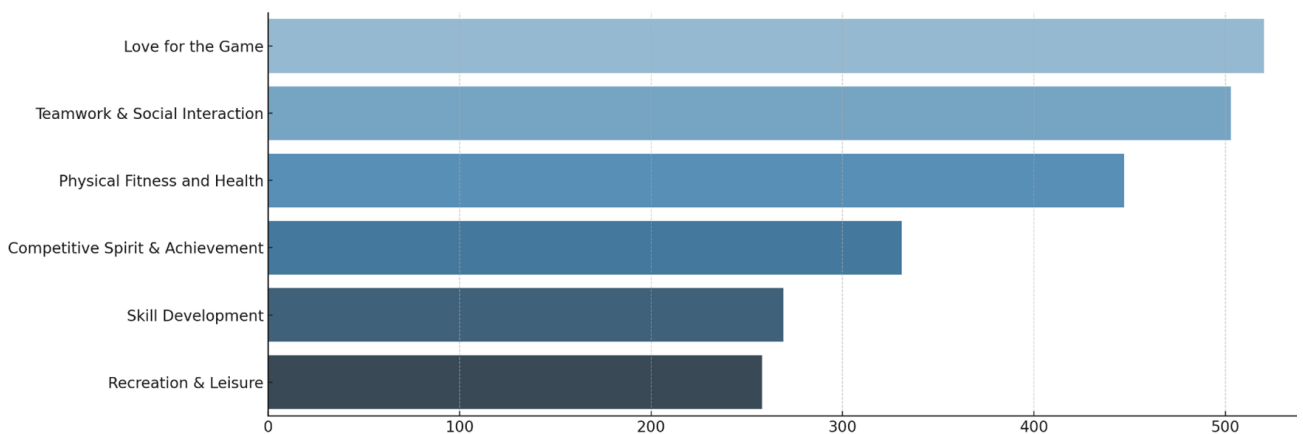


Fig.4 What is the main reason you (or your children) participate in football?

The main deterrents for women and girls participating in football are high registration fees, time constraints / conflicting commitments, and a lack of supporting environment.

Although significantly ahead in the barriers to participation, reducing registration fees is not an easy task, as it would require finding alternative sources of funding or cutting costs elsewhere, which could potentially impact the quality of the services provided to all participants.

Football as a code recognises the impediment to potential participants, especially in households with limited disposable income. Data from the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) AusPlay survey reveals that the cost of sport in Australia, as well as time commitments, are two of the most common reasons why many kids across the country aren't participating.

It also shows families on average spend \$600 per child last year on sport, compared to \$520 in 2019. The cost of Registration, Boots, Referees Fees & other Gear, along with the reduction of NSW Governments Active Kids Vouchers adds on to the already strained finances for some households.

The issue of confidence is another crucial aspect, emphasizing the importance of building confidence in potential players through encouraging and supportive environments.

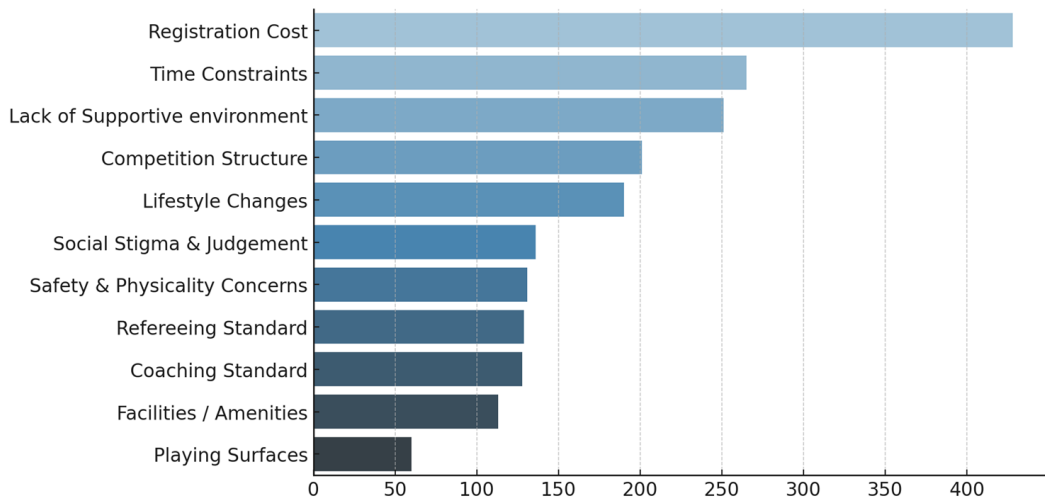


Fig.5 What are the TOP 3 factors discouraging women and girls from participating in football?

Steering Committee Insight:

- *The committee acknowledged and discussed at length the significance of Cost to many participants in our code. There are greater structural factors in our sport that contribute to the overall fee structure, almost all of which are outside our control for any immediate 'fee relief / cost saving measures.'*
- *It is noted by the WFSC that Supportive Environment was ranked highly on the deterrents from participation. This will form the next phase of work for the committee, with club workshops and training to be formulated.*

Many respondents do not see the choice of playing day (Saturday vs Sunday) as a major factor influencing participation, however, a notable portion of respondents do believe that personal, work, or family commitments might make one day more convenient than the other. Responses often revolved around personal schedules and commitments. For instance, some respondents might prefer to keep their weekends free for family time or rest, hence they might prefer to play on weekdays. Others might have work or school commitments on weekdays and thus prefer weekend games.

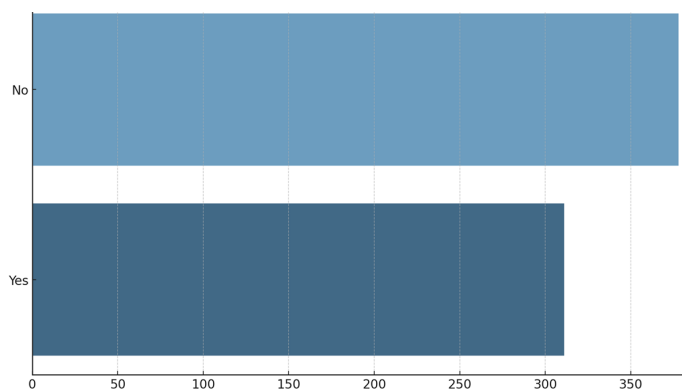


Fig.6 Do you believe that the choice of playing on Saturdays or Sundays affects participation?

There was significant commentary from Womens All Age participants that conflicting commitments could be reduced or eliminated with increased flexibility of match scheduling, including midweek or nighttime competition schedules.

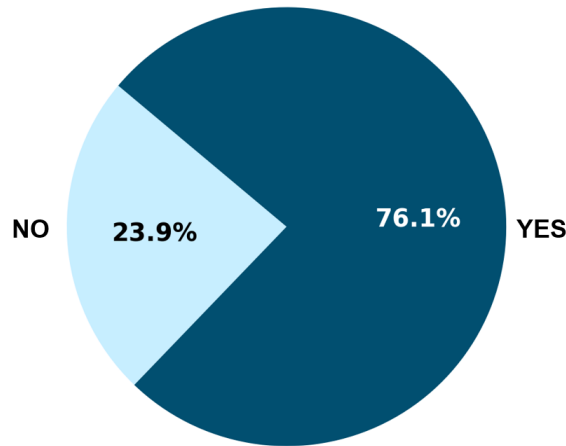


Fig.7 Would an Over 35 women's competition interest you? Responses from Senior players only.

Central Coast Football has approximately 5% higher Distribution of over age players than state average, with 12% of all female footballers being aged 35+ and **more than 1 in 3** All Age players being aged 35+.

League	Total Players	Players 35+	%
WPL	234	24	10%
WAA1	91	11	12%
WAA2	155	37	24%
WAA3	165	61	37%
WAA4	170	70	41%
WAA5	174	57	33%
WAA6	163	82	50%

Respondents asked CCF to offer as many different opportunities to participate as possible and not limit the opportunities to play football to one type or time or day.

The majority of respondents expressed positive sentiments about the current structure and organization of the Under 7/9/11 Girls competitions. Around 78% of respondents were Satisfied with the new initiative

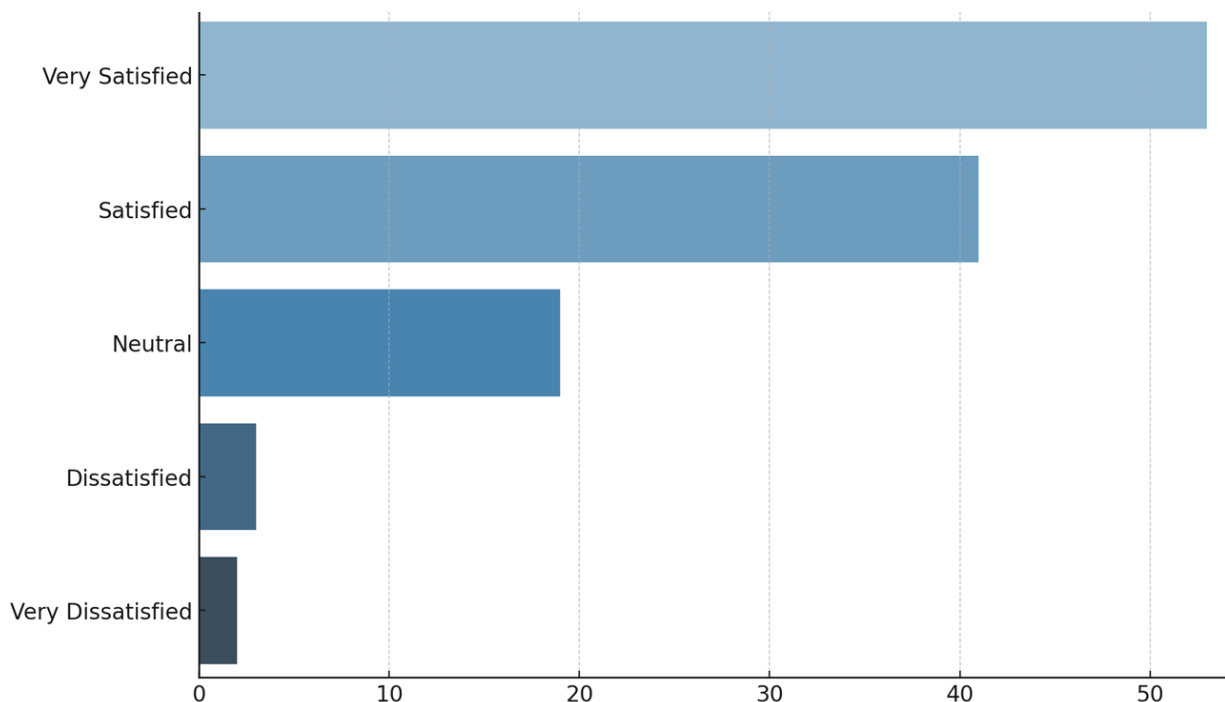


Fig.8 How satisfied are you with the Under 7/9/11 Girl's competitions?

71% of respondents asked CCF to introduce more age groups for the 2024 season. There were a number of suggestions made for improving & expanding the Under 7/9/11 Girls competitions, including the general themes of:

- A league for each age group rather than every two years.
- More encouragement from clubs when it comes to girls' teams.
- Continue to promote participation, but don't force it.
- Implement more age groups for girl-only competitions.

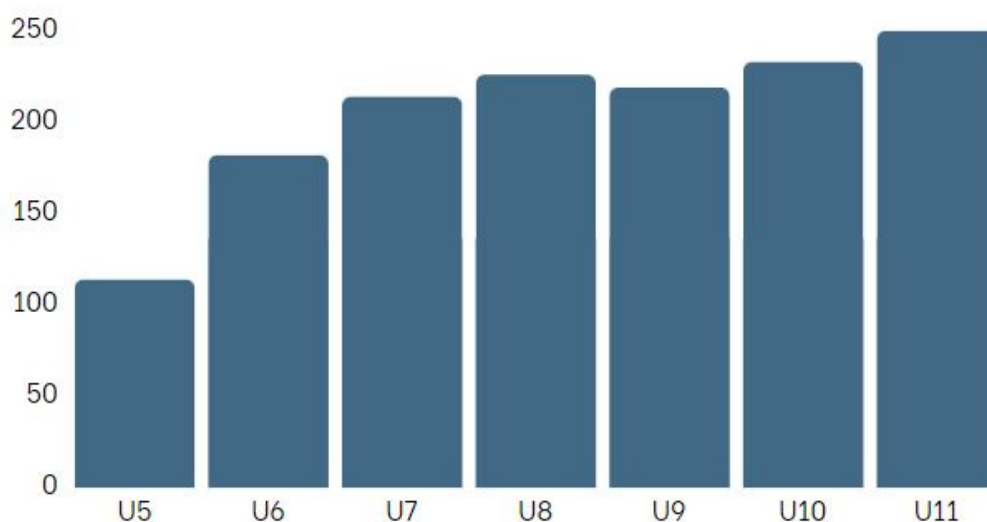


Fig.9. Number of Female participants in 2023 MiniRoos competitions.

Womens Premier League

The Survey allowed all participants the opportunity to answer questions on the future of CCF's Premier structure, which may have tempered results give a lack of critical knowledge and engagement around the nuances of the competition. As such, the results below include responses from a wide range of stakeholders along with specific analysis tailored to Current WPL participants. Questions asked included:

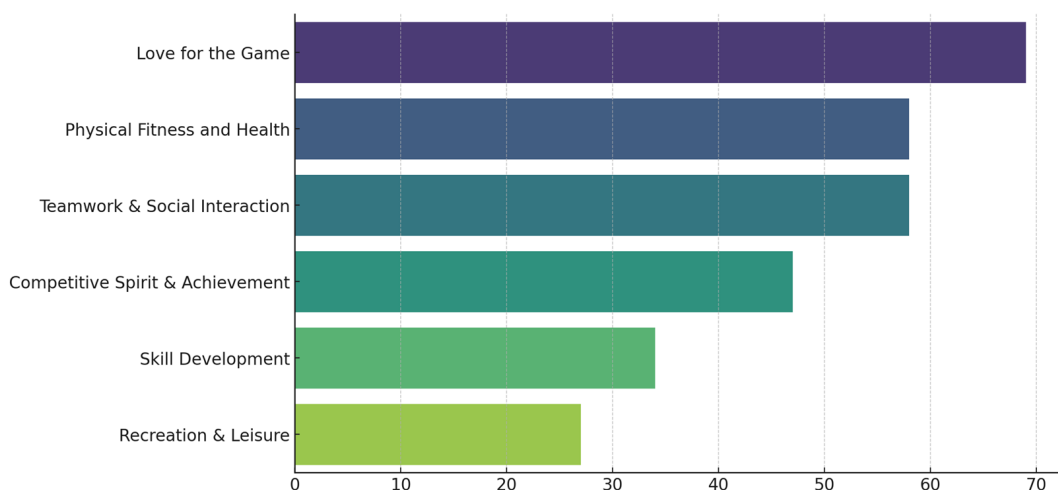
- In your opinion, should the WPL competition continue with First and Reserve Grade?
- What should the structure of WPL be?
- What are the TOP 3 areas of improvement or modifications that you believe would enhance the WPL experience for players, coaches, and clubs?
- What suggestions do you have to ensure the long-term success and sustainability of the WPL?

Womens Premier Competitions administered by CCF have had a varied history, marked by a lack of consistency in club participation and continuity. The below graphic was shown at CCF Female Coach Forum and Stakeholder Forum, as a discussion point for future iterations



Fig.10 Womens Premier Competition structures over the last decade

Current WPL players, similarly to the overall cohort, cited personal enjoyment and health benefits as the top drivers of participation.



Analysis of feedback on the Women’s Premier League experience suggests that there’s a strong desire for increased investment in the league, particularly in raising promotion and focusing on player development.

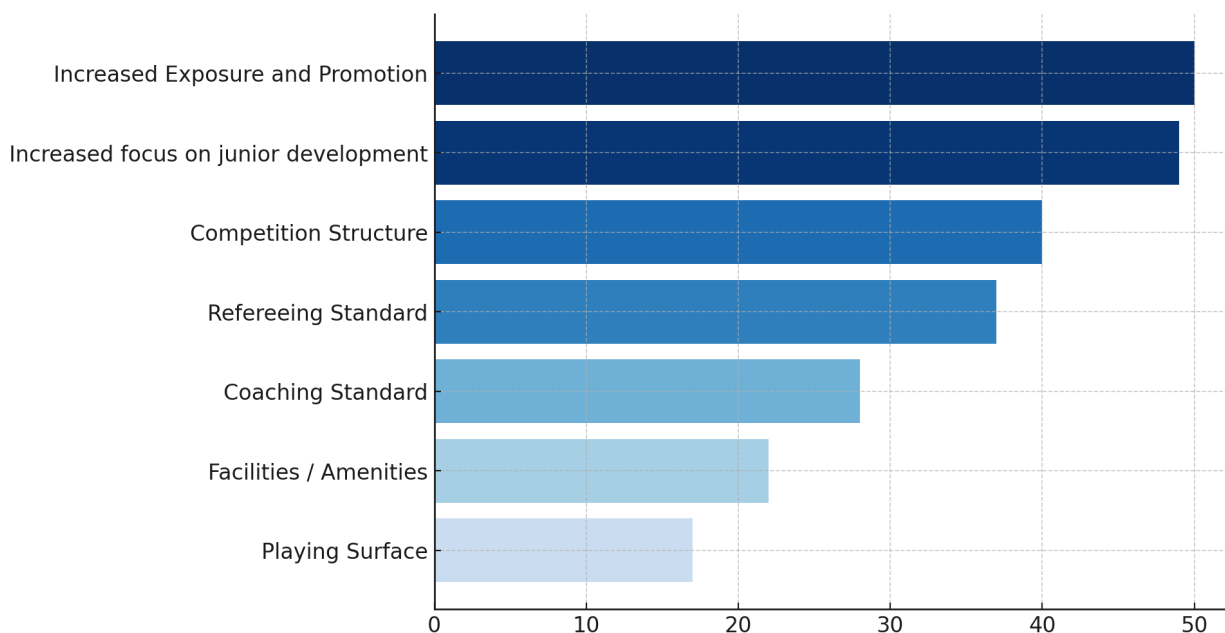


Fig.11 TOP 3 areas of improvement that would enhance the WPL experience.

Looking holistically at the **competitions long term sustainability**, participants emphasized several key themes including a focus on junior development, the involvement of female players, and the importance of coaching opportunities.

- “Making it a one team comp where more clubs can participate and be competitive.”
- “To involve more of the development of younger females in football.”
- “Better coaches, and more teams.”
- “Ensure ALL players are provided will right support and facilities.”
- “Start promoting young girls in MiniRoos, either in all girls’ teams or mixed.”

Zooming into the micro view of current WPL players, perhaps understandably - those clubs who are experiencing success in the 2023 season are in favour of keeping the squad-based system. **84% of the vote to keep First and Reserve grade was submitted from top 4 clubs.**

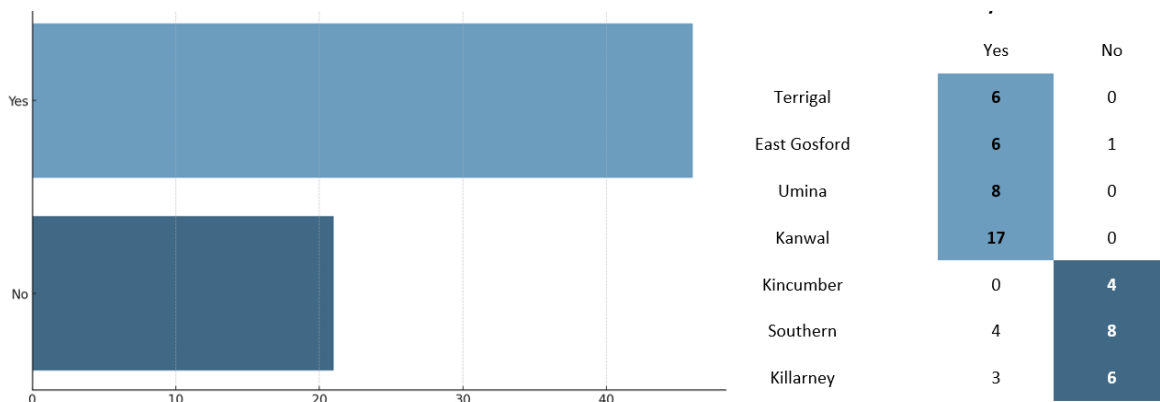


Fig. 12 (Current WPL Players) should the WPL competition continue with First + Res Grade?

Those in favour of **keeping the squad-based structure** highlighted equality, club culture and the challenge around player movement as reasons to continue with the current structure:

- *“I think the 2 grades are important to separate the skill levels and give everyone a chance.”*
- *“Community spirit. Experienced players to help the younger ones. Social aspect to club.”*
- *“You’ll lose a lot of players in reserve grade but not quite at the standard of first grade.”*
- *“Enables competitive structure. Club cohesiveness...”*
- *“Equal competition to the men’s league”*

When looking at **those who were against First & reserve grade**, the responses offer a variety of suggestions and considerations for the structure of the WPL, including the difficulty of registering enough players, the idea of relegation, the possibility of including younger age groups, and the challenge of competitive balance.

- *“WPL as one level with relegation a factor to allow 1st division clubs to move up”*
- *“Only way to build women’s football is to let teams play at the level they are capable of.”*
- *“Div 1 and WPL but only 1 team required for each.”*
- *“1 team only, maximum 18 per team, play each other twice.”*
- *“Trying to get 25 players to register is hard enough.”*
- *“Hard - as there is always 2-3 teams which dominate, and the rest are just making up the numbers - Maybe include under 21’s or even 18s.”*
- *“One team per club. The current structure is not working.”*

Steering Committee Insight:

- *There have been significant steps taken in this space to gather feedback from all clubs as to the future direction of the competition. It should be noted that the WFSC have had many formal and informal conversations with stakeholders that have informed the recommendations.*
- *Overall, the WFSC see a need to challenge the status quo in favour of long-term gain for the women’s game. There are significant roadblocks to keeping the competition in its current format - and there is a sense that something needs to change.*

When looking at the entire competition, including those clubs who are not currently represented in Womens Premier Competitions, there is a large number of participants in Junior or all age competitions that are perceived to not have a pathway.

Average age of a 2023 WPL participant in 2023 is 24.2 years old. Taking this into account, the number of potential premier competition players (based off a simplistic view of age alone) represents a significant untapped market for Central Coast Football

Club	Current W16’s	Current W18’s	Current WAA (Under 30yo)	WPL (Current)	Total
AVO	24	0	16	-	40
BER	0	0	40	-	40

Club	Current W16's	Current W18's	WAA (Under 30)	WPL (Current)	Total
BUD	16	0	8	-	24
BWT	0	0	5	-	5
DOY	0	16	16	-	32
EGO	13	0	39	29	81
ENT	0	0	37	-	37
GOS	17	0	11	-	28
KAN	0	16	25	31	72
KAR	0	0	13	-	13
KDS	16	0	0	33	49
KIN	27	0	3	29	59
MTN	0	0	16	-	16
OUR	0	16	24	-	40
SEU	14	0	18	26	58
TER	30	0	25	31	86
TOU	0	0	36	-	36
UMI	16	14	8	28	66
WGA	0	15	0	-	15
WMG	0	0	8	-	8
WOY	0	0	20	-	20
WYG	0	0	12	-	12

Fig. 13 Current Player numbers in WPL "Age Bracket"

When asked about a single team format - there appears to be a mixed reception among club affiliates based on their responses to whether they would participate if their club nominated.

16 / 24 Clubs had more “YES“ responses than “No“, while others show a more balanced or even negative response. This diversity suggests that the decision to participate in Premier Competitions is influenced by various factors that may be unique to each club or individual.

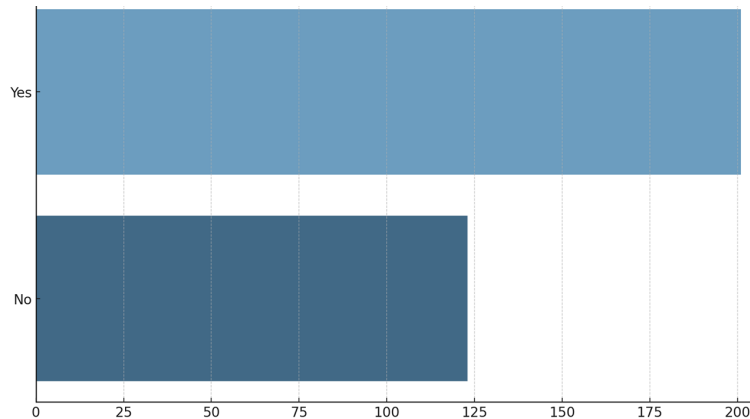


Fig. 14 Would you be interested in participating in a single team premier competition?

Many associations face similar challenges across participation, recruitment and retention & therefore it can be useful to look outside the Central Coast area for those best practice.

There is a range of All Age, Premier and other competitions that make up associations 'top grade', however the commonalities are that almost all have a single team in a single grade. Manly Warringah are the notable outliers, having broken through the 35% mark for all female players in 2022, and now have 4 clubs that boast 40% or higher (**CCF - 23% and Nil**).



Fig. 15 Nearby Association Comparison of Player numbers & Competition Structure. Sydney Associations represented are NSFA, NWSF, MWFA and ESFA, Newcastle Associations Macquarie Football, Newcastle Football, Hunter Valley Football.

Competition structure was at the forefront of discussion throughout the **Coach Workshop** (22nd May) and **Stakeholder Forum** (19th June). The Steering committee was represented in both sessions & prompted conversation around the future of the competition with stakeholders in attendance.

To summarise; the common themes put forward from current successful premier league clubs included:

- Building Culture within clubs.
- Having built a program from nothing to success.
- Chance that non-first grade participants will just leave the game.

Other clubs had alternative views, and whilst the success of the current 'top 4' was generally applauded, the specific challenges for clubs to start on a pathway towards having a top grade Womens team included:

- Requirement for TWO teams being a barrier to entry that is too high for most clubs.
- W16 and W18 players leaving clubs to pursue premier league football that can't be provided at current club.
- Disparity in the match results of the WPL over the last 2-3 years is a deterrent for entry into the competition for fear of being comprehensively beaten.

Steering Committee Insight:

- *The key theme of representation from ALL CCF clubs was continually reinforced. the ability for clubs to provide a pathway into senior competitive football for youth players is currently limited.*
- *Clubs reinforced the need for 'role models' for the female game, where "You can't be what you can't see."*
- *Similar sized associations have a single team for all women's premier competition equivalents, including FNSW NPL Competitions.*
- *The committee noted the significant risk to the current WPL structure if no changes are made - the chance that CCF only has 4 teams nominate is of concern and would render the competition unviable.*
- *WFSC have considered the impact of single team football on the current 'Top 4' Clubs, and the potential player movement, or loss of players to the game. As it stands, it's our opinion that the potential participation gain outweighs the downside.*

Non-Playing Roles

After a lack of engagement with Female only programs throughout 2023, the survey specifically asked respondents about their awareness of these initiatives. This feedback suggests there is room for improving communication and awareness about such initiatives.

When analysing the open text responses requesting ideas to encourage more women to get involved in off-field roles, the responses were varied and often focused on the club environment rather than the roles themselves:

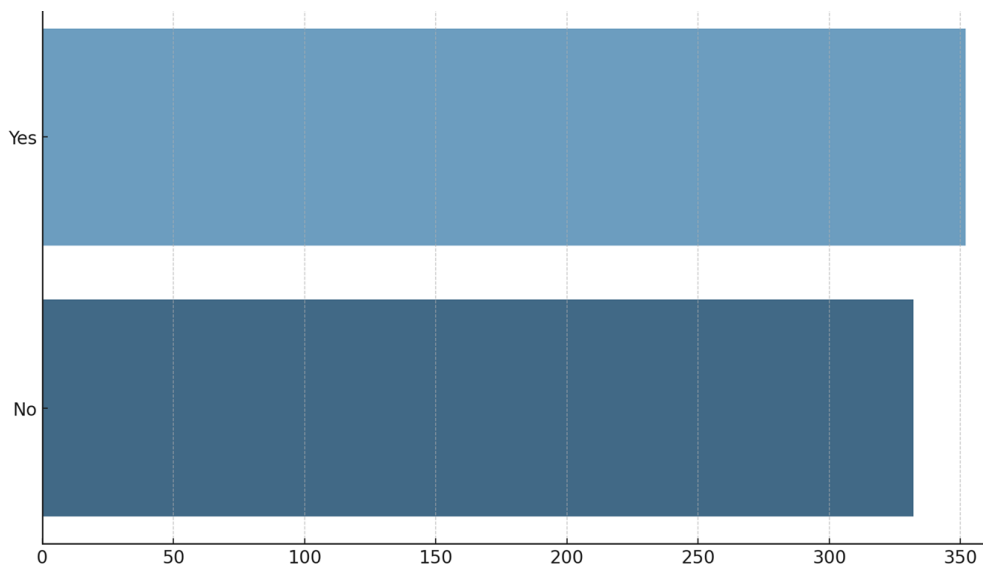


Fig. 16 Were you aware of CCF Female only Coaching Course or Referee Course in 2023?

- Opportunities for girls, providing more time and opportunity for them to get involved.
- Need for increased promotion of women in coaching roles, addressing the gap between men and women, promoting female involvement in clubs.
- Support for coaching, team and player engagement, information sharing at club level.
- Male champions of change.
- Focus on female inclusivity in clubs, enhancing existing initiatives.

These topics highlight a variety of strategies and areas of focus that respondents believe could encourage more women to get involved in coaching, refereeing, and other female-only initiatives. The main themes revolve around providing opportunities, promoting training, support, and a focus on inclusivity.

Steering Committee Insight:

- *WFSC acknowledge that this is a challenging space for the female game, given that many of the constraints around off field roles (time commitments, lifestyle changes etc.) are also barriers noted in overall female participation.*
- *There are perceived opportunities around the female only cadet referee programs, and an ability to implement 'girls ref girls' in the Youth and Senior competitions.*
- *Of note, but outside the scope of this group is the Male stereotype on decision making in committees & off field roles. The Societal norms & boys club mentality need to be challenged to make the environment at club level more inclusive for potential volunteers.*

Womens World Cup & External Factors

Based on the analysis of the survey responses, there appears to be a high level of awareness about the Women's World Cup (WWC) and its potential opportunities.

The vast majority of respondents (764) are aware of the WWC being hosted in Australia, the fact that more than half of the respondents are planning to attend some Women's World Cup matches further attests to a high level of interest and engagement with the event.

When asked about what opportunities respondents see in leveraging the Women's World Cup to promote growth in female football on the Central Coast, the main themes included:

- Encouraging girls to play the sport, **creating awareness** and opportunities.
- Women's and girls' **training sessions**, leveraging the WWC, promoting the game.
- Central Coast Mariners working with local teams and clubs, **leveraging the W-League**, promoting games and player engagement.
- Gala days, **encouraging girls and juniors to watch games**, leveraging opportunities around schools.

These themes suggest that respondents believe in the importance of working with local teams, building partnerships, organizing training sessions and clinics, promoting the games, and leveraging social media to maximize the impact of the WWC locally.

OTHER REFERENCES

In conducting this review, Central Coast Football (CCF) leveraged key insights from notable external resources, including:



FIFA Womens Football Strategy - A framework for developing the women's game, both on and off the pitch, at all levels.

Football NSW Women's Competition Review - Which was established to consider optimal competition structures and their connection to the talented player pathway.

Football Victoria Womens & Girls Competition Review - To determine the optimal structures for women's and girls' football in Victoria to grow participation, provide the best possible pathway for junior talent.

WFSC RECOMMENDATIONS

Participation & Competitions

Task or Deliverable	Rationale
Expand Female Only MiniRoos Competitions to include U6 and U10	78% satisfied with competition in 2023. 71% said add more age groups in 2024.
Implement social 5-a-side Competitions (Summer and Winter)	Love of the Game #1 (731) and Teamwork / Social Interaction #2 (695) were the top 2 reasons for participation in football.
Implement Friday night female football competition (Over 35)	More than 1 in 3 All Age players being aged 35+ Time Constraints #2 (312) reason discouraging participation in football.
Establish a development program for female youth skill development.	Focus on Youth Development #1 (319) suggestion given to ensure long term sustainability of WPL. Program should supplement club football.
Form an in-depth research group to investigate the viability of moving Womens competitions to Saturday.	Significant feedback that participation on a single day would be more convenient than the other (i.e. whole family plays on one day)

Womens Premier League Structure

Task or Deliverable	Rationale
Change Competition Structure to a Single team only Womens Premier League	Address current competition imbalances and reduce barriers to entry for all CCF clubs.
Establish a Womens Division One competition.	16/24 Clubs have 20+ eligible age players to participate in a top-level competition in 2024.
Develop nomination criteria for Womens Premier Competitions	Address key areas of player movement, competition integrity and sustainability.

Task or Deliverable	Rationale
Formulate a 5-year plan for Womens Competition, Promotion Relegation and return to squad based formats.	Enable regular points of review to allow flexible decision making. Work on plan to re-establish squad-based competition.

Womens World Cup & External Factors

Task or Deliverable	Rationale
Engage Central Coast Mariners A League Womens Team	Working with local teams and clubs, leveraging the W-League, promoting games and player engagement.
Increase exposure and Awareness	Encouraging teams and players to watch games while engaging with local clubs.

Engagement in Non-Playing Roles

Task or Deliverable	Rationale
WPL + Womens Division 1 Coaching Course Requirement	Elevating coaching expertise significant factor (150+) in enhancing WPL experience.
Increase promotion of women in coaching roles	Goal to increase female coach representation to 20% overall by 2025 (currently 13%)
Establish Female Coach Mentoring Program	Local club female coaches network with other coaches to develop their coaching understanding & skillset.
Establish Female Elite Referee Panel	Current number of female referees (28) not sufficient to sustain increased requirements of WPL and DIV1 standalone competitions.
Facilitate the ability for 'Girls Ref Girls.'	Significant barrier to participation is the perceived environment.

NEXT STEPS FOR WFSC

Moving forward, the Women's Football Steering Committee (WFSC) is poised to undertake several crucial initiatives to advance women's football in the region.

1. Focus on implementing structural changes within the Women's Premier League (WPL). **The WFSC will play a pivotal role in assisting local clubs in effectively planning for participation in either the WPL or Women's Division 1 (WDIV1) football.** The committee will work with clubs to develop nomination criteria and participation requirements, provide guidance and ensure clubs can make informed decisions that align with their capabilities and ambitions.
2. **Develop and host club forums on the topic of fostering an inclusive environment within the women's football community.** These forums will serve as a platform for open and constructive dialogue, bringing together representatives from various clubs, players, coaches, and other stakeholders. The WFSC will facilitate discussions on best practices, sharing insights, and strategies to create a more inclusive and supportive atmosphere for all participants.
3. **Work with clubs to provide individual feedback based on the survey data gathered.** This personalized feedback will offer comprehensive insights into each club's strengths, areas for improvement, and potential opportunities for growth.
4. **Work collaboratively with CCF Staff to implement and facilitate the recommendations of this report.** Regular progress reports on the programs, initiatives and communications within these recommendations will ensure that our target audience is well-informed and equipped with the necessary tools to foster participation.

By focusing on these key aspects, the WFSC is well-positioned to drive significant positive change for women's football. The committee's commitment to continuous improvement and collaboration with clubs will undoubtedly set the stage for a more thriving and equitable women's football community on the Central Coast.

FEEDBACK ON THIS REPORT

If you have feedback, thoughts, or ideas related to the contents of this report, or Women's Football generally on the Central Coast, we welcome your comments.

Your perspectives and insights are vital to the continued growth and success of women's football in our region.

Email - admin@ccfootball.com.au

Subject: Womens Football Feedback

ATTN: Alex Burgin - CEO & Diane Fathers - Board Member