

# MELBOURNE EAST REGIONAL SPORT AND RECREATION - FAIR ACCESS POLICY

## BACKGROUND REPORT



WHITEHORSE  
CITY COUNCIL



BOROONDARA



Yarra  
Ranges  
Council



Knox City Council



Maroondah  
City Council



MANNINGHAM



CITY OF  
MONASH



SPORT+LEISURE+COMMUNITIES

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*Otium Planning Group acknowledges the Australian Aboriginal, Torres Strait and South Sea Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which our company is located and where we conduct our business. We pay our respects to ancestors and to Elders, past, present and emerging. Otium is committed to national reconciliation and respect for indigenous peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas, and their rich contribution to society.*

# Acknowledgement

Otium Planning Group would like to acknowledge the staff and community from the seven Local Government Authorities of the Melbourne East Region that have provided their expertise and input to the **Melbourne East Regional Sport and Recreation – Fair Access Policy**.

Their valuable insights and feedback have been instrumental in shaping the Policy.

## *Womenjeka*

We respectfully acknowledge the Wurundjeri people as the traditional owners of the land on which we work and live. We pay our respect to their Elders both past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge Aboriginal people as the original inhabitants of the land and their long and continuing connection to Country.

We are committed to national reconciliation and respect for indigenous peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land and waters, and their rich contribution to society.



Figure 1: Yarra River/Birrarung

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# 1. Introduction

The seven Local Government Authorities that comprise the Melbourne East Region have developed an overarching **Melbourne East Region Sport and Recreation Strategy – Fair Access Policy**. The Fair Access Policy includes:

- Volume 1 – Fair Access Background Report
- Volume 2 – Fair Access Policy and Evaluation Framework.

## 1.1 Why do we need a Fair Access Policy?

There is a sustainable gap in both the participation of women and girls in sport and recreation and an identified gender imbalance in leadership positions across all levels of the Victorian sporting and recreation industry.

**17%**  
Men and Boys

**9%**  
Women and Girls

Sports participation rates across all ages are higher for men and boys than women and girls.



Only 21% of girls aged 0-14 years participate in organised sport and active recreation outside of school hours 3 times a week.  
Ausplay 2021

There has been a **decline of 22,000 women and girls’** participation after COVID-19 where **men and boys’ participation rose by over 20,500 participants** in 2021 compared to 2019. Section 3.1 of this report includes the barriers and factors that could influence this decline.  
*Vic Health Sports participation in Victoria 2015 - 2021*



29% Executive Officers  
33% Board positions

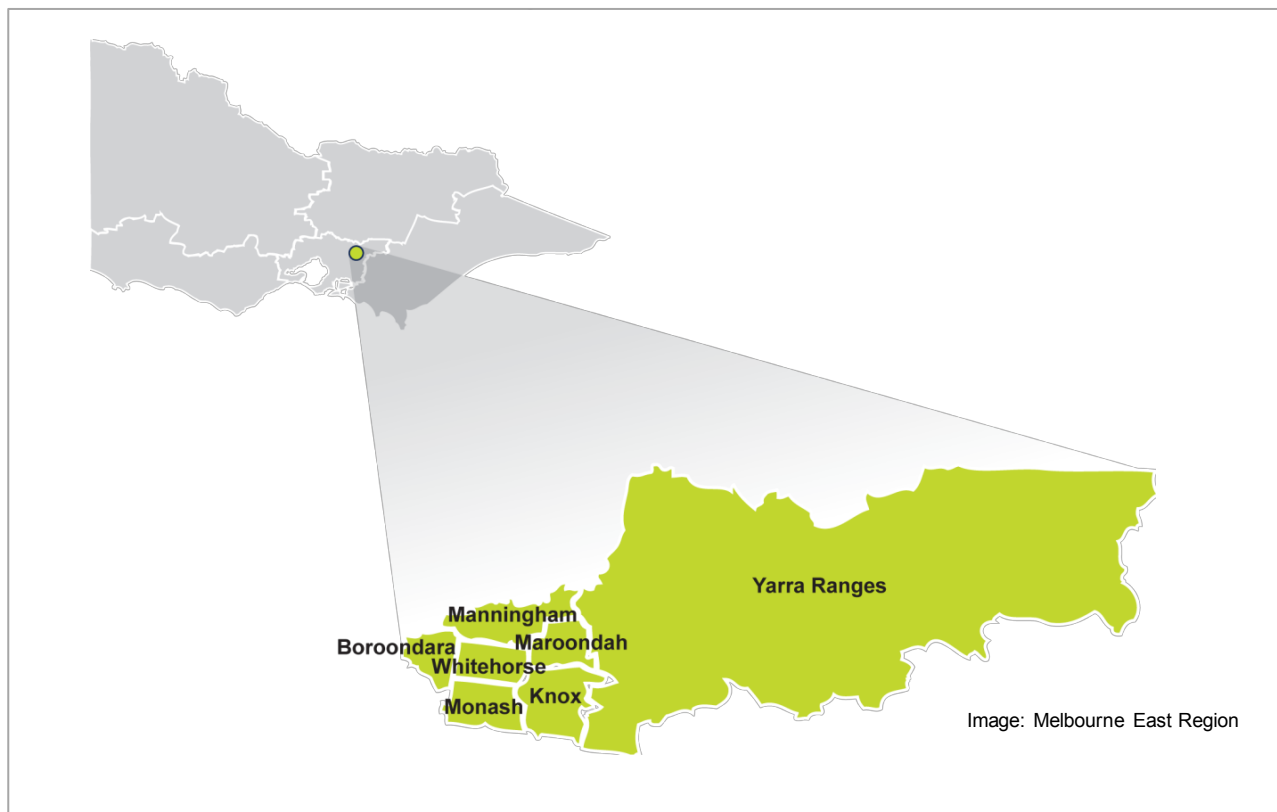
Twenty nine percent of executive positions and 33% of board positions are held by women in State Sporting Organisations.  
*Inquiry into Women and Girls in Sport and Active Recreation - 2015*

- **28%** of women have considered leaving their club due to inequitable treatment.
- Women are **2.5 x** more likely to report feeling unwelcome at their sporting club compared to men.
- Of people who played community sport, women were **less likely** than men to agree that club facilities were shared equally.  
*State of Play Survey 2022-23, Change Our Game*

Many Victorian women and girls don’t have access to the best courts or grounds, have facilities of lesser standard, or are relegated to less convenient competition and training times.

## A mechanism for change

The Melbourne East Region is one of the largest regional groups of Victorian councils that includes: Boroondara, Manningham, Whitehorse, Monash, Knox, Yarra Ranges and Maroondah.



**Figure 2: Melbourne East Region**

The Melbourne East Regional Sports and Recreation Strategy (MERSRS) was recently updated in 2022-2032. The Strategy will continue to guide a regional approach to key issues and opportunities for delivering sport and recreation infrastructure and services in the Melbourne East.

The update has found a need to:

- Accommodate an increasing demand for stadium sports.
- **Improve participation for all genders and abilities.**
- Identify opportunities for shared or better regional use of facilities.

The **MERSRS Fair Access Policy** is a key recommendation of the updated Strategy with an aim to improving participation for all genders and abilities. It will be guided by the Fair Access Policy Roadmap provided by the State Government and will reference relevant State Government legislation such as *The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (The Charter)*, *The Equal Opportunity Act 2010*, and the *Gender Equity Act 2020*.

Key reasons for Strategy:

- State Government policy mandate for all Local Government Authorities and peak sporting bodies requiring a Fair Access Policy to access State Government funding opportunities. This includes recognition of the impact the “This Girl Can” campaign has had on encouraging greater participation of girls and women in sport and recreation activities.

- MERSRS has identified a need to improve participation for all genders and abilities. To do this a Fair Access Policy is needed that focuses on, infrastructure, programs and governance.
- Engagement and partnership with sporting bodies, leagues and associations to define their role in improving equity.
- Participation trends show a significant increase in girls and women participation across sport and recreation activities, including improved development pathways and competition structures. Conversely, the trends also show that some sports have low levels of girls and women participation, and support is needed to reverse this trend.

The figure below from the MERSRS Strategy shows the relationship between key stakeholders to ensure a regional and collaborative approach to delivering on the strategic directions; and underpins the delivery of the Fair Access Policy.



Figure 3: MERSRS Strategy Regional Influences

## 1.2 A Policy for Change

The project will deliver a Gender Impact Assessment, Fair Access Policy and supporting Evaluation Tool for the Melbourne East Region. The following project methodology and project governance framework has been established for the project.

### The Approach

Key project tasks include:

- Review of background documents from all seven MERSRS and identify consistent themes, trends, gaps and opportunities that will inform the development of a Fair Access Policy.

- Preparation of a Gender Impact Assessment for the MERSRS Fair Access Policy in line with the Commission for Gender Equity in the Public Sector requirements and templates.
- Development of a MERSRS Fair Access Policy and supporting resources.
- Development of an evaluation tool to measure the impact of the MERSRS Fair Access Policy.
- Workshop discussions at key stages with MERSRS Project Working Group.



Figure 4: Policy Development Process

### Project Governance

The development of the project is a collaboration with the MERSRS Councils representatives (MERSRS Project Steering Committee) and key stakeholders including Sport and Recreation Victoria and Women’s Health East.

The graphic below shows the governance framework for the project. The Fair Access Policy will be developed by the MERSRS Project Steering Group and supported by the Melbourne East Region Group of Council’s (CEO’s).

The draft policy will be provided to the Melbourne East Region Group of Councils (Mayor/CEOs) for project endorsement. Once endorsed, the Fair Access Policy will be considered by each individual council for adoption. The City of Boroondara sits outside the Eastern Region group and will consider adoption of the Fair Access Policy once completed.

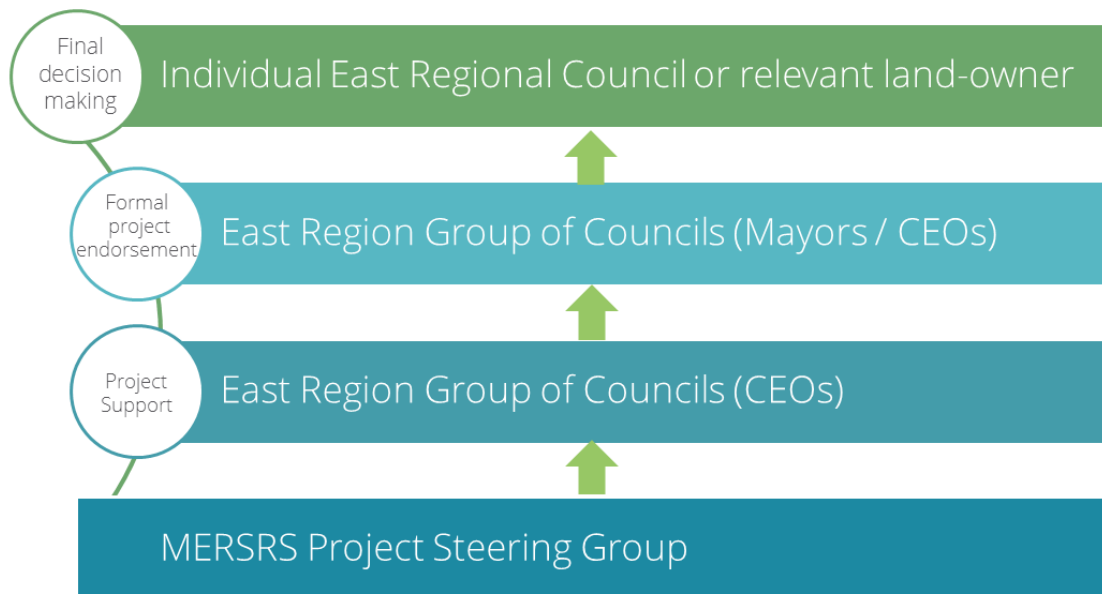


Figure 5: Project Governance Framework



## 2. Strategic Context

### *What are the strategic drivers that influence gender equity and access policies?*

This section summarises the legal framework and strategic context and relationships for the MERSRS Fair Access Policy.

### 2.1 Legal Framework

The following State and Federal Government legislation provides the legal framework for the MERSRS Fair Access Policy.

Local Government have an obligation to gender equality, not only under State Government legislation but also under Commonwealth legislation. The State and Commonwealth Government legislation includes:

- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic).*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic).*
- *Gender Equity Act 2020 (Vic).*
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cwth).*

#### **Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Victorian Charter)**

The Charter is Victorian legislation that sets out the basic rights, freedoms, and responsibilities of all people in Victoria. The Charter requires public authorities, including local government, to act consistently with the human rights in the Charter.

Specifically, Section 8 of the Charter protects the right to enjoy other human rights free from discrimination. It states that laws, policies and programs should not be discriminatory.

#### **The Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Victoria)**

The *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* provides protection from discrimination in public life in Victoria.

Specifically, under the Act, sports clubs and organisations have a positive duty to eliminate discrimination and victimisation as far as possible. When participating in sports, it is against the law for someone to treat you unfairly or bully you because of a personal characteristic (disability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation) that is protected by law.

#### **Gender Equality Act 2020 (Victoria)**

Following the 2016 Royal Commission into Family Violence and extensive public and stakeholder consultation, *The Gender Equity Act 2020 (The Act)* was passed in parliament. *The Act* is a landmark piece of legislation that will drive gender equity in the public sector workforce and the broader Victorian community.

The Commissioner has a range of enforcement options available under the Act, including:

- Working directly with an organisation to achieve an informal resolution (section 22(3)).
- Issuing a compliance notice (section 22(1)).
- Recommending that the Minister takes action against the organisation (section 26(b)).
- Naming the organisation and their failure to comply on the Commission's website (section 26(c)).

- As a last resort, making an application to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) for an order directing the organisation to comply (section 26(d)).

The Act applies to certain organisations that have 50 or more employees, including the public sector, universities and local councils ('defined entities'). Defined entities will have obligations under the Act to promote gender equity in their policies, programs and services, and complete Gender Impact Assessments.

### Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Commonwealth)

Section 42 of the Sex Discrimination Act outlines the obligations of **sport**:

- Nothing in Division 1 or 2 renders it unlawful to discriminate on the ground of sex, gender identity or intersex status by excluding persons from participation in any competitive sporting activity in which the strength, stamina or physique of competitors is relevant.
- Subsection (1) does not apply in relation to the exclusion of persons from participation in:
  - The coaching of persons engaged in any sporting activity.
  - The umpiring or refereeing of any sporting activity.
  - The administration of any sporting activity.
  - Any prescribed sporting activity.
  - Sporting activities by children who have not yet attained the age of 12 years.

### Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector

The Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector was established after the *Gender Equity Bill 2019 (Vic)* passed in February 2020. The Commission supports the Public Sector Gender Equality Commissioner to oversee the implementation of the *Gender Equality Act 2020* and promote gender equity in the public sector workforce and the broader Victorian community.

Local Government Authorities are required to complete Gender Impact Assessments and submit these to the Commission for Gender Equality. The Commission reports on progress made towards delivering on the *Gender Equality Act 2020*.

The Act requires defined entities to:

- Develop, publish and implement a Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) every 4 years based on the results of a workplace gender audit.
- Make reasonable and material progress in relation to the Act's workplace gender equality indicators, and publicly report on this progress every 2 years.
- Undertake gender impact assessments on all new policies, programs and services that impact the public and publicly report this activity every 2 years.
- Take into account that gender inequality may be compounded by other forms of disadvantage or discrimination and have regard to this when developing strategies for improvement.

The Act is the first formal integration of the concept of compounded discrimination (intersectionality) into Australian equality law. This means that defined entities must consider the disadvantage or discrimination that a person may experience on the basis of Aboriginality, age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion and/or sexual orientation in addition to gender inequality across the majority of their obligations. This includes as part of their duty to conduct workplace gender audits, promote gender equality, develop their GEAPs, and undertake gender impact assessments.

## 2.2 State Government Strategies and Policies

The following figure details the strategic relationship of State Government’s strategies and policies on gender equity in sport and recreation with relevant legislation described below. This framework underpins the MERSRS Fair Access Policy.

Gender inequity continues to be a major barrier to the realisation of rights and access to sporting facilities and opportunities for girls and women in the state. In the past two decades there has been significant government policy and legislative reform that seeks to address systemic and long-term issues of violence against women and gender diverse people.

The figure is an overview of the laws, legislation and policy that have evolved and applies to local government and the broader sporting community.



Figure 6: Strategic Relationships

### Victorian Government Inquiry into Women and Girls in Sport (2015)

The Victorian Government initiated an Inquiry into Woman and Girls in Sport and Active Recreation which resulted in key monumental changes in the sector. The changes included the establishment of a Victorian Office of Women in Sport, followed by the Female Friendly Sport Infrastructure Guidelines (2017) and funding program and then the Change Our Game Initiative. These resources were developed to support LGAs to better engage and provide for women and girls in sport. In response to the Inquiry, The Office for Women in Sport and Recreation was created by the Victorian Government – the first Office of its kind in Australia.

## Fair Access Policy Roadmap (2022)

Following the Inquiry and Change Our Game funding program the Victorian Government in 2022 released the Fair Access Policy Roadmap. The Fair Access Policy 'RoadMap' includes the following six principles.

1. Community sports infrastructure and environments are genuinely welcoming, safe, and inclusive.
2. Women and girls can fully participate in all aspects of community sport and active recreation, including, as a player, coach, administrator, official, volunteer and spectator.
3. Women and girls will have equitable access to and use of community sport infrastructure.
4. Women and girls should be equitably represented in leadership and governance roles.
5. Encourage and support all user groups who access and use community sport infrastructure to understand, adopt and implement gender-equitable access and use practices.
6. Prioritise access, use and support all user groups who demonstrate and ongoing commitment to gender equitable access and use of allocated community sport infrastructure.



### Fair Access Policy Roadmap

Supporting gender equitable access to and use of community sports infrastructure in Victoria

CHANGE  
THE  
GAME



VicHealth



The following graphic details the implementation roadmap.

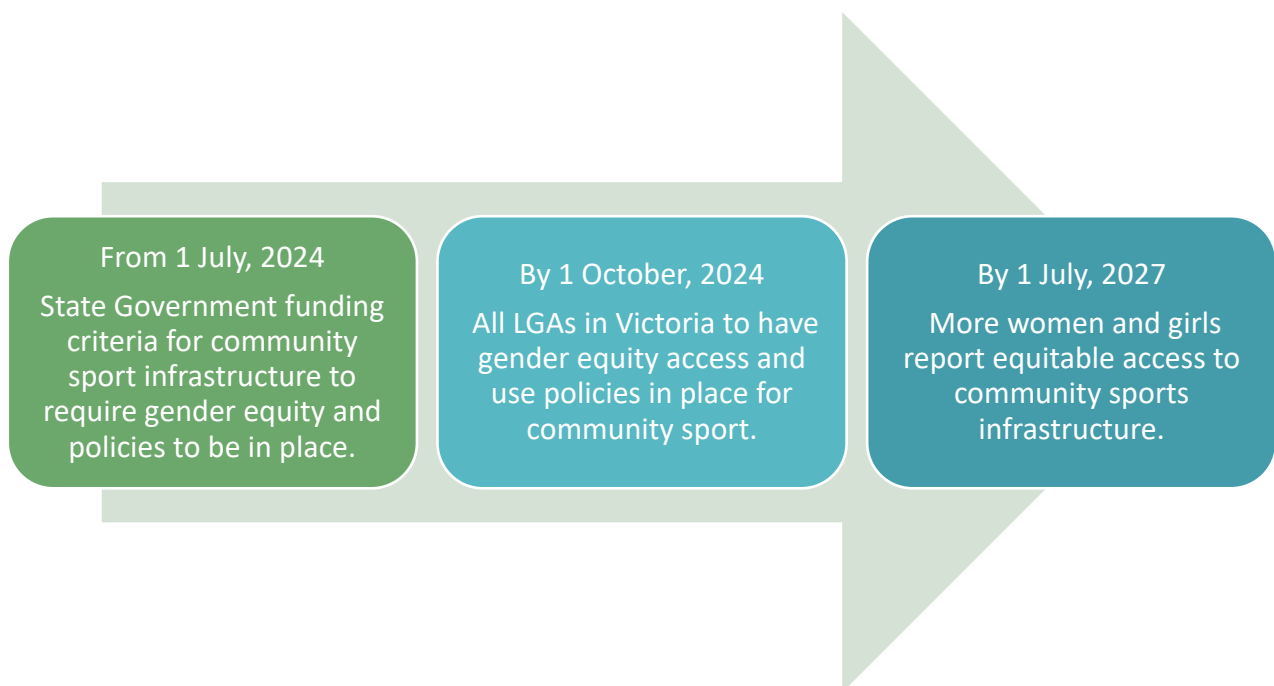


Figure 7: Fair Access Policy Implementation Roadmap

*“From 1 July 2024 all LGAs must have endorsed an Fair Access Policy to be eligible for State Government funding of sport and recreation facilities”*

## 2.3 Local Government Strategies and Policies

As detailed in the roadmap above, legislation requires all Local Government Authorities (LGAs) to prepare and adopt Gender Equity Action Plans, consistent with Council Plans (every four years). These plans were provided and noted by the seven councils and this section summarises the strategies and policies that inform the individual councils current response to gender equity in sport and recreation.

## Boroondara City Council Strategies

**Table 1: Boroondara Strategic Commitments to Gender Equity in Sport and Recreation**

Policy Name	Expiry Date	Relevant Sports	Detail the relevance to the MERSRS Fair Access Policy
2021-2031 Boroondara Community Plan	2031	All sports	<p>Strategy 1.1: Neighbourhoods and community spaces facilitate social connections and belonging by providing, maintaining and activating places for people to meet, organise activities and celebrate events.</p> <p>Strategy 1.2: Health and wellbeing is improved through delivering, facilitating and advocating for services and programs that are accessible and affordable.</p> <p>Strategy 1.5: Life-long learning is supported by delivering and working with our community and partners to meet the broad range of interests within the community.</p> <p>Strategy 1.7 Community resilience, safety and public health are improved by working in partnership with community and government organisations.</p>
2016 Boroondara Sport and Recreation Strategy and action plan	N/A	Sport and Recreation in general	<p>Facilitate sport and recreation opportunities that encourage and cater for participation regardless of gender (e.g., facility design, specific programming, and consideration of safety).</p> <p>Action 2.7 &amp; 4.10.</p>
2019 Development and Funding of Community Pavilions - Sport and Recreation	Review 27 May 2025	All sport and recreation pavilions	Pavilion standard provisions.

### Development and Funding of Community Pavilions Policy 2019 – 2025

#### What is the Policy?

This policy aims to ensure the responsible development and renewal of community pavilions. The policy principles focus on developing and funding pavilions in partnership with facility users and other levels of government, targeting investment in areas of demand, and aligning with ESD, CPTED and universal design principles.

#### Implications for Gender Equity:

Many existing sports grounds in the City of Boroondara are at capacity, due to increased participation and the landlocked nature of the area. This policy aims to work as a prioritisation framework supporting women and girls needs when developing community recreation facilities. It seeks to achieve access and inclusion objectives, by assessing a pavilion's functionality in the planning phases, to highlight areas which may require improved accessibility during renewals, upgrades or new buildings.

### Sport and Recreation Strategy 2016

#### What is the Strategy?

The Sport and Recreation Strategy sets out Council's actions to further develop sport and recreation across the municipality to enable all people to be more active more often.

Six priority areas for action have been established, these include:

1. Health Wellbeing, Social Cohesion – focus on an active, healthy and connected community.
2. Diversity and inclusion – create opportunities for people who are traditionally less like to participate.
3. Participation – get more people active more often and balance use of facilities for structured and unstructured activities.
4. Partnerships – forge effective relationships with government, sporting groups, schools and peak bodies.
5. Sustainability – focus on environmental sustainability, financial sustainability and club/volunteer support.
6. Infrastructure and safety – maximise outcomes from investment in new and existing infrastructure.

### Implications for Gender Equity:

The Sport and Recreation Strategy 2016 overall supports gender equity principles and within the Action Plan there are two items that will ensure the City of Boroondara supports women and girls' participation in sport.

- Action 2.7 – Ensure design principles for sport and recreation facilities are in line with Boroondara Open Space Technical Guidelines - Open Space Design Directions and the latest standards, guidelines and research (e.g., universal design, family friendly facilities, crime prevention through environmental design, multiuse, healthy by design, sustainable buildings policy) and these design principles are incorporated into project design briefs.
- Action 4.10 – Seek out partnership opportunities with peak sporting bodies, particularly those who received Access All Abilities (a state government funded program to increase participation among people with a disability) and VicHealth increasing female participation funding to improve pathways to participation and deliver local outcomes.

### Knox City Council Strategies

**Table 2: Knox Strategic Commitments to Gender Equity in Sport and Recreation**

Policy Name	Expiry Date	Relevant Sports	Detail the relevance to the MERSRS Fair Access Policy
Guidelines for Developing Sports Facilities Policy	2022	Cricket, AFL, Soccer, Rugby, Baseball, Softball, Tennis.	Targeted access initiatives.
Sporting Reserve Facility Usage Policy	2026	Cricket, AFL rules, Soccer, Rugby, Baseball, Softball, Tennis, Netball	Highlights Council's effort in promoting gender equity in sporting clubs at management and participation levels.
Pavilion Strategy	2021	All sports	Provide a guide for standards components, including universal design approach.
Seasonal Licences agreements	Every Season	Cricket, AFL, Soccer, Rugby, Baseball, Softball, Tennis.	An agreement between Council and clubs on how management of the sporting facility adequately.  Fees and charges for women and girls' teams (as specified in the license agreement) are 80% to 85% lower than those for their senior male teams.

## Guidelines for Developing Sports Facilities 2019-2022

### What is the Strategy?

The Guidelines establish a four-category hierarchy consisting of Regional, Municipal, Local and School level facilities which describes component size standards for its recreation venues.

### Implications for Gender Equity:

The policy provides specific values for the design and fit-out of sporting reserve facilities, aiming to ensure gender equity and universal access principles are used in the planning of the following components:

- Changeroom, amenities and toilets
- Social rooms
- Kitchens and canteens
- Storage
- Sports fields (including maintenance schedules)
- Sports field lighting
- Car parking.



## Sporting Reserve Facility Usage Policy

### What is the Policy?

This policy mandates clubs to have women/girls' teams by the start of the 2024 winter season and the start of 2026 for summer club. Please refer to 6.1 (a)

### Implications for Gender Equity:

The Policy seeks to encourage improved governance and sustainability within Knox sport and leisure clubs. Encouraging the continued increase in female participation in sport, so the membership of user groups is more reflective of the demographics of the Knox community.

## Pavilion Strategy 2021

### What is the Strategy?

The Knox Pavilion Strategy sets out how are responding to issues and opportunities that impact pavilions and club rooms at sporting reserves in Knox.

The objectives of the strategy are:

- identify the adequacy of existing pavilions
- maximise the usage, flexibility and multi-use potential of current facilities
- promote universal design for pavilion upgrades
- reassess the facility standards
- make recommendations for user group contributions to fund facility improvements
- prepare a framework to prioritise the timing of pavilion redevelopments.

### Implications for Gender Equity:

The strategy recommends using a prioritisation framework for pavilion capital works, which suggests weighting projects with the following criteria, assisting with gender equity:

- Functionality
- Condition
- Usage
- Opportunity

The Strategy also includes using Pavilion Planning and Design principles to guide future design and development of community pavilions.

## Manningham City Council Strategies

**Table 3: Manningham Strategic Commitments to Gender Equity in Sport and Recreation**

Policy Name	Expiry Date	Relevant Sports	Detail the relevance to the MERSRS Fair Access Policy
Active for Life Recreation Strategy 2010-25 (2019 Review)	2025	All sports and recreation	This strategy guides Manningham's work in sport and recreation.
Outdoor Sports Infrastructure Policy (2020)	Currently Under Review	AFL, athletics, baseball, BMX, bowls, cricket, soccer, hockey, netball (outdoor), softball and tennis. Please note that the review is likely to increase the scope of sports covered.	This policy governs the provision of infrastructure at each sporting reserve. It also looks at the funding contribution ratios for these infrastructure upgrades.
Sporting Facilities Allocations Policy	Currently Under Review	All outdoor sports (similar scope to the above policy)	Governs the way in which we allocate outdoor sports infrastructure.

### Active for Life Recreation Strategy 2010-25 (2019 Review)

#### What is the Strategy?

This strategy guides the City of Manningham's work in sport and recreation and identifies four key priority areas defined as:

1. Provide flexible, multi-use and durable spaces for recreation to meet the needs of a growing community.
2. Collaborate with key partners and organisations.
3. Foster an environment of inclusion.
4. Build capacity for our community.



#### Implications for Gender Equity:

The strategy specifically identified a significant increase in female participation in sport, recording a 23% increase between 2014-15 and 2016-17 across 18 sports in the City, with further growth anticipated to continue.

Overall, the strategy supports gender equity in sport and notably has strategic priorities and outcomes focused on improving access for women and girls, some of which include the following:

- Priority 2.3 - Strategic collaboration with key sporting organisations to enhance participation opportunities in active sport, with particular focus on increasing participation by underrepresented groups (women and girls).
- Priority 3.1 - Improved access to Manningham's organised sport and active recreation opportunities, to encourage participation by all members of the community.



## Outdoor Sports Infrastructure Policy (2020)

### What is the Strategy?

The Outdoor Sports Infrastructure Policy seeks to provide a consistent approach to the provision of infrastructure, and related financial contributions, for outdoor organised sports.

### Implications for Gender Equity:

The following design standards, amount other initiatives identified in the policy aim to support women and girls' participation in sport:

- Initiative 2.1.1 – Community Focus Council's facilities will be constructed to maximise community benefit, with a focus on community-accessed facilities as opposed to exclusive use elite facilities.
- Initiative 2.1.2 – Multipurpose Facilities will be designed to be multipurpose in nature, to enable maximum sustainable use. This will be applied to sports field and pavilion design, in conjunction will multi-use allocations.
- Initiative 2.1.3 – Equitable Use/Access Council's facilities will be accessible to all regardless of age, ability, gender and background. Universal design principles will be applied to all Council infrastructure.
- Initiative 2.1.4 – Environmental Sustainability Consistent with Council's approach towards environmental sustainability, environmentally sustainable design principles will be incorporated into Council's infrastructure.

## Sporting Facilities Allocations Policy

### What is the Strategy?

The Policy is based on the following Guiding Principles:

1. Equitable and inclusive access.
2. Sustainably maximising usage.
3. Transparent and consistent processes; and
4. Community focus.

### Implications for Gender Equity:

Applications for sporting facilities and grounds allocations need to address the following criteria to support women and girls' participation:

- "Preference will be given to the applicant who provides a demonstrated need for the usage, demonstrates integration of people from under-represented groups (e.g., females, juniors, people with a disability, CALD and older adults) and will achieve optimal/maximum use of the requested facility".

## Maroondah City Council Strategies

Table 4: Maroondah Strategic Commitments to Gender Equity in Sport and Recreation

Policy Name	Expiry Date	Relevant Sports	Detail the relevance to the MERSRS Fair Access Policy
Equally Active Policy	In overholding due to COVID		Council's commitment to increasing the physical activity of women and girls.
Equally Active Strategy (2019)	In overholding due to COVID	All	Actions to increase the physical activity of women and girls.
Physical Activity Strategy 2015 - 2020	Expired new under development	All	Council's commitment to increasing the physical activity of Maroondah residents

Policy Name	Expiry Date	Relevant Sports	Detail the relevance to the MERSRS Fair Access Policy
Community Facilities Occupancy Policy	Mar-24	All sports in seasonal, licenced and leased facilities	Rationale and principles that will guide the assessment of requests for use of Council-owned or managed land and buildings.
Sporting Facilities User Guide	Not specified	All sports in seasonal, licenced and leased facilities	Outline the processes undertaken when allocating sports grounds and pavilions.

## Equally Active Strategy and Policy (2019)

### What is the Strategy?

The Equally Active Strategy and Policy aims to increase the physical activity levels of women and girls, acknowledging their specific barriers to participation. The Strategy seeks to drive outcomes in the four key areas of gender equity in sport, women of CALD backgrounds, young women and women with care responsibilities.

### Implications for Gender Equity:

The Equally Active Strategy and Policy are strong frameworks directly supporting women and girls' participation in sport. The Strategy and Policy aim to set standards, priority actions and guidelines related to:

- Investment in Infrastructure, resources, and policy.
- Priority of use guidelines for allocations of clubs at sporting grounds and venues.
- Structured intervention, resources and specific programs/initiatives targeting women and girls.
- Collaborating with sporting bodies and employment groups to promote opportunities for women and girls.



*MaroonDAH has invested heavily in measuring and reporting on its progress of the Equally Active Strategy.*

## Physical Activity Strategy (2015 - 2020)

### What is the Strategy?

In 2015, Council endorsed the Physical Activity Strategy 2015-2020 which comprises of 45 Council actions to address barriers to participation, make incidental exercise more accessible and provide further opportunities to participate in physical activity programs and activities.

### Implications for Gender Equity:

In addition to these actions, the strategy recommended undertaking further targeted initiatives that are responsive to the needs of identified low-participation cohorts, including women and girls.

## Community Facilities Occupancy Policy (2021 -2024) and Sporting Facilities User Guide (2018 -

### What is the Strategy?

The Community Facilities Occupancy Policy and Sporting Facilities User Guide sets out the rationale and principles that guide the assessment of requests for use of Council-owned or managed land and buildings.

### Implications for Gender Equity:

The Occupancy Policy and Sporting Facilities User Guide has outlined to sporting clubs the expectations for improved access for girls' and women's teams.

## Monash City Council Strategies

**Table 5: Monash Strategic Commitments to Gender Equity in Sport and Recreation**

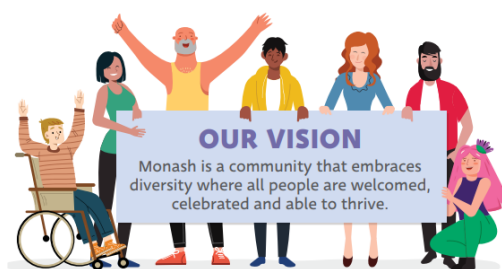
Policy Name	Expiry Date	Relevant Sports	Detail the relevance to the MERSRS Fair Access Policy
Active Monash Sports Club Framework	2026	All sports in Monash	Measures inclusive and sustainable clubs.
Active Recreation Opportunities Strategy	2031	Casual outdoor sport and recreation	Inclusive spaces for women and girls.
Clubs report	N/A	All sports in Monash	Report of CLUBS program.
LGBTIQA Action Plan	2027	All sports in Monash	Inclusive City.
Monash Soccer Plan	2031	Football (Soccer)	Strategic action plan for participation and facilities for this sport.
Monash Tennis Plan	2031	Tennis	Strategic action plan for participation and facilities for this sport.
Monash Gender Equity Framework	N/A	All sports in Monash	Gender Equity guidelines across the City.
Inclusive and Welcoming Environments Guidelines	N/A	All sports in Monash	Tenancy guidelines to achieve inclusiveness.
Sport participation study	N/A	All sports in Monash	Analysis of participation and investment inequities across Monash.

### Active Monash Plans and Strategies

#### What is the Strategy?

Active Monash incorporates a series of frameworks and initiatives that aim to deliver on the vision and aspirations of Monash City Council, including:

- Sports Club Framework
- Monash Tennis Plan
- Monash Football (Soccer) Plan
- Community Sport, Premier League and Elite Sport Framework
- Active Communities Framework
- LGBTIQA Action Plan (2023 – 2027).



#### Implications for Gender Equity:

These strategies and plans provide strategic and operational guidance to ensure that Monash City Council delivers on the goals of Active Monash and ultimately improves the health of the residents.

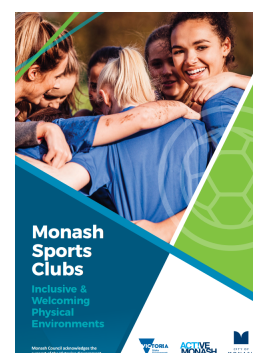
### Active Monash Sports Club Framework 2022-2027

#### What is the Strategy?

The Framework has 16 standards across the three priority areas. Clubs are expected to meet all mandatory standards in each priority area. Beyond this it is hoped clubs will strive to improve in each standard, ultimately leading to being accredited an Active Monash Bronze, Silver, Gold or Platinum Club under the Framework.

#### Implications for Gender Equity:

Targeted areas in the framework include:



- Decision-making and leadership - Actively recruits diverse leaders e.g., women, people with a disability, and people from CALD communities.
- Growing Membership - Consults with existing and previous members, including specific groups e.g., women and girls, people with a disability, CALD community. Has links to schools/other clubs/elite.

## Gender Equality Sports Pilot Program and Sport (2019)

### What is the Strategy?

The Pilot Program worked with individuals from 18 clubs across two years to try to understand what the barriers were for women and girls taking part in club sport, and what changes could be made to create more inclusive and welcoming club environments.

### Implications for Gender Equity:

The key findings of the pilot program were summarised and provided to clubs as a resource. The resource is being used to create inclusive and welcoming club environments for girls and women.

## Whitehorse City Council Strategies

Table 6: Whitehorse Strategic Commitments to Gender Equity in Sport and Recreation

Policy Name	Expiry Date	Relevant Sports	Detail the relevance to the MERSRS Fair Access Policy
Sporting Facilities Provision Studies	2024	All, particularly sports field sports	- analysis of historical scheduling and women’s participation opportunity - winter turf capacity analysis - participation data for popular disciplines - discussion of investment approaches. - Review of participation levels per sport of popular disciplines.
Pavilion Development Policy	TBD	Sports field sports	Outlines building standards for sports field sports (including amenities etc).
Sporting Facilities Guides - Seasonal and Casual Users (2019)	TBD	Sports field sports and supporting pavilions	Gives the terms and conditions for seasonal tenants, including allocation principle (sports field sports and supporting pavilions).
2023-24 LARS Fees and Charges			Provides rates of contribution for user groups and details discounts for inclusive practices including female participation.
Whitehorse Recreation Strategy 2015-2024	2024	All sport and recreation disciplines	Framework for Whitehorse City Council's approach to Leisure and Recreation.

## Whitehorse Recreation Strategy 2015-2024

### What is the Strategy?

The Recreation Strategy establishes the priorities for the City of Whitehorse to guide the planning of recreation services and facilities. Overall, the strategy works to improve recreation opportunities for women and girls addressed through the principles of providing a range of opportunities and adopting universal, inclusive design principles.

### Implications for Gender Equity:

The Recreation Strategy is the overarching strategy that sets the principles for improving sport and recreation facilities, programs and services. The key principle of improving recreation opportunities for women and girls will filter to other recreation plans and influence the design of recreation facilities, programs and services.

## Whitehorse Pavilion Development Policy 2019

### What is the Strategy?

The aim of the Pavilion Development Policy is to outline the facility standards to guide the development and/or refurbishment of pavilions and provide a framework for the funding contributions towards pavilions. Whitehorse Council is committed to providing female friendly facilities and the policy contains a section that focusing on the development of Female Friendly Facilities.

All developments need to include the following design outcomes:

- Surfaces that are easily cleaned.
- Mirrors in change rooms including bench space and GPO's.
- Pans will be provided in toilets (no urinals).
- Cubicle showers with appropriate privacy.
- Seats and hooks in cubicle showers.
- Well-lit interior and exterior spaces.
- Safe access routes between the car park, building and playing fields, with clear lines of sight.
- Use of universal colour schemes.
- Selection of appropriate finishes promoting friendly and inviting environments for all users.
- Safety considerations consistent with Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CEPTED).

### Implications for Gender Equity:

By including specific standards that support women and girls' participation in recreational facilities, it has ensured all developments are accessible and inclusive.

## Sport Facilities Guide

### What is the Strategy?

The following principles and objectives were identified to support women and girls' participation in sport and direct the Sporting Facilities Guide.

- Fees Council's fee structure will encourage participation from a variety of User Groups.
- To develop a fee structure that encourages different groups, including juniors, older adults and women. A 50% discount off full seasonal fees is applied if girls' and women's teams use the sports facilities.

### Implications for Gender Equity:

Providing incentives to sports clubs to provide teams and programs for girls and women has ensured that more female teams are being introduced.

## Yarra Ranges Council Strategies

Table 7: Yarra Ranges Strategic Commitments to Gender Equity in Sport and Recreation

Policy Name	Expiry Date	Relevant Sports	Detail the relevance to the MERSRS Fair Access Policy
Yarra Ranges Gender Equity and Inclusion Recreation and Sport Strategy	2020	Sport and Recreation across YR	Reiterates YRC's commitment to Gender Equity. Outlines the consultation findings through the Recreation and Open Space community consultation process. Identifies the key Strategic Pillars for Council in this space.

Policy Name	Expiry Date	Relevant Sports	Detail the relevance to the MERSRS Fair Access Policy
Yarra Ranges Pavilion Redevelopment Plan	2019	Seasonal Sports including AFL Football, Cricket and Soccer	Outlines the strategic approach to pavilion redevelopment due to ageing facilities that no longer meet the needs of the communities they serve.
Active Reserves Fees and Charges	2012	Seasonal Tenants, AFL Football, Soccer and Cricket	Outlines the discount process for Female Participation in clubs. The policy is currently being reviewed.
Seasonal Licence Agreement and Sports Club Handbook	Ongoing	All Clubs on Seasonal tenancies	Outlines the clubs' responsibilities as seasonal tenants.
Creating a Place for Women in Sport - Self Assessment Toolkit	Ongoing	All Sport and Recreation Clubs	Self-Assessment Toolkit that assists clubs in creating a safe and welcoming environment for Women and Girls. Includes pre-tool survey, assessment and gender equity action plan resources.
DRAFT Active Recreation Plan	Draft	Active Recreation Pursuits	Identifies specific opportunities to increase participation for girls, especially teenage girls.

## Yarra Ranges Gender Equity and Inclusion Recreation and Sport Strategy

### What is the Strategy?

The Yarra Ranges Gender Equity and Inclusion Recreation and Sport Strategy (The Strategy) demonstrates Yarra Ranges Council's commitment to removing barriers to enable a more inclusive and diverse community where women, men and gender nonbinary people have equitable access to resources and opportunities.

The Strategy is built on five key pillars, each with clear objectives and measurements of success as shown in the following table.

**Table 8: Yarra Ranges Gender Equity and Inclusion Recreation and Sports Strategy.**

	Cultural Change	Leadership and Opportunities	Facilities and Environment	Celebrate and Showcase Women and Girls	Promotion and Communication
<b>What do we want to achieve?</b>	Women and girls feel encouraged and empowered to be physically active through welcoming and inclusive environments.	Women and girls have equitable opportunities in sport and recreation participation, development and leadership positions.	Women and girls of all ages and abilities have equal and safe access to sport and recreation facilities and the natural environment.	The achievements of all women and girls in sport and recreation are celebrated and promoted through positive messaging and imagery.	Sport and recreation participation choices, opportunities and outcomes for all genders are promoted and communicated equally.
<b>How will we measure success?</b>	Equal engagement and participation from all genders for all Council-supported gender equality training by 2020.	100% of all clubs on Council-leased facilities meeting 40:40:20 guidelines by 2025.	100% of all clubs with female junior teams by 2025.	Minimum of two female Live. Move. Yarra Ranges ambassadors employed each year.	Proportion of females who meet physical activity guidelines increases from 46% to 50% by 2040.

### **Implications for Gender Equity:**

The Yarra Ranges Gender Equity and Inclusion Recreation and Sport Strategy sets up Council with a strong commitment and strategic framework to implement and report on change in the sport and recreation community. Through the implementation of this Strategy and the subsequent Fair Access Policy, it will ensure systemic change is achieved and celebrated.

## **Yarra Ranges Pavilion Development Plan**

### **What is the Strategy?**

The Pavilion Redevelopment Plan (the Plan) is designed to inform and provide a strategic framework for future Council investment in redevelopment or significant upgrades to Council sports pavilions across its recreation reserves. The Plan will also guide Council staff and inform the broader community as to how Council is responding to evolving community expectations concerning the functionality, purpose and accessibility of these facilities to service a wide range of community sport, recreation, leisure and social activities.

### **Implications for Gender Equity:**

The Plan identifies pavilions will be heavily influenced by the growing demand for female participation, together with the Female Friendly User Guide (from Sport and Recreation Victoria) Council will require support to ensure that these facilities feel safe and comfortable.

The plan outlines an assessment criterion for the prioritisation of future developments of pavilions based on:

- Policy and Plan – 10%
- Building Issues – 25%
- Functionality – 25%
- Usage – 10%
- Service – 10%
- Community Benefit – 10%
- Project Readiness – 5%
- Female Facilities and Culture – 5%

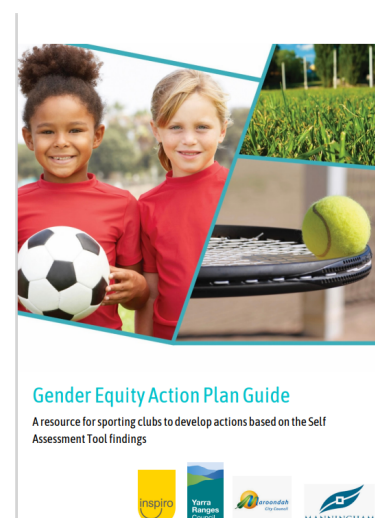
## **Gender Equity Action Plan Guide**

### **What is the Strategy?**

The Gender Equity Action Plan Guide has been designed to support sporting clubs to identify and implement key actions to promote gender equality and respectful relationships for women. The Guide is a resource to help sport clubs navigate change following the completion of the Pre-Tool Survey and Self-Assessment Tool. The Guide is not a mandatory policy.

### **Implications for Gender Equity:**

The Guide is a resource for sports clubs to enact change and promote gender equality and respectful relationships that will lead to increased representation and participation by girls and women. with clubs.



## 2.4 Regional Health Strategies and Policies

### Women's Health East Strategic Plan

#### What is the Strategy?

Women's Health East is one of nine regional and three statewide women's health organisations that make up the Victorian women's health sector. Women's health services across Victoria promote good health and wellbeing for Victorian women. They apply an expert gender lens to health issues and systems to influence the underlying contributors to women's health and wellbeing and improve outcomes for women.



Women's Health East (WHE) is the women's health promotion agency for the Eastern Metropolitan Region (EMR) of Melbourne. They are organisation focused on women's wellbeing and equality across seven Local Government Areas (LGAs) – Yarra Ranges, Knox, Maroondah, Manningham, Monash, Whitehorse and Boroondara.

The Strategy outlines three strategic priorities areas being:

1. Advance Gender Equality
2. Prevent Violence against women.
3. Improve sexual and reproductive health.

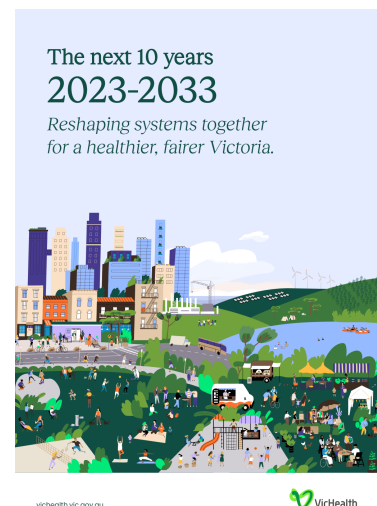
The Strategies intent and outcomes sought closely aligns with the Fair Access Policy and there is opportunity to strengthen the existing partnership and support collective social impact.

### VicHealth strategy 2023- 2032

VicHealth has developed a 10-year strategy, with the vision to transform Victoria's health outcomes and reshape systems for a healthier, fairer Victoria. VicHealth was Established as an independent statutory authority by the Victorian Parliament in 1987 and as an agency they partner and invest with many organisations, including LGAs.

The Strategy focuses on three key areas including:

1. Health - Deliver healthier, longer lives for all Victorians.
2. Economy - Deliver value to the Victorian healthcare system and economy.
3. Equity – Drive fairer health outcomes with and for Victorian communities.



Directly relating to LGAs, within the VicHealth Strategic plan it states:

*“VicHealth looks forward to continuing its deep, place-based partnerships as it invests long-term for those communities facing the greatest barriers to good health. This will involve building on existing partnerships and creating new ones. VicHealth can complement the work of local government through its power to convene, provide technical capability, contribute to funding, and evaluate impact.”*



The VicHealth Strategic Plan strongly supports the need for a Fair Access Policy. Its third strategic priority is directly focused on fairer and more equitable health outcomes and is identified as an opportunity to possibly explore future partnerships and potential funding programs from VicHealth should they arise.

## 2.5 Peak Sporting Bodies Strategies and Policies

Some peak sporting bodies have been developing girls and women strategies to improve representation and participation of girls and women in their respective sports. The following sport strategies from Cricket Victoria, Football Victoria, AFL and Tennis Australia give an idea to what sport initiatives local governments will need to support in partnership with peak sporting bodies.

### Cricket Victoria – Women and Girls Strategy 2023 -2028

The strategy vision is to be the favourite sport of all Victorians and it sets strong targets for the game by 2028 including a 100% increase in girls' participation across Club and Woolworths Cricket Blast Cricket to 30,000 participants.

The strategy also sets out a roadmap to 1,000 active female coaches in Victoria and earmarks the Premier Cricket competition to become a net exporter of contracted state players.

The strategy is built on three key pillars:

- Strengthening the existing footprint in community cricket.
- Creating a truly integrated competition in Premier Cricket.
- Building the leading female High-Performance system in Australian cricket.

### AFL – Women's Football Victoria and Women and Girls Game Development Action Plan

The *Women's Football Vision* for participation is striving for equal participation and representation by 2030. This translates into:

- Equal opportunity for women and girls to play, coach, umpire, officiate and govern.
- A participation pathway that best supports the continued development of participants and enables lifelong participation in the game.



The *Women and Girls Game Development Action Plan* supports the delivery of the 2030 Women's Football Vision participation objectives and is currently in Phase One. Phase One action goals include:

- Dedicated women and girls' participation options in every region at every level, from Auskick to Senior Community Football.
- Consistent implementation of a Participation Framework that supports the needs of girls.
- Access to curriculum-linked football programs and school competitions for all school-aged girls.
- Gender-balanced leadership in all community football leagues and clubs.
- Women role models in community coaching positions, with women making up at least 40% of all accredited coaches.
- Inclusive and safe pathways for women in umpiring, with women making up at least 40% of accredited umpires.

- Sufficient capacity of gender-neutral community football facilities to support the growth of women’s football.
- Equity in investment and allocation of resources.
- Education, tools and resources available for community clubs to build inclusive environments for women of all backgrounds.

### Tennis Australia – Women and Girls Strategy 2022-2027

The *Women and Girls Strategy* vision is for “no limited for women and girls on and off the court”. To achieve this vision, Tennis Australia have developed four focus areas:



- Lead – Drive accountability through:
  - Ensuring equitable investment across tennis.
  - Applying a gender lens to funding strategies, policies and agreements in tennis and with partners.
  - Publicly reporting progress in Australian tennis annually.
  - Engaging and inspiring the tennis community to embrace change.
  - Providing leadership to achieve equality in sport globally.
- Influence – Create an equal voice through:
  - Strengthening career and volunteer pathways and opportunities on and off the court.
  - Creating sustainable networks to influence and advance women.
  - Inspiring and developing women to be a public voice for tennis from grass roots to the world stage.
  - Ensuring equal and appropriate representation of women in the media.
  - Advancing governance structures to ensure equal representation of women at all levels and roles.
- Play – Enrich playing experiences through:
  - Ensuring safe, inclusive and welcoming environments that value and empower women and girls.
  - Applying a gender lens to enrich the playing experience across life stages.
  - Empowering women and girls to excel and thrive in tennis.
- Underpinning everything we do are the principles that:
  - Women and girls are central to shaping and influencing Australian tennis.
  - Courageous and relentless improvement and innovation drive sustainable change for women and girls.
  - Safe environments enable women and girls to feel empowered and valued on and off the court.
  - Systems, policies, practices and resources are available to progress equality for women and girls.
  - Unconscious bias and current practices that constrain women and girls must be exposed and changed.

- Equality is embedded into the performance expectations of leaders and team members across Australian tennis.

### Football Australia – Legacy ‘23

Legacy ‘23 is Football Australia’ strategic plan to grow women’s football and deliver enduring benefits for football beyond 2023, including becoming the first community sport to reach gender parity in participation.

There are five key pillars with supporting programs and initiatives that will deliver on this vision:

- Participation: Growing football through expanded community programs to ultimately achieve gender parity, with 400,000+ new female participants.
- Facilities: Building football through improved grassroots infrastructure to ensure equitable female facilities to meet surging demand.
- Leadership and development: Leading football through capacity in women’s leadership to shape the future of Australian sport and foster a culture that welcomes more women and girls to the game.
- Tourism and international engagement: Expanding football to boost tourism, trade and international relations when co-hosting 30 nations and their leaders at the FIFA Women’s World Cup 2023.
- High performance: Elevating football with world-class preparation to support the Matildas, whilst also developing the next generation of talent.

### Football Victoria – Football Her Way

The *Football Her Way’s vision* is a whole of Football Family objective that must impact culture, values, policies, practice, planning and programs with each and every one committed to achieving true gender equity in Football.

This plan goes beyond participation. Football Victoria has set the ambitious target to reach 50/50 gender balance by 2027. FV is striving to drive change among the football industry and ultimately develop women leaders at all levels in our game – players, coaches, referees and administrators.

The Plan follows a strategic framework with five key priority areas, these include:

- Clubs – Change the dynamic of our clubs to be more inclusive within the spirit of diversity.
- Facilities and Infrastructure – Our Football Homes will cater for families, women and girls, elevating our standing in the community that football is the sport of choice for women and girls.
- Enjoy our game – ensure women and girls can participate in football whenever and wherever they choose.
- Promoting our game – Create a movement that encourages women and girls to engage with football.
- Our People - Invest in advancing gender equity.

## 2.6 Planning Frameworks and Guidelines

### UN Human Rights Council Resolution 40/5 – International Human Rights Framework on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and Girls in Sport

The UN Human Rights Council passed resolution 40/5 on the elimination of discrimination against women and girls in sport. Australia is a signatory to the resolution.

The resolution includes the following statements relevant to the Fair Access Policy that supports reducing inequality in sport based on race and gender:

- Recognise the potential value of sport as a universal language that contributes to educating people on the values of respect, dignity, diversity, equality, tolerance and fairness and as a means to combat all forms of discrimination and to promote social inclusion for all.
- Recognise further the imperative need to engage women and girls in the practice of sport and to enhance their participation.
- Noting with concern that many women and girls face multiple and intersecting forms of stigma and discrimination in sport.
- Recognise that sports regulations and practices that discriminate against women and girls from competing on the basis of race, gender or any other ground of discrimination can lead to the exclusion of women and girls from competing.

A report was prepared by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights titled “Intersection of race and gender discrimination in sport”. In her report, the High Commissioner discusses relevant international human rights norms and standards and the obligations of States and the responsibilities of sporting bodies towards women and girl athletes, identifies possible gaps in the protection of the human rights of women and girls in sports and provides recommendations aimed at enhancing protections.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/ahrc4426-intersection-race-and-gender-discrimination-sport-report-united>

**The resolution and supporting report call for States to ensure sporting bodies implement policies and practices in accordance with human rights norms and practices.**

### **Guidelines for the Inclusion of Transgender and Gender Diverse People in Sport, 2019**

The Australian Human Rights Commission, together with Sports Australia and the Coalition of Major Professional and Participation Sports (the coalition includes AFL, Cricket Australia, Football Australia, National Rugby League, Netball Australia, Rugby Australia and Tennis Australia), released the Guidelines for the Inclusion of Transgender and Gender Diverse People in Sport to provide guidance to sporting organisations on promoting the inclusion and participation of transgender and gender diverse people in sport.

The guidelines provide information about the operations of the Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act 1984, and practical guidance for promoting inclusion in line with fundamental human-rights-based principles of:

- Equality
- Participation in sport
- Freedom from discrimination and harassment
- Privacy.

Guidance is provided across the following focus areas:

- Leadership
- Inclusion policies
- Codes of conduct
- Uniforms
- Facilities
- Information collection processes.

These Guidelines should be used to help inform local governments and sporting organisations of their obligations under the Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act 1984.

Of specific relevance to the MERSRS Fair Access Policy, the Guidelines recommend developing an inclusion policy for the following reasons:

- Help a transgender or gender diverse person identify a sporting organisation that will welcome them.
- Encourage a transgender or gender-diverse player to remain engaged in sport throughout their transition or affirmation.
- Provide guidance to staff and volunteers at a sporting organisation on how to include transgender and gender-diverse participants and respond appropriately to any issues that may arise.

### Guidelines for Trans and Gender Diverse Inclusion in Sport – Complying with the Equal Opportunity Act 2010, 2017

The Victorian Human Rights Commission issued the Guidelines for Trans and Gender Diverse Inclusion in Sport – Complying with the Equal Opportunity Act 2010, an update to the Commission’s 2015 Guidelines for Transgender People in Sport. It provides guidance for sporting organisations about promoting an inclusive environment, being active in preventing discrimination and responding appropriately if it occurs.

The guidelines provide information about the operations of the State *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (now 2020 following a review) and practical guidance for sporting organisations on how to comply with the Act.

The following minimum steps to comply with a sporting organisation's positive duty include:

- Develop a policy that deals with equal opportunity in sport, employment, club membership and service delivery.
- Ensure the policy is communicated to all players and staff at induction and through refresher training, and that players and staff understand their obligations and what they mean in practice.
- Review the policy at regular intervals to ensure it is up to date.
- Ensure players and staff know their rights and responsibilities, as well as your policies on inclusion and member protection.
- Develop a fair, effective and confidential complaints procedure for players and staff, and make sure people know about it.
- Regularly monitor your club or organisation’s activities, employee knowledge of legal obligations and any complaints received, in order to promptly deal with any issues that arise and improve compliance.

### Sport Australia Women and Girls Strategic Advice

Sport Australia support the UN Human Rights Council Resolution 40/5, “From grassroots to the elite level, it’s imperative that the sport sector increases the representation of women and girls in sport to better reflect Australian society and create a fairer and more inclusive environment”.

Sport Australia identify the following strategies:

- Advocate for equal representation at all levels including coaching and on club committees.
- Create a safe and welcoming place.
- Promote initiatives for females to the public i.e., profile female role models, and ensure equal representation in imagery and social content.

- Provide accessible activities and facilities such as equal access to courts/pitches, female-only activities, appropriate changing rooms and toilets.
- Allow participation in flexible uniforms such as hijabs for Muslim females.
- Instigate a zero-tolerance policy towards any type of prejudice or behaviour that puts the wellbeing of women and girls at risk.
- Provide a pathway and opportunities for progression and career development.
- Emphasises and supports the social aspects of sport.
- Offer alternative/modified formats.
- Ask women and girls for input and feedback.
- Deliver group activities.
- Providing activities at the right time of the day/week.
- Reduce financial barriers.
- Promote women into decision-making roles in your club.
- Create a pipeline for women contenders for committee roles and promote gender balance in selection processes.
- Provide training opportunities to increase women’s capabilities for advancement.
- Develop policies that are gender inclusive, and that club culture promotes gender equality.
- Ensure the requirements for committee membership are free from discrimination and bias.
- Create opportunities to educate boys and men about the benefits of gender equality through sport.

### Making Space for Girls

In the past, design for sport and active recreation facilities and services has been more suited to male participation. The following design guidelines and resources respond to extensive research and engagement with girls and women that focus on barriers faced when participating.

The ‘Make Space for Girls’ is a resource that includes research, design principles and case studies for making space for girls and women in a public space.

Specifically, the website refers to research and guidelines developed by the University Leads titled Safer Parks – Improving Access for Women and Girls”. The guidelines included extensive research and reports the concern about safety as the “biggest single barrier to women and girls’ enjoyment of parks and green spaces”. The guidelines include the following design principles:

- Eyes on the park:
  - Busyness and activation – Provide alternative seating options, locate spaces popular with women and girls in busier areas of the park, encourage businesses to use the park increases activity, a broad range of activities to activate the park and encourage new users and circular running or walking routes.
  - Staffing and authority figures – Arrange working patterns to maximise staff presence.
- Awareness:
  - Visibility and openness – Provide canopies above head height to enable a clear view, maintain bushes and shrubs alongside paths to ensure visibility, locate facilities close to main routes and busy areas of the park, mounds and high points give good prospects.

- Escape – Provide wide and clearly visible park entrances and park edges as open and accessible as possible with regular breaks and regular exits with clear signposts.
- Lighting – Provide human-scaled lighting rather than floodlights - low and even light can be safer than bright lights that create strong contrast and glare. Using lighting helps activate key routes and spaces, and lighting should enable good colour rendering.
- Wayfinding and layout – Provide a clear hierarchy of paths that connect with routes beyond the park, a circular path around the perimeter with regular exit points, paths should connect key facilities with each destination and clear signage with directions to key destinations.
- Inclusion:
  - Belonging and familiarity – The naming of facilities to signal multiple uses broadens their appeal, statues and artworks can indicate belonging, and specific facilities aimed at women and girls signal that they are welcome.
  - Image – A tidy park signals care, remove graffiti and repair any vandalism, well-maintained vegetation around paths and well-maintained signage and information boards.
  - Access and location – Access should be via safe and well-used routes. Prioritise entrances close to public transport connections and signpost nearby places as safe zones.
  - Co-production and engagement – Engagement with existing women’s and youth groups can be a good starting point for co-production, co-designing parks might change what is included and how spaces feel, engagement must be intersectional and involve existing and potential park users, and safety walks help to articulate perceptions of safety in the park.

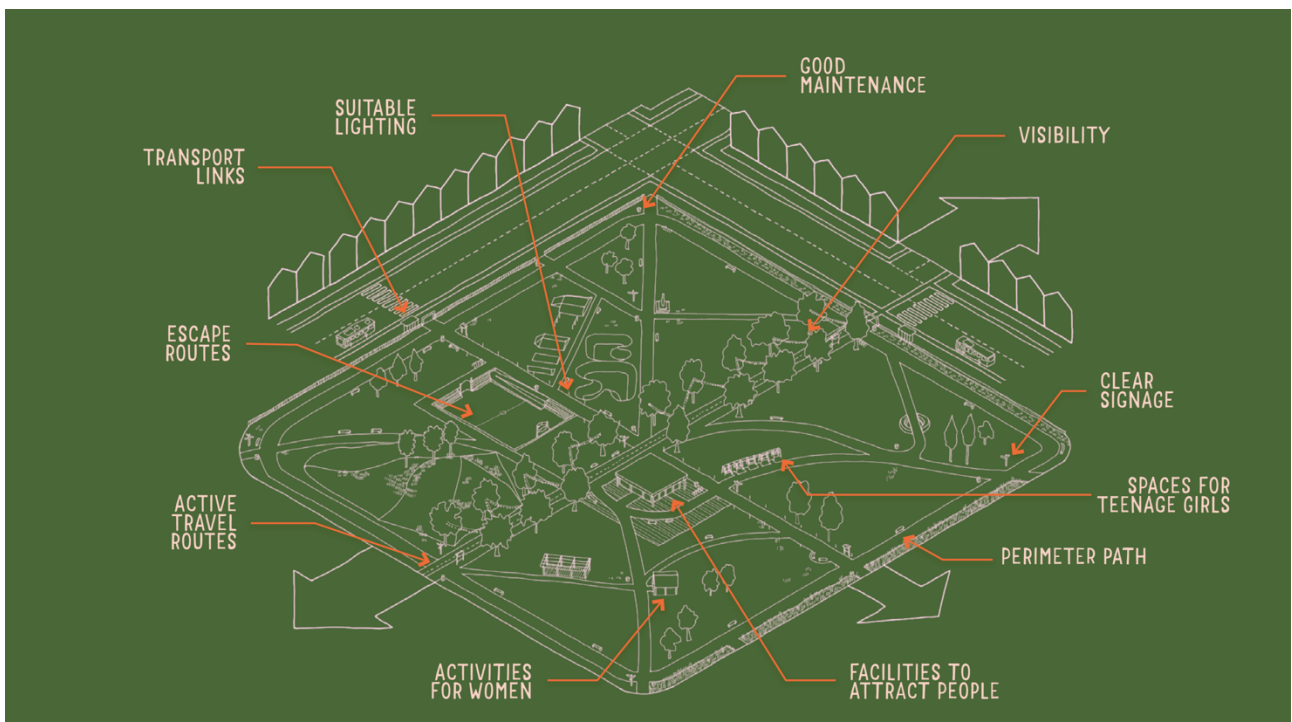


Figure 8: Design Advice for Improving Access to Parks for Women and Girls (Source: Safer Parks, 2023)

## Female-Friendly Sport Infrastructure Design Guidelines

Female sports participation at the elite and peak of athlete pathways is increasing rapidly in line with an increase in grassroots participation in sport and physical activity. This represents an exciting time for Australia but also presents challenges for sports administrators and facilities.

Sport and Recreation Victoria has developed the Female Friendly Guidelines that include the following design principles to create female-friendly facilities:

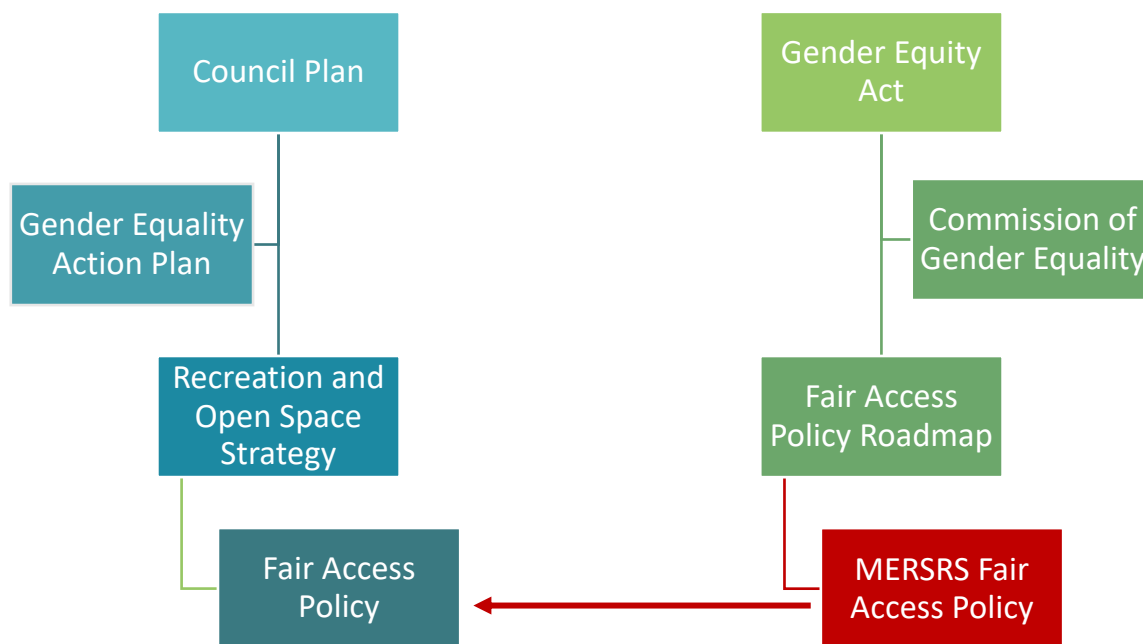
- **Fit for purpose:** While promoting a flexible and multi-use approach, ensure female-friendly design elements and specific requirements meet the level and type of activities being delivered, as well as occupant, club or tenant needs.
- **Multi and shared use:** Infrastructure should be efficiently designed to promote equitable and flexible use by a mixture of users capable of sharing facilities and usage times. The facility space planning and design of public spaces should adopt a multi-purpose approach.
- **Compatibility:** Identification of compatible sports, teams, activities, clubs or organisations with similar objectives and requirements for facility design, use and management should be promoted.
- **Universal Design:** The principles of Universal Design should be applied to community sport and recreation facilities so that they accommodate users of all ages, genders, abilities and cultural backgrounds.
- **Public Safety:** Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) takes into consideration the relationship between users and the physical environment in the design of public spaces in crime prevention and assists with public safety.
- **Health and safety:** The security and safety of users should be paramount. Sport and active recreation facilities and their surroundings should be designed, built and maintained in accordance with relevant occupational health and safety standards. They should also incorporate child-safe and safer design principles into facility design.
- **Functionality:** Facility design and layout should promote safe and optimal functionality to accommodate formal, competitive, social and recreational forms of usage and participation.



## 2.7 Key Findings of Strategic Review

*Local Government strategic and policy alignment with State Government legislation and policy on gender equity in sport and recreation is critical to a regional response to the issue.*

The following graphic shows the indicative relationship between the MERSRS Fair Access Policy with State Government’s gender equity legislation and policy and Local Government strategies.



**Figure 9: Relationships between legislation, policies and strategies**

The review of all seven councils’ current policies and strategies that influence gender equity in sport and recreation outcomes found the following key findings:

- Strategies and policy statements stating improved gender equity in sport were typically provided by each council Recreation Strategy and then reviewed at a high level as part of the Council Plan. These strategies are now supported by a Council Gender Equity Plan (usually a four-year cyclic strategic plan). These plans are mandated by the State Government through the relevant legislation.
- Three councils (Monash, Yarra Ranges and Maroondah Council) had adopted specific strategies focused on improving gender equity in sport and recreation facilities.
- Most of the Sporting Facilities Development Strategies or Policies reviewed, referenced Universal Design Principles and supported overall access to facilities. The policies that incorporated evaluation and prioritisation tools to access requests for works on sporting facilities demonstrated a stronger alignment supporting female participation.
- Two councils (Whitehorse and Knox) regularly meet and provide feedback to sporting associations, State Sporting Associations and leagues on competition and fixtures aiming to improve women and girls.
- All councils had Sport and Recreation Strategies that identified the long-term strategic priorities, objectives and actions the council would take to support female participation in sport. These Strategies will help support and inform each council's Fair Access Policy.

- Five councils (Manningham, Whitehorse, Yarra Ranges, Knox and Monash), use financial incentives or discounts to encourage female sport participation in the councils relative fees and charges policy or pricing strategy hire of sport facilities.
- All councils provide sporting clubs and associations with tool kits, campaigns and resources to support women and girls' participation in sport.
- The consistent strategic objectives relating to the Fair Access Policy identified in councils' strategies were:
  - Equitable use and access to sports facilities for women and girls.
  - Partnering and collaborating with local sporting clubs and associations and peak sporting bodies
  - The council has a responsibility to provide safe and inclusive infrastructure

*New sports facilities should adopt industry planning frameworks and design principles that deliver inclusive, safe and welcoming sport and recreation facilities and programs.*

The planning frameworks provide the following principles that will guide the design of future sport and recreation facilities, programs and services:

- **Accessible and Inclusive:** Sport and active recreation facilities and programming will be universally designed and inclusive, fostering participation in sport and active recreation by all our community, across all life stages, genders and cultures.
- **Diverse and Equitable:** Sport and active recreation facilities will offer a diverse mix of facilities, programs and experiences. The council will provide an equitable distribution of sport and active recreation precincts across the municipality and to girls' and women's sport and recreation.
- **Safe and Welcoming:** Sport and active recreation facilities and programs are designed to be visible, open and welcoming to the community, creating a safe place for girls and women to participate.
- **Multi-Use:** Sport and active recreation facilities will be multi-use, offering several activities, programs and experiences for users and enabling access to girls and women's sport and recreation.
- **Connected:** Sport and active recreation participation opportunities are connected to our communities, including our unique natural environments.
- **Sustainable:** Sport and active recreation facilities will be designed and operate efficiently, whilst being well managed and maintained.

The following reference documents and links are provided for guiding design principles:

- [Creating Places for People](#)
- [Making Places for Girls](#)
- [Healthy Active by Design](#)
- [Crime Prevention through Environmental Design](#)
- [Universal Design Principles](#)
- [Female Friendly Sports Infrastructure Design Guidelines.](#)

The Fair Access Policy should include a partnership approach with State Sporting Association, and together develop policies, practices and resources that support, encourage, and incentivise the delivery of Sport Australia strategies for increasing women and girls' representation and participation.

These strategies together with the Victorian Government’s Fair Access Policy Road Map are examples in how governments and peak sporting bodies are responding to Australia’s obligations to the international human rights framework, specifically as a signatory to UN Human Rights Council passed resolution 40/5 on the elimination of discrimination against women and girls in sport.

*Councils and State Sports Associations should partner in delivering Sport Australia strategies for increasing women and girls’ representation and participation.*

### 3. Current State of Play

*What is the current state of play for improving gender equity and access?*

This section summarises the current state of play for sport participation in the Melbourne East Region and a review of industry trends.

#### 3.1 Demographic Factors in the Region

In both the Melbourne East Region, certain groups of women encounter higher levels of disadvantage and discrimination, as well as additional obstacles to achieving good health and well-being. These groups include Aboriginal women, immigrant and refugee women, trans and gender diverse people, women facing socio-economic challenges, and women with disabilities (Women's Health East, 2021).

We acknowledge that intersectionality can impact participation in sport and active recreation. Intersectionality refers to the ways in which different aspects of a person's identity can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation. For example, an immigrant women also identifies as a person with a disability and is more likely to experience discrimination.

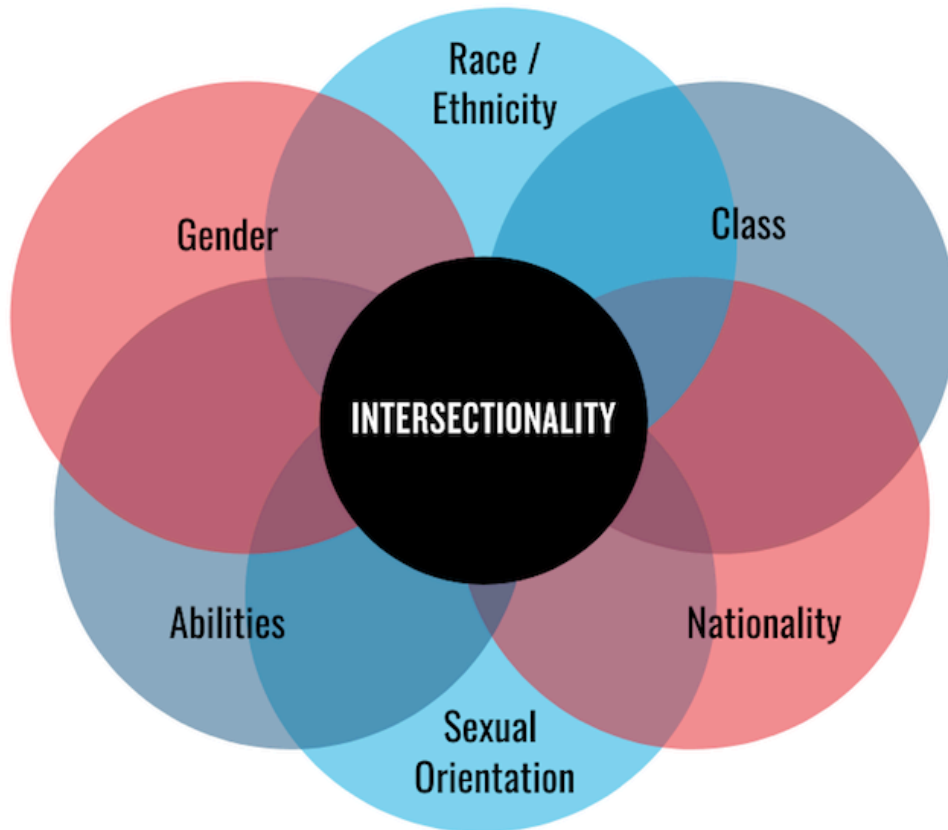


Figure 10: Intersectionality described as, the ways in which different aspects of a persons identity can expose them to overlapping marginalisation or discrimination.

The table below shows the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census 2021 data, sourced from [id.com.au](https://www.id.com.au):

- Although the Melbourne East Region is generally considered as one of relative advantage, it is important to note that there are significant low socio-economic pockets in each municipality.
- A growing population is fuelling female participation in sport and recreation. The current female population will grow from 554,139 in 2021 to 692,220 in 2041.
- There are an estimated 317,686 females within the most active years age groups (5 and 49 years) that will demand access to sport and recreation facilities, programs and services.
- There are an estimated 2,697 Aboriginal females in the Melbourne East Region. Providing culturally sensitive programs and services that connect Aboriginal girls and women to Country, Community and Culture will be important to encouraging sport and recreation participation.
- There are an estimated 195,935 females from a CALD background (born overseas). Encouraging inclusive sport and recreation clubs and programs that recognise the needs of these diverse cultural communities are important to encouraging sport and recreation participation.

**Table 9: Female Population Breakdown**

Council	Total 2021 Pop.	Total 2041 Pop.	Total Pop. Change %	Female Pop.2021	Female Pop. 2021 %	Female Pop. 2041^	Female Pop. Diff.	Female Aboriginal Pop. 2021 >	Female CALD Pop. 2021 (Born OS) >	Female Active Years (5-49) Pop. >
Melbourne East Region	1,083,589	1,332,089	21.00%	554,139	51.21%	682,220	128,081	2697	195,935	317,686
City of Monash	190,397	250,219	22.50%	95,556	50.20%	125,610	30,054	277	48,216	61,911
City of Knox	159,103	185,226	16.40%	81,164	51%	94,465	13,301	523	26,819	45,132
Manningham City Council	124,700	148,318	17.80%	64,374	51.60%	76,532	12,158	156	27,998	33,440
City of Boroondara	167,900	205,203	22.20%	87,386	52%	106,706	19,320	229	28,351	49,678
Maroondah City Council	116,075	140,904*	21.30%	59,351	51.60%	72,706	13,355	379	15,016	33,535
Whitehorse City Council	169,346	216,317	27.70%	87,430	51.60%	111,620	24,190	269	36,283	50,154
Yarra Ranges Council	156,068	185,902	19.10%	78,878	50.50%	93,881	15,003	864	13,252	43,836

\* Maroondah future population is for 2036.

^ If current proportion of females is maintained.

> If current proportion of target group; and current proportion of females is maintained.

## Target Groups

The Women's Health East's Strategic Plan 2021-25 includes a review of the demographic factors for target groups for the Melbourne East Region relevant to the strategy.

### Aboriginal women

Each council has a small percentage of its population identifying as Aboriginal, ranging from 0.2% to 1.1%. The largest female populations of those identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander reside in the Yarra Ranges, followed by Maroondah and Monash.

Yarra Ranges Council is home to 1,711 Aboriginal people, highest in the region. Aboriginal women face systemic disadvantages. Compared to non-Aboriginal women, Aboriginal women are 32 times more likely to be hospitalised as a result of family violence<sup>1</sup> and are almost 10 times more likely to die from assault. Aboriginal women are also at far greater risk of homelessness and incarceration.

### Women with disability

The latest Ausplay Survey 2021 found 70.2% of women (over 18 years) with a disability participate at least 1x per week (compared to 84.1% of other Australian women) and 53.7% three times per week (compared to 67.9%). There were 21.3% that do not participate in any sport or physical activity (compared to 9.1%).

People with a disability receive the same physical, mental, and social benefits from participating in sport and physical activity as those not having a disability. However, they are not participating at the same levels as all Australian women. Addressing barriers to participation for people with disabilities is essential to reversing this trend.

### CALD women

The percentage of the population born overseas varies among the councils, with figures ranging from 16.8% to 50.4%. Over the last five years to 30 June 2020, some 26,391 additional females have settled in the region. Monash has the highest overseas-born population (50.4%) in the region, followed by Whitehorse and then to a lesser extent in Maroondah and Manningham. The top five non-English speaking countries of birth as reported at settlement were (in descending order): China, India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Iran.

From 2015 to 2020, 816 females settled in the region through the humanitarian migration stream, with 66.8% reporting their country of birth at settlement as Myanmar, with most of these women settling in Maroondah and Yarra Ranges.

Women from CALD backgrounds face additional barriers to education and employment and may have limited information about their rights. CALD women are over-represented in low-paid and insecure work and, coupled with family commitments, find it a challenge to participate in sport and recreation.

For example, migrant women are 7% less likely to be employed than those born in Australia. 37.5% of women accessing domestic violence support services are of non-English speaking backgrounds but represent only 17.3% of the total population in Victoria.

### Age

The impacts of gender vary over a lifetime. For example, during adolescence, expectations of girls are increasingly shaped by gender norms that impact girls' social, educational and leisure choices.<sup>6</sup> Women retire with half the superannuation savings of men, and older women are at greater risk of homelessness than older men.<sup>7</sup>

People in their active years tend to be the biggest participants in sports. All councils have a considerable population of people in their active years, ranging from 38% to 46%.

### Women from low SES backgrounds

Women from low SES backgrounds face barriers in accessing services and supports which can compound other gendered disadvantages. For example, socio-economic inequity heightens the risk of violence against women. Women from low SES are less likely to participation in sport and recreation.

**Table 10: Individual weekly incomes of females and males (above or below the minimum weekly wage) across the local government areas in Melbourne’s East. Source- ABS Census of Population and Housing 2016**

	Percent of females and males earning less than the minimum weekly wage (\$0 to \$649), 2016								
	Boroondara	Knox	Manningham	Maroondah	Monash	Whitehorse	Yarra Ranges	Eastern Metro	Victoria
Female	36.7	45.7	46.7	43.8	48.4	46.4	45	44.7	45.7
Male	26.7	29.9	32.9	27.8	36.1	33.5	28	30.7	32.5

### LGBTIQ+

LGBTIQ+ communities face significant barriers to accessing essential inclusive services and supports in the community including in sport and recreation environments. The LGBTIQ community experience discrimination when attempts are made to access services, or when attempting to support friends, partners or other individuals who identify as LGBTIQ+ within the service system. This experience often leads to a fear that this will be experienced in other life settings like within a sports club or fitness program. This community experiences family violence, and significant discrimination, which have negative implications for individual and collective mental health, general health and wellbeing.

## 3.2 Participation

The updated MERSRS 2022-2032 sourced State Sporting Association registered participants (club members) across major participation sports. The 2031 projected sports participation is based on the current participation rate applied to the future population.

The table shows:

- The proportion of females that play listed major participation sports is 36% of the total registered participation in 2021, well below parity.
- The female participation for listed major participation sports will increase from 61,837 participants in 2021 to 70,224 participants in 2031 (an additional 8,387 female participants). This will mean access to more facilities, competitions, and programs will be needed to service this future demand.



- The following female participation rates (2021), across all listed major participation sports for each LGA area were:
  - Boroondara 14.89%
  - Knox 10.65%
  - Manningham 9.72%
  - Maroondah 12.56%
  - Monash 7.13%
  - Whitehorse 12.18%
  - Yarra Ranges 10.28%.

Improving on this participation rate will outperform the future 2031 participation projections in the table below.

**Table 11: State Sporting Association Registered Participants 2021 and Future 2031 Projections**

Sports	Total Particip. Rate 2021	Total 2021 Particip.	Total Particip. Rate 2036	Women and Girls Particip. Rate 2021	Women and Girls 2021 Particip.	Women and Girls Particip. Rate 2036	Diff.
AFL	3.00%	33,122	37,583	1.20%	6,739	7,653	914
Badminton	0.12%	1,295	1,469	0.08%	453	514	61
Baseball	0.11%	1,199	1,360	0.02%	132	150	18
Basketball	3.96%	43,668	49,549	2.26%	12,705	14,428	1,723
Bowls	0.52%	5,757	6,532	0.22%	1,223	1,389	166
Calisthenics	0.15%	1,618	1,836	0.29%	1,613	1,832	219
Cricket	1.66%	18,341	20,811	0.21%	1,205	1,368	163
Football	1.00%	11,025	12,510	0.35%	1,962	2,228	266
Gymnastics	1.07%	11,803	13,393	1.67%	9,403	10,678	1,275
Hockey	0.28%	3,063	3,476	0.22%	1,133	1,287	154
Netball	1.63%	18,006	20,431	3.12%	17,545	19,925	2,380
Rugby League	0.02%	189	214	0.0%	25	28	3
Rugby Union	0.10%	1,145	1,299	0.02%	96	109	13
Swimming	0.16%	1,806	2,049	0.20%	1,118	1,270	152
Tennis	1.40%	15,421	17,498	1.03%	5,823	6,613	790
Volleyball	0.13%	1,477	1,676	0.12%	662	752	90

A review of the participation data indicates:

- Basketball has the highest women and girls' participation rate (2.26%), with a total of 12,705 participants in 2021 and projected to grow to 14,428 in 2036. This was followed by Netball and Tennis.
- Rugby, along with Baseball, recorded the lowest women and girls' participation rate (0.02%). Rugby only had 25 participants in 2021, while baseball had 132. Both are projected to grow to 28 and 150, respectively.

## Barriers to Girls and Women's Participation in Sport and Recreation

The *Moreland Active Women and Girls Strategy (2015)* reported on survey findings exploring the participation barriers faced by women and girls in sport and recreation and in leading an active lifestyle.

Whilst barriers vary for different people, some common barriers reported are:

- Fragmented time constraints – family commitments and household responsibilities.
- Availability of options at convenient times.
- Cultural norms.
- Inadequate infrastructure i.e., lack of suitable change rooms or women-only spaces.
- Family commitments and responsibilities.
- Existing injury or disability (for older women).
- Racism and discrimination towards women from a CALD background i.e., different cultural values and dress.
- Limited social network.
- Negative body image.
- Perceived lack of skills to undertake the activity i.e., swimming etc.
- Perceived safety issues i.e., accessing recreation facilities after dark, dogs, uneven pavements, etc.
- Lack of fitness and associated concerns about keeping up or doing the right thing.
- Tiredness due to family/childcare responsibilities.
- Cultural and religious barriers – inappropriate dress codes and lack of safe, comfortable, and accessible facilities.
- Lack of childcare and lack of awareness of childcare options.

The World Health Organisation recently conducted a study into the *Barriers and Facilitators of Physical Activity Participation in Adolescent Girls*. The report was released in March 2022 and found:

- Teenage girls quit sports because school and academic activities are too demanding. They tend to get involved in other activities that are less demanding than a competitive sport that requires training and competing two to three times each week.
- Participation of girls between 10 and 19 is in decline, and there is urgent action needed to reverse this trend to safeguard their long-term health. “Globally, around 85% of girls do not meet the WHO recommendations of at least 60 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous physical activity. Also, the participation of girls in exercise and sports declines throughout adolescence.
- WHO identifies providing for physical exercise (PE) in the school curriculum but also before, during and after school day. A whole-of-school approach that links the school curriculum with the broader school environment and local community programs can increase the participation of adolescent girls.

## 3.3 Local Governments Response to Gender Equity in Sport and Recreation

This section summarises the current state of play for the seven local governments and in particular, their response to gender equity in sport and recreation. The evidence cited in this section was sourced by surveying and seeking evidence from Sport and Recreation Council Officers at the seven LGAs.

## Infrastructure Allocation

Of the seven councils surveyed, all heavily rely on Ausplay and State Sport Association participation data to understand the number of registered sports participants in their municipality. They do not directly capture gender participation data from municipality sports clubs and associations on what category of user i.e., junior girls or senior women's teams, use specific sporting facilities (fields, courts and greens).

However, the following councils capture and monitor participation data for most of its sporting facilities. These are:

- Knox City Council - AFL, cricket, rugby, tennis, baseball, softball.
- Yarra Ranges Council – AFL, netball, soccer and cricket.
- Monash City Council – Baseball, AFL, rugby, soccer, softball, cricket, tennis and lawn bowls.
- City of Boroondara - AFL, archery, baseball, cricket, croquet, lacrosse, lawn bowls, little athletics, hockey, netball, pétanque rugby, soccer, tennis and ultimate frisbee.
- Whitehorse City Council - Cricket, Baseball, Australian Football, Soccer, Rugby, Lacrosse

Interestingly, all five councils report, on average, a split of 78% of sports facilities allocated to boys and men's teams/participants and 22% of sports facilities allocated to girls and women's teams/participants.

*There is an inequity in the allocation of sports facilities between boys and men's teams and girls and women's teams.*

As girls and women's participation grows and more teams and programs are introduced, councils in partnership with state and local sporting associations will need to consider how to provide equitable allocations to sporting clubs to meet this demand/need. This may require re-prioritising or thinking differently about how sports facilities and competitions are distributed across a network, as opposed to allocating to a specific club for a summer or winter season. Improving usage data collection is a key consideration for the Fair Access Policy.

Most councils have an allocation policy that provides incentives i.e., discounts for girls and women's teams' use of sports facilities.

## Sporting Bodies Governance

To gain future funding, state sports associations (SSAs) are now required to have 40% women on their boards, and this is a priority for many SSAs. Whilst this mandate is not currently directed for sporting associations and clubs yet, it is shows that the leadership gender split in the sports industry is increasingly a priority.

Of the seven councils surveyed, only one council (Whitehorse City Council) collects information on the gender distribution of local sports associations and club committees. Whitehorse Council acknowledged that this is a snapshot of a very limited data set, as it is about 10% of the clubs they have facility arrangements. They reported the number of paid and volunteer staff split by gender for the major sporting associations, leagues and clubs, as shown in the table below.

**Table 12: Whitehorse Sports Association/Club Governance Survey Response**

Sport Associations /Club Name	Paid Staff						Volunteers					
	Male		Female		Other		Male		Female		Other	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Box Hill Reporter District Cricket Association	1	100					15	88%	2	12%		
Eastern Football Netball League	6	75	2	25			7	70%	3	30%		
Nunawading Basketball Association	3	38	5	62			6	86%	1	14%		
12 various Community Sporting Clubs							91	76%	29	24%		

The Whitehorse example shows that this is not being achieved across key sports clubs and associations where only 20% of boards/committees are female.

*Research shows that increased gender diversity on boards leads to improved organisational performance.*

Whitehorse City Council is currently the only council in a position to report on progress to the State Government. **Improving governance data collection is a key consideration for the Fair Access Policy.**

Some councils have provided sports clubs with resources and self-assessment tool kits on improving the club environment for girls and women i.e., Creating a Place for Women in Sport Self-Assessment Tool (Yarra Ranges Council). This has often been through club development programs and workshops.

Knox, Yarra Ranges and Maroondah Councils have collaborated to create the Gender Equality (GE) assessment and action plan. Currently, Knox City Council is conducting workshops with clubs to help them understand these tools and put them into practice, as part of our support in response to the new Facility Usage Policy.

### Resource Allocation

All councils surveyed have dedicated Sporting Pavilion and Facility Development Policies to inform the prioritisation, funding, provision and scale of renewal and upgrade works at their municipalities. Some councils' policies included specific outcomes and objectives to access and universal design principles that help support women and girls' participation.

All councils surveyed tracked total budget spend for:

- New builds (i.e., new pavilion)
- Redevelopments and renewals (i.e., renewal of sports courts)
- Maintenance and operations (i.e., turf maintenance, cleaning, utilities)
- Total annual council grant funding for sporting clubs.

Budgets varied each year and across councils. The following councils noted specific capital and operational funding and/or sports club grants and resources provided to sporting clubs that were dedicated to supporting gender equity outcomes in sport and recreation:

- Boroondara
- Yarra Ranges
- Monash City Council

- Maroondah
- Knox.

Specifically, Maroondah is the only council that reviews and reports on its female-friendly capital works projects. They have been reporting in this way since 2015. Female-friendly specific developments include gender-neutral change rooms, car parks and pathway security lighting. Since adopting this approach.

*It noted in 2017, 78% of existing facilities at Council’s sporting grounds did not adequately cater for female participation, and this has since improved, with now just 20% of existing facilities not adequately catering for female participation in 2023. The remaining 20% is identified for future redevelopment in the Capital Works Program.*

Monash completed a detailed capital spend analysis, per sport and gender. Council staff identified this approach as is beneficial when discussing funding priorities. See Monash’s reporting table below.

**Table 13: Monash City Council budget breakdown by sport and gender (Source: Monash City Council, 2023)**

Overall Spend Per Sport			Gender Analysis Of 2022/23 Capital Spend			
Sport	2022/23 Capital Works Spend on Sporting Facilities	Capital Spend Per Participant	Male Participants	Female Participants	Male Spend	Female Spend
Cricket	\$3,627,000	\$1,278	2629 (93%)	209 (7%)	\$3,373,110	\$253,890
AFL	\$1,238,000	\$626	1606 (81%)	374 (19%)	\$1,002,780	\$235,220
Soccer	\$600,000	\$310	1722 (89%)	210 (11%)	\$534,000	\$66,000
Rugby	\$357,000	\$506	575 (82%)	130 (18%)	\$292,740	\$64,260
Tennis	\$10,645,250	\$2,650	2209 (55%)	1808 (45%)	\$5,854,887	\$4,790,362
Golf	\$3,910,750	-	65%	35%	\$2,541,987	\$1,368,762
Total	\$20,378,000				\$13,599,504	\$6,778,494

*The examples provided by Maroondah and Monash show that collecting data and reporting on funding to projects and programs based on gender can help inform decision-making that is more equitable.*

These steps have led to sports facilities being designed in a way that can welcome and accommodate girls and women participants. **Improving Council expenditure data collection is a key consideration for the Fair Access Policy.**

## 3.4 Examples of Local Initiatives

*What are we currently doing to make the change?*

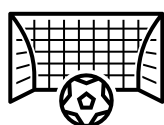
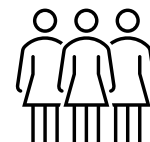


### Boroondara City Council

**Inclusive Clubs** - Project builds club official's knowledge on how to make their club more inclusive by creating safe, equal and respectful environments for all members, particularly women and girls.

### Knox City Council

**This Girl Can** - Three local Exhibitions of Knox community members and athletes with the aim of inspiring future generations of local female sport participation.



### Manningham City Council

**Go Soccer Mums** –Introductory soccer program for women. Facilitating improved access to Muslim community in 2022

### Maroondah City Council

**This Girl Can** – launched women volleyball competition that has seen the growth in participation from four teams to two division supporting numerous teams of all ages and abilities.



### Monash City Council

**Community Leaders United by Sports Club** – pilot program funded by SRV to work with 18 clubs across two years to better understand the barriers for women and girls participate in sport.

**Free dance party** – free dance party group fitness class for all women at the Oakleigh Recreation Centre.

### Yarra Ranges Council

**She Can Ride** – beginners mountain bike program for girls aged 7 to 17 to learn to ride.



### Whitehorse City Council

**Female-friendly pavilion** - Walker Park Reserve pavilion redevelopment which provided improvements to the existing change room and amenities to a standard that supports the continued growth of female participation in sport.

**Regional initiative** - Yarra Ranges, Knox and Maroondah, Inspiro Health EACH Creating a place for women in sport – self-assessment tool for community recreation and sporting clubs to promote equality, enabling Councils to work in collaboration with clubs to develop a sports equity action plan.



### 3.5 Key Findings of Current State of Play

*Women and girl's participation in sport and recreation is being fuelled by population growth and improved access to new competitions and programs.*

The proportion of females in the Melbourne East Region is 51.21% or 554,139 people. If the current proportion of females is maintained, there is an estimated increase of 128,081 females by 2041, reaching 682,220 people. Female population growth will translate in more girls and women participants in sport and recreation that will demand access to sport and recreation facilities, programs, and services.

The most active years age groups in our community are between 5 and 49 years of age. There are an estimated 317,686 females within this age group that will demand access to sport and recreation facilities, programs and services.

The female participation for listed major participation sports in MERSRS 2022-2032 will increase from 61,837 participants in 2021 to 70,224 participants in 2031 (an additional 8,387 female participants). This will mean access to more facilities, competitions and programs will be needed to service this future demand.

*Delivering culturally sensitive, accessible, and inclusive sports facilities, programs and services is important for parts of the Melbourne East Region.*

There are 0.49% or 2,697 females that identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Providing culturally sensitive programs and services for Aboriginal girls and women that welcome and connect people to Country, Community and Culture will be important to encouraging sport and recreation participation. This is particularly true for Yarra Ranges Council, the City of Maroondah and the City of Knox which have a relatively high proportion of Aboriginal community.

There are 34.73% or 195,935 females that are from a CALD background (born overseas). Encouraging inclusive sport and recreation clubs and programs that recognise diverse cultural backgrounds and particularly customs that impact female participation will be important to encouraging sport and recreation participation. This is particularly true for the City of Monash, the City of Manningham and Whitehorse City Council which have a relatively high proportion of CALD community.

Females with a disability participate less than all female Australians. Limited opportunities to participate in a supported and modified way is restricted participation by people with a disability. Providing adaptive programs and services and accessible sport and recreation facilities are key ingredients to improving participation by females with a disability.

*Melbourne East Region councils have improved access to facilities for girls and women, however, the lack of data on the use and representation of girls and women in sport and recreation is limiting progress.*

There is a lack of data available from most councils. It will continue to be challenging to make meaningful change across the Melbourne East Region without an evidence base to inform decision-making. Key data sets include how many girls and women have access to sport and recreation facilities, programs and services, representation of women on boards and committees, and the council's funding of initiatives designed to improve access to sport and recreation facilities, programs and services.

The survey of Melbourne East Region councils found:

- Allocation of sporting grounds and facilities for competition and training is dominated by male participants, with the three councils supplying data reporting on average a split of 78% of sports facilities allocation to male teams and 22% of sports facilities allocation to female teams.

As girl's and women's participation grows and more teams and programs are introduced, councils will need to consider how to provide equitable allocations to meet this demand/need. This may require re-prioritising or thinking differently about how sports facilities are distributed across a network, as opposed to allocating to a specific team for a summer or winter season. Improving data collection is a key consideration for the Fair Access Policy.

- Only one council collected data on how many paid and volunteer committee members were female. Whitehorse found only 20% of committee members were female. This is well short of State Sporting Associations requiring 40% of boards to have female representation to gain State Government funding.

Female governance leadership of sporting bodies has been identified as a key priority for the Government through the adopted Gender Equity Strategies and State Sporting Associations.

- Resource allocation and funding of renewal or capital works for sporting facilities varied at each council. Only one had completed a detailed capital spend analysis, per sport and gender. This council's approach has been beneficial when discussing funding priorities, including when seeking the adoption of their Fair Access Policies.



## 4. Next steps

The next steps for the project are:

- MERSRS Project Steering Committee to consider the findings of the Background Report, discuss what this means and what are important themes for the MERSRS Fair Access Policy.
- Following this workshop, the Fair Access Policy will be prepared and include a policy document containing why we need a policy, what we found, what is the policy for, what we want to achieve, and what steps we will take to achieve this?
- The second workshop will be a presentation of this Fair Access Policy document and to discuss feedback.
- A Council Report Template and Evaluation Framework will follow this step. The Evaluation Framework will include an action plan with measurable targets. The evaluation framework will determine a baseline to track gender equity data.

## 5. Warranties and Disclaimers

The information contained in this report is provided in good faith. While Otium Planning Group has applied their experience to the task, they have relied upon information supplied to them by other persons and organisations.

We have not conducted an audit of the information provided by others but have accepted it in good faith. Some of the information may have been provided 'commercial in confidence', and these venues or sources of information are not specifically identified. Readers should be aware that the preparation of this report may have necessitated projections of the future that are inherently uncertain and that our opinion is based on the underlying representations, assumptions and projections detailed in this report.

Otium Planning Group's advice does not extend to, or imply professional expertise in the disciplines of economics, quantity surveying, engineering or architecture. External advice in one or more of these disciplines may have been sought, where necessary to address the requirements of the project objectives. There will be differences between projected and actual results because events and circumstances frequently do not occur as expected, and those differences may be material. We do not express an opinion as to whether actual results will approximate projected results, nor can we confirm, underwrite, or guarantee the projections' achievability as it is impossible to substantiate assumptions based on future events.

This report does not constitute advice, investment advice, or opinion and must not be relied on for funding or investment decisions. Independent advice should be obtained in relation to investment decisions.

Accordingly, neither Otium Planning Group, nor any member or employee of Otium Planning Group, undertakes responsibility arising in any way whatsoever to any persons other than the client in respect of this report, for any errors or omissions herein, arising through negligence or otherwise however caused.