

Women and Girls Action Plan 2026 – 2031

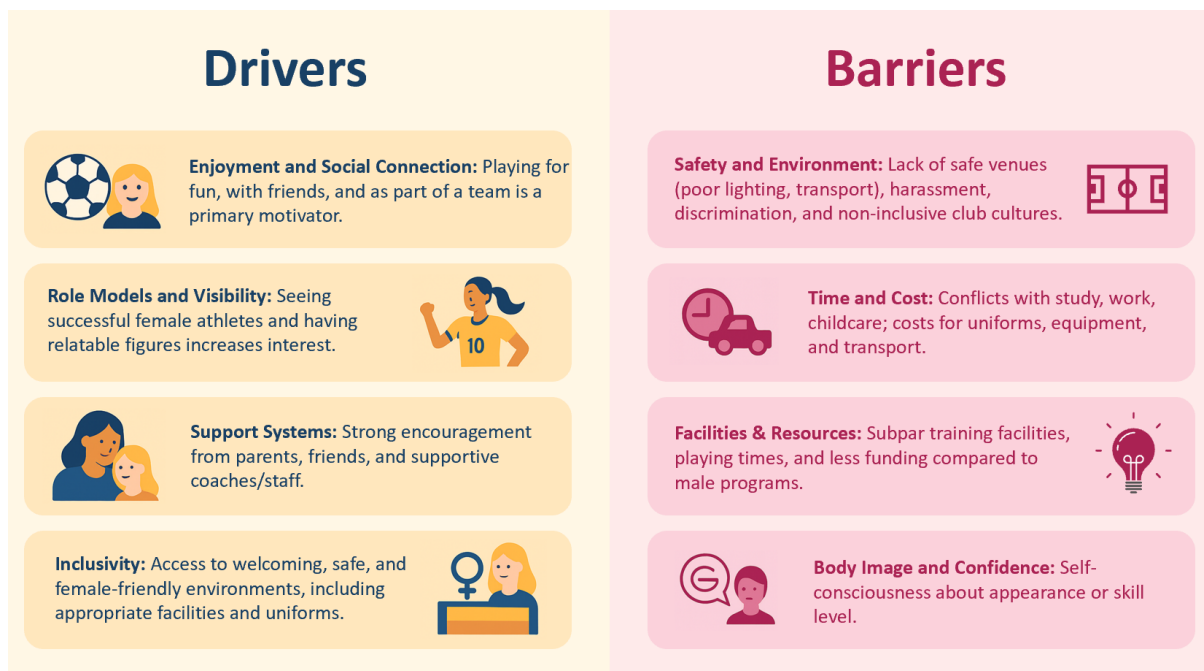
Douglas Park Wilton FC
December 2025



An inclusive strategy to support our women and girls

There are systemic challenges in football which is impacting overall player retention and growth. While still largely regarded as the sport with some of the highest playing numbers for children under 12 years old, the proportion of women and girls playing the sport in comparison to men is a considerable gap.

Figure 1: A mix of factors contributes to decisions to play football



Expectations were high in 2023 with the FIFA Women's World Cup hosted in Australia and New Zealand. While women and girls registrations have marginally increased, a lack of continued investment at a grassroots level or limited proactive inclusive playing experiences has been cited as some of the broader issues.

Grassroots clubs play a critical role in shaping the football experience for girls. When clubs lack resources, visibility, and inclusive culture, girls are more likely to disengage from the sport early—before they can realise their potential or lifelong connection to football.

But the flip side is powerful: when clubs invest in girls, provide role models, create safe spaces, and prioritise inclusion, female participation skyrockets.

Douglas Park Wilton FC is a growing community club serving a semi-rural area with rapidly increasing junior participation. While the club has made strong steps toward supporting female players, girls and women continue to face unique challenges across the club environment.

In 2025, Douglas Park Wilton FC sought feedback from our members on their experiences, as well as engaged other local clubs and our member association. A summary is provided below:

- **Parents overall want the best playing experience for their children**, with a preference for their child being able to play with their friends.
- Available **coaching roles** are often for boys only teams, and women do not feel supported by parents or other adults to act in those roles.

- Parents have commented that the ‘coach’ role is viewed as a typical male role, while the ‘manager’ is viewed as a predominantly female position.
- Coaches have noted that parents appear to intervene in training sessions or on game day more often when a female is coaching a team than a male.
- Coaching in general (male and female led) requires more support to cater for the different skill or interest levels in teams, noting that more girls start playing the sport from 8 years of age.
- Players noted that the **costs** associated with playing the sport are often higher for women and girls with additional clothing required, such as sports bras, alternative shorts, or other undergarments.
- **Spectator behaviour** is cited as a common challenge across all ages, where officials and players are abused for results (on occasion) despite the non-competition structure of the MiniRoos program.
- **Time, physical health and family commitments** are cited as primary barriers for senior players, with a desire to play socially is a preference over a formal competition.

At the time of drafting this strategy, the Macarthur Football Association (MFA) was in the process of reviewing it’s strategic plan. This includes rolling out more inclusive programs to grow the number of women and girls playing football, particularly in the seniors space.

This action plan focuses on what Douglas Park Wilton FC can do over the next 5 years to increase it’s representation of women and girls in the sport. These actions range from player pathways and experiences, coach education and advocacy.

Our Vision: Speak up and lead from the front

An inclusive community football experience is more than just playing a sport on the weekend. It is about our coaches, families, friends and community fostering a culture of support, passion and understanding.

Douglas Park Wilton FC is committed to growing the representation of women and girls in grassroots football. Respect is shown in the game, between players and from the sidelines.

How we measure success:

By 2031, we aim to achieve a 50/50% balance of our registered players, coaches and volunteers identifying as female.

Actions

The following actions are to be worked towards in the first 12-24 months of this action plan. The below list will be reviewed at the end of the 2026 season, alongside an evaluation of the plan's success.

Action 1: Grow our pathways for new and social players

- Run Girls-Only “Come & Try” Days at Douglas Park Sportsground to attract local families and introduce football in a friendly, low-pressure way.
- Create a weekly social football session for women and girls—no uniforms, no commitment, just a kick-around – See **Appendix A: Social Football Pilot**
- Offer beginner skill clinics led by supportive coaching staff, especially targeted at new-to-sport players in the local community.
- Introduce a buddy player system, where returning players support new girls in their first few weeks.
- Provide cost discounts to players referring new players to the club, such as a ‘bring a friend’ discount’.
- Run mid-season and end-of-season check-ins with girls’ teams to gather feedback.
- Engage parents through girls’ program information nights, volunteer opportunities, and open training sessions.
- Establish a program for all players to prepare a ‘letter of commitment to supporting women and girls, which would be returned to the player alongside their 5 year service award.

Action 2: Development Pathways for Skill Progression

- Align all junior girls’ training with Football NSW skill acquisition and youth development frameworks.
- Offer optional extra development sessions, such as a weekly “Girls Technical Mastery Hour.”
- Provide regular, positive player feedback, focusing on encouragement and confidence-building.
- Host position-specific workshops (e.g., goalkeeper development with specialist coaches from nearby clubs).
- Partner with local female role models—W-League, NPL, or former club players—to run training or wellbeing sessions.

Action 3: Provide comfortable, fit for purpose uniforms and gear

- Apply for a grant to subsidise the cost of new uniform purchases for women and girls
- Partner with appropriate uniform providers to provide discounts on sporting goods and equipment for registered players.

Action 4: Build the confidence and support for coaches and managers

- Provide coaches with inclusive coaching training to help them better understand the needs of young female players.
- Ensure all girls teams have an appointed coach and assistant coach.
- Provide opportunities for women and girls aged 14 and up to take up coaching roles with the support of qualified coaches and associated training courses.
- Identify emerging female coaches in the club and provide financial assistance or sponsorship to support them to undertake professional coaching qualifications such as a C License Certificate.
- Develop a process via the club's Member Protection and Information Officer for coaches and managers to request assistance with parent behaviour, player development and general training to foster a culture of speaking up and increasing support for volunteers.

Action 5: Advocate for improved competition experiences

- Work with our member association to improve the outcomes for women and girls in a review of their strategic plan.
- Engage with our member association to:
 - Encourage and support the establishment of an over 30's Women's competition.
 - Review the maximum number of eligible players on a match card for dedicated women's and girl's teams.
 - Seek support to offset registration fees from the association.
 - Explore set times and days that alternate or differ to men's competitions to support player availability.
- Pilot social programs that promote fun, inclusion and fitness as a core part of a game and to complement the regular competition season.

Action 6: Create an promotional and rewarding experience through female football week.

- Engage in Female Football Week taking forward some or all of the below initiatives:
 - Become the coach for a day - Players are encouraged (with support of the Committee and other coaches to run a training session for the parents or for Under 5s and Under 6s teams.

- Take part in a social fundraiser that sponsors a women's-based charity which can leverage:
 - Custom female football week jersey
 - Charity match
 - Sponsored raffle.
- Use social media social media to highlight the achievements of players, coaches, managers and volunteers.

Appendix A: Social Football Pilot

Modelled off Kick on for Women, a program established by Football NSW, the below program blends the two variations of the program as an introduction to the sport.

Over 8 weeks, participants develop their core football skills and gain an understanding of the laws of the game and gives women a taste of football through small-sided games.

Odd weeks (week 1, 3, 5 and 7) focus on the core skills established by Football NSW. In small sided game formats, these sessions are run by professional coaches to introduce women to the game. No pressure, just skill development and fun.

Even weeks (week 2, 4, 6 and 8) focus on non-competitive games of 6-a-side. This opportunity allows participants to practice skills learnt through the previous weeks skills lesson into a game style format. 20 minute games are played in a round robin format where each team gets to play each other in different variations.

Potential partnership options with Macarthur Bulls FC

The EmpowerHER – Macarthur Bulls Community Program is an initiative aimed at fostering a free inclusive and accessible football pathway for women and girls in South West Sydney and the Macarthur region. Focused on engaging CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse), Indigenous, and isolated communities, the program works to break down barriers to participation, including cultural norms, language challenges, and limited access to equipment.

An opportunity exists to pilot these programs to enhance their success and delivery but integrate the structure with parents and children.

In a potential partnership arrangement, players would register for the full 8 week program.

During odd weeks, the coaches appointed by the Macarthur Bulls FC would deliver core skills sessions aligned to the EmpowerHER program. Where parents of children are participating in odd weeks, arrangements can be made via the club for their child to be supervised by the club's volunteers. Of note:

- Club volunteers would have a valid working with children's check
- Children would be provided with light food and drinks and a movie on a screen in Douglas Park Community Hall, and
- Additional volunteers may be required to support this offering.

During even weeks, Douglas Park Wilton FC would coach non competitive 6-a-side games. Concurrently, when parents of children are participating in games, the coaches of the Macarthur Bulls FC could operate a skills based clinic for interested children.

The above program is subject to availability and appropriate resources.

The proposed dates of the program are Thursday evenings from 6.30pm-7.30pm, commencing on 15 January 2026.