

## CASE STUDY

Case study title: Imperials Football Netball Club

Date/s this story occurred (if applicable): 2023-2024

**Short overview of your case study (2-3 sentences):**

The Imperials Football Netball Club (IFNC) wanted to create a more inclusive and equitable club for all members.

While investigating the main drivers of inequality in the club, they noted discrepancies between how male footballers are encouraged to play and celebrated compared to how the netballers were.

**Backstory:**

Imperial Football Club was initiated in 1929 as a standalone football club in the Sunraysia Football League, with netball incorporated into the club in the 1980s.

Imperial football and netball club now includes:

- 2 senior football teams
- 4 senior netball teams
- 6 junior football teams and another 60 Auskick participants
- 11 junior netball teams

IFNC signed up to the project in May 2023. In the beginning, key members of the leadership team were resistant to changing how the club functions. With some opposed to any changes that solely benefitted netball members.

The general committee members expressed concern on the lack of equitable pay between the football and netball teams and the inequitable way resources were divided between the teams.

This was supported through the Club Checklist where it was identified that the areas for improvement included:

- Payments to senior players in their senior football team at a minimum of \$50 a game while the senior netballers in their top division received no payments.
- The senior football teams also received a brand-new match ball for all home games. The senior netball team were given 1 new ball at the start of the season.
- The Club committee was underrepresented by women and gender diverse people.
- The team mascot was a very muscular footballer with the letters IFC on his shirt. The netballers were not represented within this mascot at all.

**What was your vision (opportunity)?**

The club goal at the start of the project was identified as “Work to create more equality between the football and netball departments of the club for the benefit of all genders.”

**What were the barriers to achieving the vision (challenge)?**

The committee and members at the time included people who were stuck on “old school male mentality” thinking.

During committee meetings and often around the club, members of leadership, players and spectators could be heard making inappropriate comments about the female members (as identified in the members survey).

The Action Group commented that “sniggers during Committee meetings (after sexist jokes or stories) set up an attitude of acceptance of this way of thinking”.

This led to a culture within the club that suggested the men were better than the women and changes that benefitted the netballers were hard to establish.

**What were the actions made to address the barrier (what happened)?**

- Four committee members attended workshops with MRCC and WHLM. The workshops addressed Gender Equality and barriers to achieving equity for all genders.
- The Gender Equity Action Group was led by an enthusiastic man who was also the father of netball players at the club.
- The Gender Audit, including the member survey, was used to identify the impact gender inequality had on women and gender diverse members at the club. It was used as evidence to support implementing change.
- Utilising this data the Action Group were able to appeal to the committee to commit to the work and make appropriate changes.
- The club hosted a Gender Equity workshop for their members following training on Wednesday 23 July 2023. This workshop was attended by approximately 50 senior football and netball members. Education received from this workshop led to a change of attitudes toward how the club was run at a committee level.
- “After the workshop, there was a couple of comments made by an old man near the bar. The current president made a point of walking over to them and telling them to stop and that it was not funny. It was at this point where I actually believed the intentions were genuine. The response was done to make change and not to grandstand or anything like that.” – Playing member and parent.
- As the drive for change continued less supportive leaders within the committee left and allowed people who were more supportive of the work to have positions where they could make changes that were identified in the Gender Audit.
- The club made changes to the Code of Conduct for its members and made the members aware of the Code of Conduct.
- The Leadership team were told to call out inappropriate comments and work with the Committee to deal with issues as they arose.

- In September 2023 the Committee voted to establish a payment scheme for the senior netballers. In the 2024 season the A Grade netballers will receive a minimum \$50 per game.
- In April 2024 IFNC will host Bystander Training that will be mandatory for their senior players.

### What was the outcome/change/impact?

- Inclusive language - "The Imperials Club" is being used to stop the separation between the footballers and the netballers and a strong focus on the fact they are one club is encouraged by leadership.
- Rebranding of the club – With a move to a new home the Imperials have made it an opportunity to rebrand the club. Changing their logo from a standalone Football logo to a combined logo.
  - **Old logo:**



- **New logo:**



- IFNC introduced combined training sessions and when making advertisements for the club ensured there was an equitable focus on all members.
  - Examples of equitable advertising used on Facebook in 2024:



- The IFNC are planning to install a digital honour board to grant life membership to women who have not been acknowledged in the past. This will improve gender equity within the club as women have not been awarded the same life member opportunities as the men historically.
- The team has seen an increase in their junior participants since beginning the project.
  - 24 added netball girls
  - 60 added junior football participants (including female Auskick participants)

- **What resources were useful in the case study?**

Sporting Club Checklist

Member Experience Survey

Club Leadership Engagement Presentation (WHLM)

Introduction to Gender Equality in Sport – Workshop (WHLM)

Gendering in a New Era Action Group

- **Does this case study highlight an intersectional approach to gender equity?**

No

- **What have you learned about gender equity through this case study (eg. how will it inform future actions)?**

The importance of education in changing the opinions and perceptions of people. Through the education received in the workshops, resistant members of the committee were able to understand how they could make change.

The most important part of this project is to create whole club culture change. The main goal should be to provide the building blocks to ongoing work that can be driven by the club.

Once provided with the evidence the club went about making several small changes that had implications for all their members. There was no one big grand gesture – it was a whole heap of baby steps that the club instigated.

It is important to recognise that none of these small steps would have happened if it wasn't for this project. The club checklist provided the opportunity for the committee to examine their role in gender inequities that existed and once exposed they committed to changing their culture supported by the MRCC Project Officer.

Without the dedicated project officer resource or the process that was developed this change would not have occurred.



**Significant quotes:**

“It was a heck of a learning curve!” – C Sharman – Previous Club President

“The old school male mentality really annoyed me and was something I needed to change for my daughters” – M Kelly – Current Vice President

“After the workshop, there was a couple of comments made by an old man near the bar. The current president made a point of walking over to them and telling them to stop and that it was not funny. It was at this point where I actually believed the intentions were genuine. The response was done to make change and not to grandstand or anything like that.” – Playing member and parent.

The clubs, organisations or partnerships involved in your case study (include SRV if relevant). Provide a short explanation of the partnership or involvement:

Mick Kelly - Imperials Club Vice President helped create the case study.

Women’s Health Loddon Mallee – Club Audit Review and Report

## IMAGERY and MEDIA

If including imagery and/or media, you must provide details attached to all submissions supplied by your organisation including: the name and consent of person/s in the image and the source of imagery (photographer, newspaper, online source). SRV may request a separate media consent.

**Imagery:**

I am sending images or video footage to support this case study. Individuals featured in this media have provided their consent for their image to be distributed in relation to this case study.

Files too large to email can be provided by a link to a shared platform (e.g. SharePoint) or contact [sarah.wheadon@sport.vic.gov.au](mailto:sarah.wheadon@sport.vic.gov.au) for alternative arrangements

**Media:**

Provide details below if your case study or project attracted media (e.g. TV, radio, print), or you posted onto social media (e.g. LinkedIn, YouTube, Website), or other related links.

Media Name	Title	URL
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e.g. <i>Respect Victoria YouTube Channel</i>	<i>Stories of Respect</i>	<a href="#">Stories of Respect – James and Thomas (Full Video) - YouTube</a>

## CONTACT

Provide the details of the contact person at your organisation if more information is required about this case study.

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