

## CASE STUDY

Case study title: Nichols Point Football Club

Date/s this story occurred: February 2023 – April 2024

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

Nichols Point Football Club (NPFC) joined the project in the pilot phase with the aim of increasing participation of women and girls.

Through the project, the club was able to identify key areas of inequality and put deliberate actions in place to achieve a 50/50 gender split on their committee.

**Backstory:**

NPFC is a football (soccer) club in Regional Victoria. It was established in 1994 and included into the Football Federation Sunraysia (FFS) competition. At formation the club begun with just a senior men's side.

Based in a small town within the Mildura LGA the club now includes players from six years old to seniors and includes boys, girls, men, and women playing and volunteering in the following sides:

- senior men's
- senior women's
- reserve men's
- over 35 men's
- under 16 boys
- under 16 girls
- under 14 boys
- under 13 girls
- 3 teams of under 12 boys

Before being an inaugural club in the Gendering in a New Era Project, the committee consisted of 10 men and 4 women.

FFS is heavily dominated by men with little support given for women to use the best pitches at their preferred times.

Women and girls were not allocated a change room at the playing field at the beginning of the project.

**Case Study**

NPFC were inaugural participants in the Gendering in a New Era Project and extremely enthusiastic about making changes to the sport. The NPFC Gender Equity Action Group consisted of 8 members (3 women and 5 men) and included the president, vice president, treasurer and 5 general committee members.

Their initial club goal was to increase their playing participants and volunteer base including encouraging more women into leadership roles within the club.

**How did the club achieve their goals and overcome the barriers faced?**

NPFC Gender Equity Action Group completed the Sporting Club checklist as a team and the Member's survey was filled in by 27 members including 18 women and 9 men. The resulting summary report compiled by Women's Health Loddon Mallee identified several key areas that needed to change.

Areas for improvement included:

- Challenges that faced women taking on leadership positions which included lack of time, skills, and opportunities. (Identified by 78% of respondents)
- The Code of Conduct was not readily available for members.
- The persistence of gender stereotypical norms at the club. Including who was asked to volunteer in certain areas like the canteen or organise fundraising activities.
- The need to improve the club's facilities including installation of additional lighting to create increased safe spaces. The men of the club were also given the preferential spot for training under the better lit areas.

All of these were included into the club's identified priorities and the action plan identified 3 key goals for 2023:

- Enhance football committee's visibility for broader recruitment, fostering inclusion and diversity.
- Ensure the availability and accessibility of the code of conduct.
- Improve facilities – safety concerns with poor lighting.

One of the biggest successes the club had was the improvement of the gender balance on their committee. This was achieved using the following actions:

- NPFC started by creating their own member volunteer survey and asked their members to identify their individual skills. The survey identified the female members and supporters who had the time, skills, and drive to volunteer in different areas of the club. They then targeted members and asked them directly to help in different areas.
- Through this approach the NPFC were able to increase their volunteer pool and identify people who were most suited to the roles on the committee. They then asked those people directly to take on leadership roles. The role definitions were discussed and developed so that when approaching members the individual could clearly understand what was being asked of them.
- Facebook posts on the club's page celebrated the committee members and coaches. This introduced them to their members publicly. This approach had several positive results. The members were able to get to know their committee and see the role being

performed. This added exposure and celebration of the Committee members, created a more open and transparent club, and allowed people who wouldn't know what the roles were to understand them better.



NPFC committee's combined, skills-based, and targeted approach has led to the committee in 2024 being made up of 7 men and 7 women. There is still only 20% of female coaches, the club are now working toward increasing the skills of their female members to allow them to gain confidence to take on coaching roles.

### Barriers or Challenges faced:

The club identified several barriers to achieving their goals including:

- The timing of the Gender Equity audit and action plan being written well into the football season so changes to the committee needed to wait until the following year.
- The availability of the volunteers was also stretched with the normal operations of the club and current season taking up majority of the time.
- Resistance from other clubs in their association to make a cultural change to the Football Federation Sunraysia as a whole and improve the outcomes for women in the sport.

### Other initiatives NPFC achieved included:

- Nominating players for the Mallee Sports Assembly awards in as many sections as possible. This takes a commitment to get to know their members and the

intersectionality that make up their individual backgrounds. They used their social media to celebrate the diversity of their members. Promoting their achievements, cultures, and abilities.



- Improved their website to include the code of conduct and make it easily accessible. Members must now read and sign to show they understand it during their membership registration each year.
- Worked with Council to plan and provide feedback on the planned upgrade to their facilities.
- Consulted with the association on changes that needed to be made to support women's football.
- Increased their women and girl's participants through recruitment drives such as come and try days and being the only football club to recruit members at a public screening of the Women's World Cup.
- Established a girls only under 10s team.

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

NPFC identified the Member's survey as the most important part of the process. Asking their members for their feedback and being able to understand their needs was invaluable information to make changes.

They have continued to create and use surveys to find out the exact needs of their members rather than speaking for them.

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

NPFC takes an intersectional approach to celebrate their members and understand their individual needs.

They understand that the needs of one woman can be very different to the needs of another woman depending on their intersectionality. Using surveys to ask members their individual opinion and celebrating differences. They have been able to create truly welcoming environments for all.

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

The importance of knowing your members at the start of the process to know their needs. Targeting members with requests that are within their skill sets and interests has a much higher success rate than just focussing on the stereotypical roles of men and women.

Understanding that saying you are welcoming and showing you are welcoming are 2 different things and being welcoming takes great effort and commitment from volunteers.

“The program provided a strong framework for us to think critically about how and why we are doing things the way we are doing them. As we already put a strong emphasis on women’s’ and girls’ soccer but being a truly equitable club goes well beyond that” – Lachlan Giles, Gender Equity Action Group Lead.

It is important to recognise that none of these changes would have happened if it wasn’t for this project. The club checklist and member experience survey provided the opportunity for the committee to examine their role in gender inequities that existed. Once the club understood those inequities, they committed to changing their culture supported by the MRCC Project Officer. The Action Plan provided a guide of where to target their efforts and make the work manageable.

This case study presents the opposite approach of the Imperials Football Netball Club (previous case study presented by MRCC). Whereas the Imperials drove their own agenda and didn’t engage in the formal process developed by WHLM but implemented a range of small incremental changes NPSC have followed the process to the letter. The outcome is a slower but no less important change process.

The important message is that there is no right or wrong way of supporting change. The important thing is to have the club’s commitment. The club is then supported with a variety of tools to undertake the journey that best meets their needs.

It is also important to acknowledge that without the dedicated project officer resource or the tools that have been developed this change would not have occurred.

#### Significant quotes:

“Partaking in the MRCC gender equity project shines a light on the importance of inclusion of women in sport and how we, as a club, can support gender equity in football. It encourages obtainable objectives to be set that will improve the conditions of women and girls in football and provides accountability for NPFC to review whether these set objectives and goals are being met.” – Isabella Gove – Player and Committee member.

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

- Women's Health Loddon Mallee – Club Audit Review and Report
- Lachlan Giles – Nichols Point Technical Director and coach
- Nichols Point Gender Equity Action Group.

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

## CONTACT

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