

Terms of Reference

Women and Girls Football Working Group

Purpose

The Women and Girls Football Working Group (Working Group) has been established to review participation trends in the women's and girls' game within Capital Football and provide recommendations to strengthen participation, retention and development opportunities across all levels of the game.

While the primary focus of the review relates to the outdoor game, the group may also consider insights from other formats of football where relevant.

The Working Group will focus on identifying the key barriers impacting participation and developing targeted support strategies to assist clubs in strengthening the women's and girls' game.

Background

The growth and sustainability of the women's and girls' game has been identified as a key strategic priority for Capital Football as part of the Path to 2029 strategic plan.

While the FIFA Women's World Cup and the Matildas generated significant national interest in women's football, participation within our region is facing challenges, particularly within National Premier League (NPL) competitions.

Feedback received from clubs ahead of the current season indicates that several clubs are experiencing difficulty fielding teams at the NPL level, with some clubs reporting insufficient player numbers or interest to support all existing teams.

Clubs and stakeholders have identified a range of potential factors influencing participation. These may include the player experience within the competition environment, coaching quality and club support structures, facility access and training environments, cost of participation, training and travel commitments, and the transition from social to premier-level competition.

While these factors have been raised through club feedback, further work is required to develop a clearer and more consistent understanding of the key drivers affecting participation and retention in the women's and girls' game.

While competition structures have recently undergone change, the immediate priority is to consolidate these changes rather than undertake further significant structural reform.

A clearer understanding of the factors influencing participation will enable Capital Football to work with clubs to deliver targeted support initiatives and programs, strengthen participation pathways, and support the continued growth of the women's and girls' game in line with the Path to 2029 strategy.

Objectives

The Working Group will review the current women's and girls' football environment and develop recommendations to:

- Identify the key factors influencing participation and retention in the women's and girls' game.
- Understand the barriers impacting participation in NPL competitions.

- Identify challenges clubs face in recruiting and retaining female players.
- Develop practical strategies to support clubs in strengthening women's and girls' programs.
- Improve the experience for women and girls participating in football across all levels of the game.
- Support sustainable participation growth across junior, youth and senior competitions.

Key Questions for Consideration

The Working Group will focus on addressing the following questions:

- What are the key factors contributing to declining or stagnant participation in the women's and girls' game?
- Why are clubs experiencing difficulty fielding teams, especially at the NPL level?
- What barriers exist for girls transitioning from junior participation into youth and senior competitions?
- What aspects of the competition or club environment influence player retention?
- What support do clubs need to deliver strong women's and girls' programs?
- What initiatives or support frameworks could Capital Football implement to improve participation and retention?

Scope of Work

The Working Group will:

- Review participation data and trends in the women's and girls' game.
- Consider feedback from clubs regarding participation challenges.
- Identify barriers affecting participation and retention.
- Consider the transition points between entry-level participation, community competitions and premier-level football.
- Develop recommendations for targeted programs or initiatives that support clubs and participants.

The Working Group will not undertake a full structural review of competitions, as competition structures have recently been adjusted. The focus will instead be on identifying and addressing participation and retention challenges within the current framework.

The Working Group may also consider potential support programs, initiatives or resources that could assist clubs to strengthen participation and retention in women's and girls' football.

Membership and Composition

The Women and Girls Football Working Group will consist of a maximum of 7 (seven) members, including one Capital Football staff member who will act as Secretariat.

To ensure the group reflects the key areas of the women's and girls' game, membership will include individuals representing the following perspectives:

- **Chair**
Appointed by Capital Football and responsible for facilitating meetings, guiding discussion and ensuring the group remains focused on the objectives of the review. The Chair should have experience in the women's and girls' game and a strong understanding of the football environment, and be able to provide balanced and impartial leadership.

- **Junior Girls Football Representative**
An individual involved in the delivery or coordination of girls' junior football programs.
- **Youth / Transition Representative**
A person with experience supporting the transition of players from junior to NPL or senior football.
- **Senior Women's Competition Representative**
An individual actively involved in senior women's competitions.
- **NPL Representative**
A person with experience in women's premier-level football or club leadership within the women's game.
- **Club Development Perspective**
A representative from a club actively delivering women's and girls' football programs.
- **Capital Football Secretariat**
One Capital Football staff member responsible for coordinating meetings, supporting administration and assisting in the preparation of recommendations.

Members will be selected to ensure the group reflects experience across junior, youth and senior football and includes both player and club perspectives.

Capital Football may seek input from additional stakeholders where required; however, these individuals will not be formal members of the Working Group.

Members of the Working Group will be appointed by Capital Football following a call for expressions of interest.

Authority and Limitations

The Working Group operates in an advisory capacity only.

The Working Group is responsible for reviewing participation challenges in the women's and girls' game and developing recommendations to support participation and retention.

The Working Group does not have authority to make decisions on behalf of Capital Football or to implement any changes to competitions or programs.

The Working Group does not have delegated financial authority and is not authorised to commit or approve any expenditure on behalf of Capital Football.

Reporting and Governance

The Working Group will report to the Capital Football General Manager.

All findings and recommendations developed by the Working Group will be submitted to the General Manager for consideration.

The Secretariat will provide progress updates to the General Manager during the review period.

Where recommendations involve structural or significant changes to competitions, these may be referred by the General Manager to the Capital Football Board for review and approval.

The reporting structure will therefore be:

Working Group → Capital Football General Manager → Capital Football Board (where required)

Meetings

The Working Group will meet as required to complete its work program, with approximately 3 – 4 meetings anticipated during the review period.

Meetings may be held in person or online as appropriate. The Secretariat will coordinate meeting scheduling, agendas and relevant documentation.

Secretariat Support

Capital Football will provide secretariat support to the Working Group. This will include coordinating meetings, preparing agendas, recording key discussion points and supporting the development and documentation of the Working Group's recommendations.

Stakeholder Consultation

The Working Group may seek feedback from clubs, players, coaches and other stakeholders to inform its recommendations.

Any consultation activities will be coordinated through Capital Football.

Deliverables

The Working Group will provide:

- A summary of the key factors impacting participation and retention in the women's and girls' game.
- Recommendations for initiatives or support programs to assist clubs in strengthening women's and girls' football.
- Considerations to improve the participation experience across the pathway from junior football through to senior competition.

Timeframe

The Working Group is expected to complete its review and provide recommendations within approximately three months of its first meeting.

A final report outlining findings and recommendations will be submitted to the Capital Football General Manager following completion of the review period.

Following consideration of the Working Group's recommendations, the Capital Football Board may determine that the Working Group continue in an advisory capacity to support implementation, monitor progress, and provide advice on emerging issues impacting women's and girls' football.

Should the Working Group continue beyond the initial review period, existing members may be invited to continue their appointment, or additional/new members may be appointed at the discretion of Capital Football.