

# THE CHANGE MAKERS PROJECT:

## Empowering Football Clubs on the Journey to 50/50



August, 2021





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# PROJECT OVERVIEW

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Decades of international research on gender and sport shows that the structural and cultural barriers to achieving gender equality in sport are very difficult to shift. Football Victoria (FV) has set an ambitious target of 50/50 gender balance in all aspects of the sport by 2027.

The Change Makers project was developed by sociologists at Victoria University (VU) in collaboration with FV and was focused on building a community of practice within and between FV clubs to overcome enduring inequities and to facilitate sustainable change in relation to gender equality. Specifically, the Change Makers project aimed to:

*Facilitate grassroots change by empowering and supporting clubs through an iterative process of evidence gathering, education, collaborative goal setting, transformative action and social analysis.*

From August 2020 to August 2021 VU and FV designed and delivered a cooperative and educative model that built the capacity of football clubs to be agents for their own change. The Change Makers project has played a significant role in improving opportunities and experiences for girls and women in football in Victoria and has generated new insights into the optimal conditions and processes for change toward gender equality in grassroots sport contexts.



# PROJECT DESIGN

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The Change Makers project utilised a participatory and action research approach. We drew from cutting edge research and knowledge about gender equity and sport and pedagogical best practices to design and deliver four football-specific, tailored workshops to equip clubs to measure gender inequality and to transform their environments.

## WORKSHOPS

1. Inclusive climates
  2. Measuring climates
  3. Designing for equity
  4. Communicating action plans
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From these workshops, 'Change Makers' (representatives from Football Clubs dedicated to the 50/50 goal) planned and implemented strategies to affect change in their club. Each Change Maker was assigned a mentor who supported them through the process. We used a reflexive approach and used participant feedback from clubs, mentors and FV to improve workshop content throughout the three iterations of the Change Makers program delivery.

The VU research team also collected and analysed data at various stages of the project to gain insights into the effectiveness of the educative model and associated change processes. Data sources included: workshop artefacts, workshop recordings, mentors field notes, interviews with mentors, exit survey and interviews with Change Makers and FV personnel.

# PROJECT REACH

We aimed to reach 50 clubs in the 12 month period. The focus on 50 Change Makers from 50 clubs is significant because this represents a critical mass that has the power to influence and affect other clubs.

The Change Makers Project was delivered online via zoom and allowed the inclusion of clubs from all over suburban and regional Victoria. No two clubs were the same, though they were all driven by the goal of 50/50 by 2027.

COVID-19 and lockdowns presented significant challenges for some Change Makers and clubs to complete the entire project. Of the First 50 clubs, 38 made some way toward transforming their environment toward 50/50 and we applaud them all for their commitment to gender equality at club level during such a challenging time.



# PROJECT REACH: PARTICIPATING CLUBS



# PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

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WORK WITH FOOTBALL VICTORIA TO IDENTIFY AND RECRUIT 50 CHANGE MAKERS FROM 50 CLUBS



RECRUIT AND TRAIN 12 MENTORS - EMERGING FEMALE RESEARCHERS



DELIVER 4 WORKSHOPS TO 3 SEPARATE COHORTS FROM SEPTEMBER 2020-MAY 2021



PROVIDE SUPPORT TO CLUBS TO COLLECT AND ANALYSE DATA IN RELATION TO PARTICIPATION, CULTURE, LEADERSHIP, ENVIRONMENT, AND THE EXPERIENCES OF GIRLS AND WOMEN



CO-CREATE ACTION PLANS WITH CLUBS (IN RECOGNITION OF THE DIVERSITY AND CONTEXTUAL DIFFERENCES OF EACH SPACE)



PROVIDE SUPPORTED IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION PLANS (ONGOING)



ANALYSE AND REPORT ON THE RESULTS

# Developing and supporting agents for change

Feedback from the Change Makers was overwhelmingly positive, and the success of Change Makers in facilitating grassroots change toward 50/50 has been endorsed by FV who have continued to fund the program for 2021. In surveys and interviews, participants emphasised the effectiveness of both the design and delivery of the program and the formal and informal learning components. It was clear through the analysis that the collaborative, evidence-based, educative model toward change works. We have gained important insights into the optimal conditions required for gender equity actions and also the challenges and resistance faced by some Change Makers and clubs in achieving gender equality. The mentoring component was highlighted as being particularly important for clubs to feel confident to make change. A selection of quotes from our interviews with participants are presented below.

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"What I love about this change makers project is the methodology was there, the research was there, the support was there. "

"The thing I learnt was the importance of having a strategy and the importance of having evidence to support it"

"The peer environment accelerates the learning and hearing first hand from women in my cohort about their experiences, challenges and feelings was extremely insightful"

"The climate assessment was the most clarifying piece of work that we did"

"The Project was run very professionally by academic leaders that showed great passion for the subject and extensive practical knowledge of club culture/psychology, governance & administration, coaching and player development. The climate assessment framework provides great structure to assess equity status and help develop strategy for change. "

"Because of change makers it gave me the tools that I needed to do everything that our club has done. I wouldn't have been able to do it without it. I'd still be where we were 2 years ago if I didn't go to change makers."





# Enhanced opportunities and experiences for girls and women at Football Clubs

Through participating in an objective assessment and evidence collection process, clubs were able to increase their knowledge and awareness of the club's climate in relation to access, experiences and representation for women and girls. Climate assessments were used to identify areas for improvement to guide further action. A summary of some of the strategies that were co-created with clubs and mentors is provided below.

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- Offer female leadership program to help empower females within the club.
- Hosting a female-only coaching course.
- Host female only mini-roos coaching course
- Mentoring programs for female coaches and potential coaches.
- Partnering with an elite club to develop players and training programs.
- Linking junior girls with senior women, including a mentoring program and social opportunities.
- Run girls social soccer program
- Target specific teams to grow to enhance pathways and player retention
- Create innovative and flexible fee schedules

- Enlist the help of senior club members and grants to help with an education program for senior coaches regarding stereotypes.
- Involvement in gender equity training courses required for senior club members.
- Implemented strategies and policies to be more vigilant over poor/gendered language use at games and training.
- Develop and updating policies
- Develop a club focused women and girls strategy.
- Apply for funding for a workshop for strategy development education.
- Audit ground allocation, equipment quality and training times for women and girls
- Host a soccer mums program
- Seek out and apply for grants supporting gender equality

- Audit website and social media for representation of women and girls
- Implement a social media policy, plan and manager.
- Re-write job descriptions to ensure they align with gender equality goals
- Develop social media strategies.
- Ensure girls and women are a standing item on meeting agendas
- Concentrated effort on recruiting female players, coaches and referees.
- Use evidence from Change Makers to lobby local government for funding and facilities

# Enhanced opportunities and experiences for girls and women at Football Clubs

Clubs developed short, mid and long term strategies. While the impact of these strategies will be more evident in coming years, significant outcomes have already been achieved by most Change Makers clubs. Outcomes are relative to the goals of each club and range from recruiting new members to acquiring funding for a new facility as detailed below.

- Grant awarded and girls social soccer program completed.
- 7 new junior female players recruited.
- 8 senior women players recruited.
- Host and completion of a female only Miniroos coaching course.
- An increase from 8.6% female participation in 2019 to 22% in 2021.
- Increase in the number of female coaches
- Recent Budget from council has committed a \$2.2 million facility in Beaconsfield in the next 3 years and in 2025 a \$7.2 million facility in Officer compared to the last Budget where there was nothing dedicated to soccer.
- Successfully fielded an inaugural junior girls team for 2021.
- Successfully awarded 2 grants. One to host a women and girls workshop to educate the community on barriers to female participation and develop club specific responses to such issues. The second grant is to fund a workshop to develop a women and girls strategy.
- Successfully fielded a senior women's and under 12 girls team.



# PROJECT OUTCOMES

## Development of female researchers

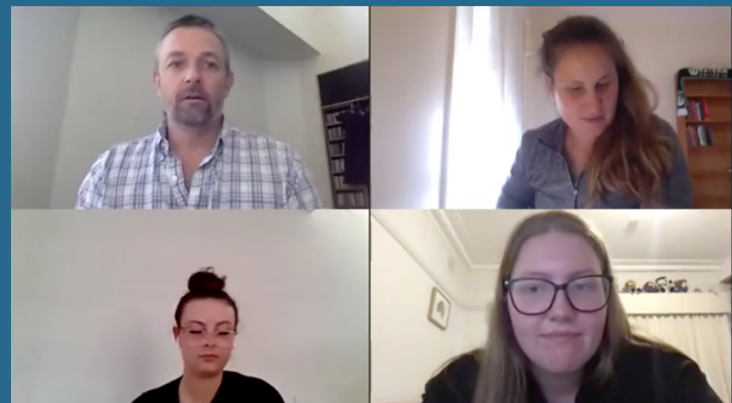
A subsidiary aim of the Change Makers project was to develop and support emerging female researchers. The Change Makers project drew on the combined knowledge of experienced researchers and also presented a unique opportunity for students, with a passion for gender equality, to gain valuable knowledge and experience as mentors. In total, 12 mentors were involved throughout the project, passing on their own knowledge, forming connections, learning about and utilising research methods, and contributing to Football Victoria's 50/50 goal. A selection of the mentors' experiences are highlighted below.

"For me personally, the Change Makers program has given me the opportunity to use my passion for women and girls' sport in a practical and rewarding way knowing that the work I am doing is contributing to making football an inclusive and supportive space."

"I feel like I have gained a lot of important knowledge and experience as a mentor. I've been able to build on my communication and organisational skills and well skills in data collection and analysis"

"I have made many professional connections through this program that have aided my career and goals as a student however the personal connections I have created throughout this experience is incredible"

"The project has broadened my understanding of the sport of football, grassroots sport in general, and the challenges that Change Makers and football clubs face."



" The experience I have gained from being a part of the Change Makers Program has drastically and undoubtedly changed my knowledge and passion for research, sport and social justice issues. I have learnt about the stages of research, the background work it takes to churn out numbers into meaningful data for participants and regular people to interpret and digest. I have gained confidence in my abilities as a student, mentor and person"



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For more information about the Change Makers visit the Sport and  
Social Change website:

<https://sportandsocialchange.org/change-makers-football-victoria/>

