



WOMEN IN HIGH
PERFORMANCE COACHING

FIXING THE LEAKY PIPELINE ACTION PLAN

About the Women in High Performance Coaching Project

The under-representation of Women in High Performance Coaching (WiHPC) roles in Australia is a critical issue, with less than 10% of the top 36 funded High Performance (HP) sports led by women head coaches. This is despite female athlete representation at the recent Olympic and Paralympics Games (Summer and Winter) and Commonwealth Games reaching over 50%.

The Women in High Performance Coaching Project has been undertaken to engage directly with organisations and participants on pursuing gender equality in High Performance coaching. This is one of the most significant steps we can take to fast-track our ambition to lead and enable the world's best sport system by 2032 as outlined in Australia's High Performance 2032+ Sport Strategy.

The WiHPC Project gathered extensive insights from women coaches from October 2021 to October 2023. These insights demonstrated how the coaching career path in HP Sport is marked by complexity and challenges- especially for women coaches.

Many women exit the Australian HP Sport System at different career stages. This results in a leaky talent pipeline and a profound gender gap in head coaching roles.

Understanding and addressing these challenges is vital to offer tailored support and ensure sustainable growth for women in HP coaching. Identifying and re-engaging with coaches who have left the system would uncover hidden talent pools which represent a valuable and untapped resource for advancing gender equity in coaching.

Further collaboration and development is expected over the next 12-18 months. Progress and next steps can be viewed on the WiHPC pages on the AIS website.

Our vision
“Just talk about
not women”



72

ORGANISATIONS represented
in engagement



250+

CONTRIBUTORS
via workshops or
1:1 interviews



262

WOMEN
participated via 2 x in-depth
surveys

in 2032 is to
out coaches,
en coaches!”

WiHPC Project Recommendations

Transformation of WiHPC necessitates more than just the AIS taking action; it demands that every sport, organisation, and individual assumes their responsibility to act.

Effective interventions addressing gender imbalance are largely focused on improving culture, offering flexible work structures, ensuring job security, fair pay, and fostering ongoing development. The insights and case studies that informed these recommendations can be found in the full report and on the WiHPC website.

- 1 All sporting organisations undertake a regular gender equity audit, adopt gender equity targets and strategies, and publicly report on progress.** The audit, targets and strategies must address women in HP and strengthen the women's coach workforce.
- 2 Develop comprehensive data capture and reporting systems across HP sport to monitor progress and drive accountability to ensure a positive impact on women coaches.** This must be sport-led and aligned across all key performance parameters.
- 3 HP sports commit to regular assessment for organisational culture and environment capabilities** and associated development strategies such as implementing family friendly work practices, coach well-being and embedding behaviours that create respectful cultures.
- 4 Investment into the customisation of the ASC Workforce Capability Framework for quality women HP coach development** (including the identification of transferable skills, and to strengthen the coaching talent pool). This will require contributions from across the sector.
- 5 Establish and sustain a Women's Talent Development Framework** led by the AIS in alignment with the Workforce Capability Framework.
- 6 Establish and sustain a National Network of Coach Development Facilitators** led by the AIS to enhance development and ongoing support of women coaches.
- 7 Broaden the access to, and delivery capacity of AIS career support services** focused on navigating career transitions for women coaches within HP pathways.
- 8 Create mechanisms and opportunities to increase the visibility of women coaches** with a focus on success stories and what's working.
- 9 Provide mechanisms to acknowledge and reward organisations** who actively support and engage in the proposed Women HP Coaches Road Map to Action.
- 10 Source, allocate and manage resources** at system and sport level to achieve the strategic goals and recommendations of this project.

These recommendations are aligned with HP 2032+ Sport Strategy, National Sport Participation Strategy (in draft) and the National Data Strategy.

Why this work matters

AIS High Performance (HP) Coach Development aims to identify, develop, attract and retain world-class coaches to enhance the experiences and success of Australian athletes.

The Action Plan makes recommendations and provides the steps required to increase the representation and experience of WiHPC to achieve our core priorities under the HP2032+ Sport Strategy.



Performance delivery

Incorporating women coaches diversifies our training approach. Their unique perspectives including female specific health and performance understanding – enhances our ability to support athletes effectively.



Athlete performance pathways

Having WiHPC enhances athlete development programs, embodies inclusion, and ensures a robust pipeline towards podium success and beyond.



World leading knowledge + practice

Diverse coaching teams that include women coaches enrich our expertise and knowledge base and keep Australia at the forefront of global sports advancements.



Outstanding people + organisations

Increasing women coaches showcases our commitment to diversity and inclusion. By nurturing their talents, we maximise human potential, strengthen internal cohesion and enhance our reputation and ability to attract and retain top talent.

“We must be more inclusive and take action to remove the complexity and challenges facing women coaches.”

Matti Clements

Executive General Manager, AIS Performance

2032+

Through these strategic efforts, we not only enhance our performance outcomes but also promote a diverse and inclusive environment in line with our vision: “We win well to inspire Australians.”



Prioritising action, moving beyond discussion

There is no shortage of research or discussion around creating greater equity in coaching and other leadership roles.

In order to ensure the system remains accountable, the WiHPC scorecard has been developed. Led and completed by the WiHPC team, annual monitoring and evaluation will allow progress to be shared and strategies adapted as necessary to maintain alignment with the HP 2032+ Sport Strategy.

Scorecard 2024

- Develop and implement a Women's Talent Framework
- Develop and implement a National Network of Coach Development Facilitators
- Assist in the development of the National Workforce Capability Framework to ensure needs of WiHPC are met
- Ensure the National Data Strategy allows for appropriate granularity on key factors that impact on WiHPC
- Drive networks and communities to enhance development and support mechanisms of connection and belonging
- Implement a 12-month campaign to elevate visibility of women coaches
- Continue to develop, refine and evaluate the utilisation and impact of toolkits, resources and other WiHPC initiatives by NSOs
- Engage with researchers to support evidence-based interventions
- % of Women Coaches at Olympic and Paralympic Games (Summer and Winter) and Commonwealth Games
- % of Women Head Coaches leading National Teams

WiHPC Project key insights

A comprehensive two year engagement effort from October 2021 to October 2023.

The need for urgent action: drivers of low female representation in HP coaching

- Negative workforce norms and cultures in sport and especially in High Performance [coaches face overwork, underpayment, lack of support and inflexible attitudes].
- Persistent negative gender stereotypes, presumptions and discrimination against women coaches.
- Wide gaps between policy and practice create instability, inefficiency and destroy trust.
- Organisational barriers and outdated and inflexible employment/ appointment structures.
- Incomplete and system-wide data gaps.
- Inadequate resourcing of women's sport and female pathways.
- Substandard and inconsistent recruitment practices.
- 'Imposter syndrome' affects women's confidence for applying and negotiating.
- Limited and ad hoc opportunities for women coaches' development; not tailored for women or sport-specific needs.
- Inadequate support for new coaches, and women returning to coaching.
- A leaky pipeline – women exit the system at different career stages.

Toolkits and resources

The HP2032+ Sport Strategy states that 'To Win Well and inspire Australians we need to pursue excellence, create belonging, display courage, and build connection.'

Four strategic focus areas were identified during the WiHPC Project. Actionable toolkits have been created in response- these are listed below and can be found on the WiHPC website.

Behaviours, culture and environment



- Archetype workshop
- The Road Map to Action
- Respectful behaviour programs
- Gender equality audits and recommendations

Systems supporting diversity



- Recruitment toolkit
- Parental leave toolkit
- Part time talent pool toolkit
- Inclusive travel arrangements toolkit
- Hidden talent pool toolkit
- Career support services
- Capability framework

Strategies for development



- The Women's Talent Development Framework
- National Network of Coach Development Facilitators
- Igniting local networks
- Mentorship toolkit
- Networking and connection events

Visibility and storytelling



- The WiHPC website
- Improving visibility, sharing success
- Connections with aligned advocacy groups

“We need to be realistic. Diversity has to be secondary to who is best for the job. But we need to remove any barriers that prevent that best person being identified or progressed.”

WiHPC Project participant



For more information visit
AIS.gov.au/coach-development/wihpc



AIS.gov.au



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