

Case Study 12

Women in High Performance Rowing Rowing Australia

Objective

This case study demonstrates an organisational, multilevel, progressive approach to gender equity within rowing in Australia throughout the last four years. The progress Rowing Australia has been able to make has been through the support of three subsequent Australian Sports Commission's (ASC) Women Leaders in Sport (WLIS) Grants.

A: Women in HP Rowing Coaching

Description

Rowing Australia (RA) received an initial WLIS grant from the ASC to begin the Women in HP Rowing Coaching Project. This project was designed to assist RA to develop and implement policy and system changes that will make the HP rowing coaching pathway more attractive, accessible, and supportive for women coaches.

Why?

- RA recognises the importance of a diverse workforce, and it is a strategic priority to create a more inclusive and equitable environment within the sport at all levels.
- RA is committed to adopting the recommendations of this project and to increasing the number of women coaches in HP coaching and HP coaching pathway.
- RA recognises it is key to have alignment and support across the organization from the Board, Management, and HP.

RA believed this project was the critical first step in increasing their capability. Storytelling and the lived experience of our women coaches was a key component.

The program:

- Utilised the lived experiences of 10 past and present women coaches who were coaching at HP level and in the HP Rowing pathway and brought them together for three days.
- External consultants conducted the workshop, and guided participants through the process of; **storytelling → key themes → recommendations → action**

- The final session was attended by the CEO, HPD, DHPD, and Coach Development Manager to hear direct feedback and outcomes from the group.

The outcomes:

- A Women in HP Coaching Advisory Group was created.
- Recommendations and actions from the project were incorporated into the 2032 RA HP Coach Development Strategy.
- Aspirational gender target of 50/50 for HP Coaching Team in 2032.
- Develop Phase 2, focussed on the HP Rowing Clubs.

B: WLIS Executive Program – WORK180 Audit

RA received a second grant for the WLIS Executive Program. The purpose of the Executive Program is to provide organisations with the opportunity to understand and implement diverse and equitable best practices. The three components of the program involved a gender equity audit, inclusive hiring workshop and 1:1 consultation to support progress across the organisation for inclusive and equitable workforce. The program was delivered by WORK180, *'a global organisation that promotes organizational standards that raise the bar for women in the workplace.'*



C: Rowing Australia Equity Toolkit for Rowing Clubs

Based upon the recommendations in Phase 1 and the subsequent Advisory group recommendations, RA applied for a third grant to assist rowing clubs around the country to create environments that are equitable, accessible and attractive to women coaches.

The RA Equity Toolkit for Rowing Clubs Project is comprised of two phases.

A: Conduct a WORK180 Equity Audit in two high performance clubs (that do not employ any women coaches), identify gaps and develop and action plan that will be tied to future funding from RA.

B: Co-create a RA Equity Toolkit for rowing clubs with the two pilot clubs (based upon the World Rowing Toolkit for Women) with the intent to roll this out across the network of clubs and schools throughout Australia.

The objective of the toolkits is to:

- assist rowing clubs to create their own action plans and embed cultures and behaviours that will create more welcoming, safe, and inclusive environments for women.

Overall impacts and outputs

- Women in HP Coaching Advisory Group
- An aligned HP coach development strategy that includes and embraces gender equity strategies.



- Engagement with targeted groups and clubs has been instrumental in gaining momentum.
- A RA Equity Toolkit for Rowing Clubs

Recommendations

- Understanding of the coaching landscape is paramount before interventions are implemented.
- Subsequent grants to support consecutive phases of development have been instrumental in ongoing momentum and progress.
- Engagement and buy in from leadership and key stakeholders have been instrumental in the progress.

‘Rowing Australia (RA) is committed to making our organisation and our sport a place that is welcoming and supportive of women and girls at all levels and in all roles. High performance coaching globally and across all sports has a long way to go, with only 13% of coaches at the Tokyo Games being women. RA have utilised the WLIS Grants Program to start to create policy and systemic change that will make the high performance coaching pathway more accessible, safe, and sustainable for women coaches.’

Sarah Cook, CEO, Rowing Australia

‘We are very grateful for the support of the ASC, WLIS and the AIS for their support of this initiative. It has been extremely encouraging to have the elite female coaches in our sport come together to tell their stories and experiences that are now helping create change at a structural level. We value diversity in our organisation and continue to push towards equality in the representation of females at all levels in our sport.’



Ellen Randell, Senior Coach, National Women’s Training Centre, Rowing Australia

Links

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[Executive Program | Australian Sports Commission \(sportaus.gov.au\)](#)

