

VAFA Women's Football Strategy

November, 2023



VAFA Women's Football Strategy

Vision

Grow women's football into a competition that our community can be passionate and proud of

Growth is more than participation numbers; targeted growth areas:

1. Player Experience and Enjoyment
2. Participation and Team Entry Numbers
3. On-Field Playing Talent
4. Competition Profile
5. Club Environment

Overarching Strategic Priorities

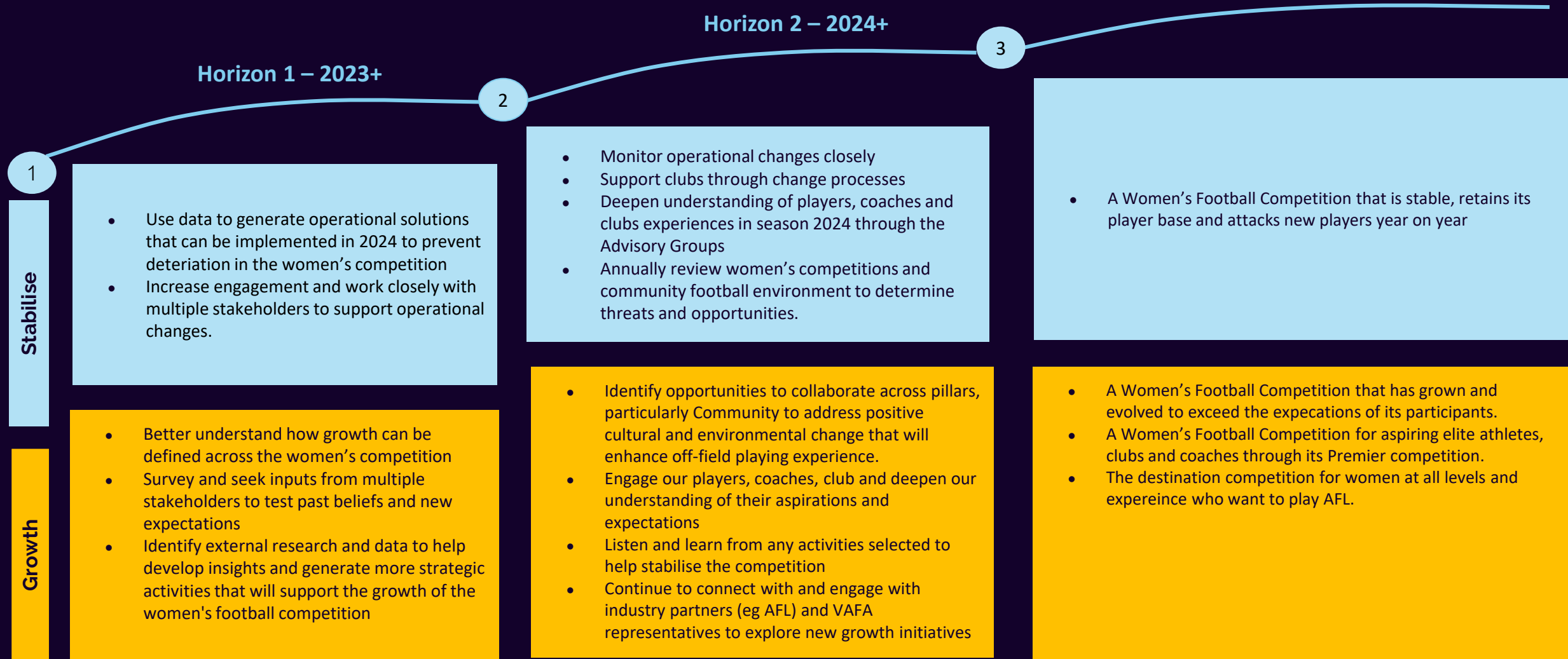
1. Provide highly valued football competitions and positive playing and spectator experiences
2. Stabilise and grow the women's football competitions



Horizons

We will stabilise our Women’s Football Competition through a year-on-year structured approach, testing, evaluating and listening to the feedback of our players, coaches and clubs.

We will grow our Women’s Football Competition through a strategic and evolutionary approach. Seeking inputs from multiple stakeholders, working across pillars within the broader VAFA Strategy and include insights from the AFL and other sporting organisations.



Stabilise

Growth

Horizon 1 – 2023+

Horizon 2 – 2024+

Horizon 3

1

2

3

- Use data to generate operational solutions that can be implemented in 2024 to prevent deterioration in the women’s competition
- Increase engagement and work closely with multiple stakeholders to support operational changes.

- Monitor operational changes closely
- Support clubs through change processes
- Deepen understanding of players, coaches and clubs experiences in season 2024 through the Advisory Groups
- Annually review women’s competitions and community football environment to determine threats and opportunities.

- A Women’s Football Competition that is stable, retains its player base and attacks new players year on year

- Better understand how growth can be defined across the women’s competition
- Survey and seek inputs from multiple stakeholders to test past beliefs and new expectations
- Identify external research and data to help develop insights and generate more strategic activities that will support the growth of the women’s football competition

- Identify opportunities to collaborate across pillars, particularly Community to address positive cultural and environmental change that will enhance off-field playing experience.
- Engage our players, coaches, club and deepen our understanding of their aspirations and expectations
- Listen and learn from any activities selected to help stabilise the competition
- Continue to connect with and engage with industry partners (eg AFL) and VAFA representatives to explore new growth initiatives

- A Women’s Football Competition that has grown and evolved to exceed the expectations of its participants.
- A Women’s Football Competition for aspiring elite athletes, clubs and coaches through its Premier competition.
- The destination competition for women at all levels and experience who want to play AFL.

DATA and INSIGHTS : VAFA Women's Football Strategy Survey

Key Themes Surveyed:

1. **Length of Season** - To produce a fixture/season that accommodates player needs and is appropriate to the section of competition
2. **Playing Experience** - To ensure the on-field match day experience is positive for players and coaches
3. **Grading and Competitive Balance** - To equalise competition and avoid teams experiencing consistent one-sided results
4. **Club Environment** - To ensure the off-field experience is positive for players and coaches
5. **Under-Age Player Pathway** - To retain girls in community football



DATA and INSIGHTS : VAFA Women's Football Strategy Survey

General Observations/Summaries from Survey:

1. Players, coaches and clubs are all generally satisfied with the length of the women's season
2. Overall, 16 rounds seems to be a comfortable preferred number of matches based on the qualitative feedback
3. There is no compelling evidence/support to drastically change the current season structure
4. 16 players on the field more appealing for coaches and club than it is for players



DATA and INSIGHTS : VAFA Women's Football Strategy Survey

General Observations/Summaries from Survey (continued):

5. Strong, consistent messaging coming through about how important competitive balance and grading is to the competition and experience
6. Playing football in a competitive section (compared to having Seniors and Reserves playing together each week) appears to be a greater priority to players than it is for coaches and clubs
7. Players support the introduction of an Under 19 Women's competition, not so much clubs and coaches



EXTERNAL DATA and INSIGHTS : AFL Participation study

Participant segments – how people participate in sports today

Segments	Description	Frequency	Type
Classic sports competitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active participants in conventional team sports Committed to training / match cycle & competition Normally ambitious for personal / team success 	Several times a week	Organised & team sports
Lifestyle-focused active individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lifestyle comes first with health & fitness a priority Active around their own schedules & values flexibility Are open to joining communities of like-minded people 		Only non-organised & individual activity
The 'pick-up and backyard' players	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appreciates sport for the social camaraderie & fun Plays on a more casual basis Safety a concern given they take sport less seriously 	1x weekly	Organised & team sports
Regular exercisers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fits in some exercise in their routine Main driver is health 		Only non-organised & individual activity

Segment size, millions (excluding 55+)

	Adult		Total Adult	Kids		Total Kids	Likely Growth Trend
	Male	Female		Male	Female		
Classic sports competitor	1.9	1.2	3.0	0.6	0.4	1.1	↓
Lifestyle-focused active individuals	0.5	1.3	1.9	0.01	0.04	0.05	↑
The 'pick-up and backyard' players	1.6	1.2	2.8	0.9	0.8	1.7	↑
Regular exercisers	0.3	0.5	0.7	0.0	0.1	0.1	↓
Fans but not yet players (AFL)	0.5	0.5	1.0	0.3	0.3	0.6	→
Fans but not yet players (other sports)	0.9	0.9	1.8	0.5	0.5	1.0	→
Little interest in sport	0.9	1.0	2.0	0.6	0.7	1.3	↑

Traditional focus area makes up ~20%

Additional segments are ~9m out of ~19m (approx. ~45%)

NB: +/- 5% between classic Sports & lifestyle segments based on other sources

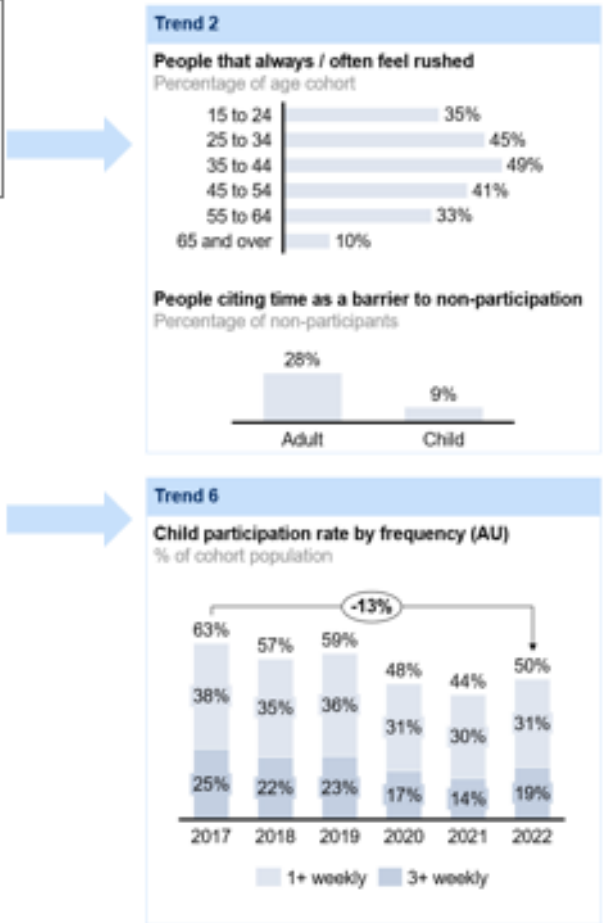


Macrotrends impacting on sports participation to 2033

Macro trends (analysis + interviews)

- 1 A greater focus on the fun, social & wellbeing aspects of physical activity
- 2 People are time poor & convenience is becoming the priority
- 3 Range of recreation options (physical & digital) are expanding
- 4 Demographics will continue to shift – older, more diverse, variety of family structures & higher density living
- 5 Demand for women / girls (only) sport will become even stronger
- 6 Overall child participation falling
- 7 The sporting emphasis at schools is in decline
- 8 Kids will spend more time in care outside of the home & early learning
- 9 Work from home levels will remain high going forward
- 10 A desire for experiences & events over routine

Emphasised by most interviewees
 Touched on by some interviewees



2024 Women's Competition Structure:

- The VAFA will strive to increase competitive balance of the women's competition
- Survey results reveal how important competitive balance and grading is to the competition and player experience and enjoyment
- Three step process to achieve this:
 1. Initial focus to ensure the Women's Premier Competitions consists of highly competitive teams with the strongest on-field playing talent available. The VAFA will assist clubs with entering two (2) teams in William Buck Premier Women's and Premier B Women's (Seniors and Reserves) by reducing the number of players to 16 players on-field (which also aligns with VFLW and AFLW-specific rules)
 2. At the discretion of the VAFA, clubs who choose to enter two (2) teams but are not deemed competitive or sustainable for either William Buck Premier Women's or Premier B Women's will have their two (2) teams fixtured into a Women's Divisional section that equates to each team's ability and competitiveness
 3. Clubs who choose to enter three (3) teams will have their third team fixtured into a Women's Divisional section that reflects their ability and competitiveness (ie. no Women's Thirds competition)

