

Promoting Women and Girls In Sport

Darebin Women's Sports Club Inc. known as Darebin Falcons

2018-2020 Funding Partnership with Darebin Council – Status Report



REPORT DATE	PREPARED BY	COUNCIL STAFF LIAISON
Date 27 November 2019	Club Contact/s	Adam Feiner, Felicity Leahy

PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVES - SUMMARY

Darebin Falcons have had another strong year, growing in playing membership (now at over 750 girls and women), accruing a number of achievements and continuing to empower girls and women on and off the field. Our Club membership and the quality of our core programs are our reason for being and gives us the authenticity to have voice across the range of female sports participation and leadership programs. It is really important that we remain a leader and innovator on field to enable us to continue our broader advocacy for gender equity both on and off the field.

Key achievements in 2019 included expansion of the Auskick and Mini Roos programs; introducing two new soccer teams and an inaugural AFL Masters team; increasing cricket from 1 to 2 junior teams; and Falcon, Lauren Pearce, winning the VFLW Best and Fairest award (see link at end to News story). We increased participation options beyond the playing group through such initiatives as the soccer mums program; Falcons Academy school holidays programs and the community come and try day. Off field, our inclusion and advocacy activities included Pride matches in both cricket and footy, a NAIDOC celebration round, participation in a number of Council events and advocacy with our leagues for gender equity in sport. With the introduction of our Masters team, we proudly now provide a full Australian Rules pathway for girls and women from Auskick to Masters. With our VFLW team included, this would be a unique contribution.

Some key challenges are that soccer is effectively at capacity due to ground availability, while junior footy, at the end of its third year, is strengthening though faces strong competition for female players as the number of Clubs offering girls football continues to grow. Sponsorship for the Club and VFLW program continue to grow but this remains an area where Council support through the Economic Development unit would be of benefit to achieve financial sustainability. Another opportunity is seen in strengthening our relationship with, and pathways for, Aboriginal girls. Our NAIDOC match provides a focus for this, but again Council input would be welcome to help progress this relationship, including with the Fitzroy Stars, who we have only achieved stop start contact with to date.

2020 will be Falcons 30th year in women's sport and we are currently planning how to celebrate this. An important theme will remain the promotion and celebration of female participation and leadership in sport. Other initiatives for 2020 include scoping a proposal for All Abilities Auskick and increasing the range of offerings through specialist clinics run by VFLW/AFLW players and a proposed Webinar series to share our learning about coaching girls and women, and female centric Club culture and administration.

STATUS UPDATE – WINS AND CHALLENGES

FOCUS AREAS	INITIATIVES	AIMS/GOALS	STATUS UPDATE: ACHIEVEMENTS, WINS & CHALLENGES
Advocacy for girls' and women's sport and leadership	Stakeholder interviews, workshops and survey input into Football Victoria Women and Girls Competition Review Engaged with Football Victoria to advocate for girls over changes to the format of U13s in 2020.	To advocate for gender equity in sport	Many positive outcomes from the review however focus was largely on the elite stream – there are still several gaps in the way women and girls are treated in community football (soccer). We support single age groups for girls however are concerned that the introduction of new format 9v9 on a half pitch for girls only (boys play 11v11 on a full pitch) sends a damaging message to girls about their abilities but also to boys about girls and to the coaches and administrators at clubs which are mostly male, about girls. Have received thanks from FV for our input but been told that it's going to happen anyway.

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	<p>Providing a female perspective to the NFNL</p> <p>Stand by Darcy Vescio and Meg Macdonald in the CBA negotiations with AFL</p>	<p>To inroad the dominant male centric focus of traditionally male sporting codes</p> <p>To empower women to stand up for what is right</p>	<p>We find that we constantly add a female perspective to NFNL forums and policy decisions. An example was a recent proposal to address antisocial behavior by banning spectator access to ovals while players are on the ground. Club president Sarah Brady argued this has not been an issue for our girls teams as emphasis is on playing for fun and not as much on winning which negates the competitiveness which is often the cause of the clashes the league is trying to prevent.</p> <p>We also advocated for sanitary bins in all club toilets and female friendly facilities.</p> <p>While Darcy and Meg are no longer playing Falcons, they continue to have a presence within the Club. Their advocacy and willingness to be named (2 of only 4 players) as opposing the powerful AFL Players Association recommendations about the ongoing structure for the AFLW competition was exemplary of the strength of character and voice we promote among our community.</p>
<p>Programs to promote and encourage girls' and women's participation in sport</p>	<p>Soccer Mums</p> <p>Expansion of MiniRoos Clinic to 85 girls in 2019</p> <p>Increased Junior soccer teams from 21 in 2018 to 23 in 2019</p> <p>Increased number of women's soccer teams to 2</p> <p>All-Star game</p>	<p>To encourage mums to get active by taking part in the sport their kids play</p> <p>To encourage girls 4-9 to take up sport through fun and engaging activities with low barrier to entry.</p> <p>To create more opportunity for junior girls to participate in soccer.</p> <p>To create more options for women to participate at their preferred level, be it social or performance participation</p> <p>To facilitate an intra club All-Star game with 2 teams made up of players from Under 12 up to Seniors and make the pathway from junior to senior level visible and encourage player retention over the long term and celebrate women's & girls participation at all levels.</p>	<p>4 programs run in 2019 with total of 50 women involved</p> <p>Will continue in 2020 as valuable opportunity to provide sporting and physical health opportunities to older cohort of women.</p> <p>We have found that the 4-9 year old age group is very important in getting girls involved in sport for the long term. We have created a solid MiniRoos kick off program to engage this age group and their parents which increases our club volunteer capacity in the long term.</p> <p>Additional 2 teams successfully offered. The Challenge now is that we are at capacity for the junior soccer program with regards to ground space at Robinson Reserve. We have a waiting list in most age groups so to provide any more opportunities for girls to play soccer we will need some alternative spaces.</p> <p>A successful year with the goal achieved of increasing women's teams from 1 to 2 in 2019</p> <p>A highly successful game which encouraged players across all levels to be involved.</p>

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	<p>Community/Come and Try Day</p> <p>MiniRoos Mother's Day Clinic</p> <p>Increased junior girls cricket teams from 1 in 2018 to 2 in 2019</p> <p>Consolidate and grow Auskick and junior and senior community football program, noting 2019 was only the third year of both programs and second year for U16</p> <p>Falcons Academy school holidays programs Delivering 'Become a better athlete' summer strength program for girls</p> <p>Introduction of inaugural AFLW Masters team</p>	<p>Give new players an opportunity to try soccer along with footy in a highly supportive, stress free environment.</p> <p>Get mothers to try soccer through joining in on Mother's Day with their kids.</p> <p>Aim to get more girls playing sport over summer</p> <p>Embed junior all girls footy programs at Falcons Provide a full pathway for girls from community football to VFLW</p> <p>Offer alternative opportunity to develop skills and for girls to aspire to sporting excellence</p> <p>Create opportunity for older women to continue or to take up sport</p>	<p>100 participants tried out soccer with approximately 50 of those trying soccer for the first time. Approx 75% of new players joined a Darebin Falcons program. Allows us to both recruit and show case the strength of our programs in the female sport landscape</p> <p>Over 40 mums joined in with their kids and several of these then signed up to participate in the soccer mums program.</p> <p>The club now has 15 registered cricket players. Growth area and opportunity for the Club</p> <p>Female participation in Australian Rules football is said to be the greatest growth area in sport in Australia. This however is from a very low base, creating fierce competition for players among developing clubs and teams. To sustain our U14s we merged with West Preston Lakeside for 2019, arrangement of mutual benefit, but believe we have sufficient numbers for 2020 due to progression of younger girls. We experienced considerable success this year with U16, U18, Div 1 and 2 playing finals. U18 were Premiers and Div1 reached Prelim final. A number of junior girls were selected in representative teams and players at all levels were well represented in NFNL end of season awards. (Refer Annual report)</p> <p>Combines revenue raising (minimal) with exposure of girls to female sporting role models and elite performance standards</p> <p>Awesome addition to Club community – returning purpose and role to previously retired players and attracting new older players (35+) to the Falcons community. Creates older role models for younger players – including mother daughter pairs!</p>
<p>Programs to promote and encourage girls' and women's participation in leadership roles in sport</p>	<p>Formalizing of coaches Under 12- Under 16 in MiniRoos Kick Off Programs</p> <p>Go Girls Clinics</p>	<p>To encourage more female role models for our younger players (4-9) by encouraging older junior players to coach</p> <p>Partnership with Football Victoria to run 2 clinics (July and September) for players, junior</p>	<p>We had 11 girls take on coaching roles for the 4-9 age group throughout the season, culminating in a Gala Day with 4 other clubs in August with Darebin Falcons girls of this age performing all the coaching and officiating roles throughout the day.</p> <p>Highly successful programs resulted in 8 qualified coaches and 12 qualified referees from Darebin Falcons who will now go on to take on these leadership roles in the sport.</p>

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	<p>VFLW and snr community players as role models, champions and guest at club and community events</p> <p>Junior Referees Program - introduction 2020</p> <p>Let's Talk Coaching – evening seminar with Falcons AFLW/NAB league coaches Jane Lange and Aasta O'Connor</p> <p>Planned webinar series for 2020</p>	<p>female coaches and junior female referees.</p> <p>To model sporting achievement and skills by/of women and develop women's public speaking and leadership skills</p> <p>To provide a pathway into refereeing for girls to address the gender imbalance that exists within the area.</p> <p>To disseminate Falcons experience and learning in coaching, playing and administering sport for girls and women</p>	<p>Falcons VFLW players attended community events (Spark Health and City of Darebin event; YMCA female strength program; in school clinic and support to inaugural girls football program at new Preston Secondary School)</p> <p>Falcons VFLW/AFLW players support junior training, jumper presentations and team awards for junior footy teams</p> <p>NFNL senior women ran Auskick program</p> <p>Intention to expand roles for VFLW and snr players in delivering specialist clinics in 2020 internally and to wider Darebin community</p> <p>Program to begin in 2020</p> <p>The coaching seminar demonstrated the depth of wisdom within the Falcon alumni and the thirst for this knowledge among our audience. Along with feedback from the Front and Centre launch where male Clubs asked for more input about how to become more female centric, we believe there is a need to further disseminate what we have learnt over time and thus are considering a trial of 3 webinars over 2020 to expand this voice.</p>
<p>Programs to encourage social inclusion and social justice</p>	<p>Cricket Pride Cup with Holy Trinity & Preston CC</p> <p>Scoping proposal to introduce All Abilities Auskick program in 2020</p> <p>Fundraiser dinner – PRIDE: Our Untold stories of women's football Pride round VFLW & lunch – 3rd consecutive year, 1st in Melbourne</p> <p>NAIDOC round VFLW v NT Thunder Club movie night: The Australian Dream Support for Koorie Women's Football Carnival</p>	<p>To promote inclusion of LGBTIQ+ community in cricket</p> <p>To introduce all abilities program to Darebin Falcons</p> <p>To recognize and celebrate the role of queer women in the growth of women's football and establishment of the AFLW</p> <p>Pay respect to Indigenous culture and develop relationship within Koorie community</p> <p>Increase participation of Aboriginal girls and women in football</p>	<p>Falcons women's cricket team that has not played together since 2016 came together to play in the Pride Cup. VFLW player Darcy Vescio gave the keynote address at the luncheon.</p> <p>Proposal brought to Club by senior player. Challenge to provide wheelchair access to playing field and ensure bathroom suitability</p> <p>All Falcons speakers Patty Kinnersley (CEO Our Watch); Darcy Vescio (AFLW star) and Julia Cheria (ex Club President, assistant coach VFLW), plus Sal Rees (founding Falcon). Combined awareness raising and fund raising in inspirational night</p> <p>Create community event, including art show by local Aboriginal artist and children's activities, to express solidarity with First Nations people.</p> <p>Part of strategies to reach out to Aboriginal community with aim to increase participation – to date struggling to get a meaningful connection – Council assistance would be appreciated</p>

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	Input to Proud to Play research into LGBTI+ inclusion in soccer as commissioned by Football Victoria	Support increased inclusion in sport for LGBTIQ+ people	Provided participants for workshops and surveys
VFLW team performance and improving financial sustainability	<p>Consolidating position within the VFLW as only independent women's Club</p> <p>Recruiting coaches with strong developmental credentials to build on draft successes in 2019</p> <p>Strengthening messaging as only community Club with VFLW pathway to promote inclusion and opportunity</p> <p>Increased Sponsorship contribution year on year</p>	<p>To consolidate and create niche role within VFLW as only independent women's and community Club competing at this level.</p> <p>To create alternative, accessible pathway to elite level women's football by strengthening local and community foundations</p> <p>To continue to establish new partnerships as foundations to financial sustainability</p>	<p>Slow start to season but strong second half, finishing two wins outside finals.</p> <p>Ground condition at VFLW led to a number of home games moved to other venues, destabilizing playing group</p> <p>4 Falcons drafted to AFLW</p> <p>Falcon Lauren Pearce won VFLW Best and Fairest (Hardeman Pearce medal)</p> <p>Falcon Georgia Hammond won VFLW goal of the year</p> <p>Increased sponsorship revenue in 2019 with VFLW congratulating us as strongest sponsorship growth in competition</p> <p>Refining marketing messages in line with value proposition: elite competition plus women's participation, gender equity and standalone club</p> <p>The Darebin Council Economic Development unit's suggestions of Activ8me (now a major sponsor) and BodKombucha have been very productive. Further leads such as these and any other support would be greatly appreciated to assist us to achieve financial sustainability.</p>
Participation in Council programs and events, for instance through providing guest speakers or coaches for activities	To participate on request or through own initiative as role models and voice for female participation and leadership in sport	To advocate for and promote gender equity in sport and society, and female participation and leadership on and off the field	<p>Volunteers training</p> <p>Sports Club Breakfast</p> <p>Single Use Plastic forum</p> <p>Sustainability Workshops</p> <p>Women in sports network</p> <p>Lauren Pearce role in YMCA program</p> <p>VFLW girls speak at Council/Spark Health event</p>

NOTES / PHOTOS / LINKS / REFERENCES

Lauren Pearce VFLW Best and Fairest 2019 - Family-first Falcons suit Lauren - VFL

<https://vfl.com.au/family-first-falcons-suit-lauren/>

Why the Darebin Falcons will never say die

<https://womens.afl/features/not-in-our-lifetime-darebin-falcons-photo-essay>

Falcons featured in the Herald Sun

<https://www.heraldsun.com.au/leader/localfooty/darebin-falcons-gain-injection-of-experience-youth-to-boost-vflw-season/news-story/220703a5e5b38fffc8ff10e66c8c30e2>

Falcons Vice President Jasmine Hirst received a recognition award for her contribution to football and female sport participation at the 6th annual Women in Sport breakfast

<https://www.facebook.com/390436387830410/posts/1279546952252678/>

Senior soccer Best and Fairest winners

<https://www.facebook.com/390436387830410/posts/1284939545046752/>

VFLW 2020 coaching panels announced

<https://www.facebook.com/390436387830410/posts/1284939545046752/>

Sequel to Falcons Pride dinner: The importance of queer players in the survival of women's Australian football | Emma Race | Sport | The Guardian
Co-authored by Julia Chiera (VFLW Assistant Coach; Falcons Life member; ex Club President)

<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2019/aug/24/the-importance-of-queer-players-in-the-survival-of-womens-australian-football>