

# FutureNow.

## Sport Industry Snapshot

FutureNow is an independent body that provides industry informed advice to influence skills development strategies across the Creative, Leisure and Technologies sectors. Our work assists Western Australia to be prepared with the new order skills required by the evolving economy and our changing society.

### Changing nature of employment in the sports industry

#### Sport workforce development focus

Working in the sports industry offers the opportunity to be part of an exciting and meaningful team environment, often aligned with people's sporting passion. This will continue to entice new staff into the industry, however with low unemployment, high living costs, higher wages in other industries and increased casual and fixed term employment, sport workforce development is focused on how to retain staff with more than 5 years' experience and equal pay across genders.

#### Casualisation of the sporting workforce

There has been a significant drop in full-time positions within the sports sector from 72% to 58% since 2014. These positions have been replaced by a higher proportion of fixed term and casual roles. There has also been a reduction in senior staff with eleven percent of staff with over five years experience leaving the industry. Many of these positions have been filled by women moving into operational and senior management roles, however on average they receive an 11.7% lower pay rate compared to their male counterparts.<sup>1</sup>

#### Encouraging leadership development of women in sport

The sport sector is encouraging women to take up leadership roles with sport board gender diversity at 49% females and 51% males.<sup>2</sup> The Hon Anika Wells established a Women in Sport Workforce Roundtable to present workforce equality recommendations at the Commonwealth Jobs and Skills Summit (September 2022). SportWest are continuing to support the development of the Women of Sport Network and the Australian Sports Commission continue to offer scholarships in Women in Sport Leadership programs and training.

### Creating mental health skills and safeguards in sport

Research from a longitudinal survey of Australian youth found they become sports coaches, instructors or officials as one of their top five casual jobs.<sup>3</sup> As mental health conditions impact one in five youth, it is therefore likely that in their role they will witness mental health symptoms by sporting participants or co-workers.<sup>4</sup> To date there have been few guidelines to support sporting staff and volunteers on how to deal with this. SportWest thus released a Mental Health and Wellbeing Community Sport Framework in 2022. This framework assists sporting staff to understand mental health referral networks, the importance of creating an inclusive culture, critical incident response and initial mental health response strategies.<sup>5</sup>

#### Campaigning for a cultural shift in the treatment of sport umpires

The Western Australian Football Commission is campaigning to change the way spectators, parents and players treat football umpires. Research at the end of the 2021 football season found eight out of ten umpires had received serious verbal abuse.<sup>6</sup> An ABC Sport report indicated an AFL review discovered that while umpire abuse was not the major, or only

reason for retaining umpires, it was an important contributor towards minimising umpire loss and shortages.<sup>7</sup> To promote cultural change, an evidence-based behavioural change campaign “Stop Umpire Abuse” was introduced in August 2022. Not only will this possibly create a more positive work environment for football umpires but has the potential to influence change across all sport involving umpires.

Industry stakeholders responsible for managing umpires across a range of sports indicated the importance of creating a positive working environment, finding it increasingly difficult to attract and retain umpires leading to the hiring of less qualified umpires so a game could still be held.

### Need for media management skills as women’s high-performance sport gains increased media attention

Women’s high-performance sport has experienced significant growth in participation, spectator numbers and player pay rises, especially AFLW and cricket. In 2022 the average player salaries in the NAB AFLW Season 7 increased by 94%<sup>8</sup>, perceived by industry as a positive change for women’s professionalism in sport. However, one article on women’s elite cricket, questioned whether an increase in aligned media attention was impacting athletes’ ability to cope. This may be because players have no, or minimal experience in dealing with this growing part of their work. It was suggested that media management strategies and skill development be included in their training.<sup>9</sup>

## Hosting major sporting events boosts employment and economic growth

Western Australia is experiencing an exciting time in relation to hosting major sporting events and preparing athletes for international events, such as the 2032 Brisbane Olympics. There has been significant government funding and investment in the development of sporting facilities including the WACA, Leschenault Leisure Centre in the Peel, and Dorrien Gardens for the 2023 FIFA Women’s World cup. Facility funding is expected to continue as major sporting events have been linked to inspiring community sport participation<sup>10</sup> and boosting tourism and economic value to our state<sup>11</sup>.

Optus Stadium was the winner of the 2022 Stadium Business Awards - Venue of the Year Award and Most Beautiful Sports Facility in the World winner - Prix Versailles 2019 architecture awards. This sporting facility had a significant influence on employment (7,826 casual staff employed) and hosting major sporting events (143 major events) over the last four years<sup>12</sup> and has over 5 million fans and 23 million website visits.

The “next generation of sport professionals will be exposed to an exceptional number of opportunities” arising from major sporting events, according to Deakin Sport Director, David Shilbury. Yet the University’s 2022 national survey found parents underestimated the volume of likely jobs that would result, and whilst 91% said they would support their teenage students in pursuing a sports related career, 21% of their teenagers felt that wouldn’t be the case.<sup>13</sup>

### Educational pathways to sporting roles

In Western Australia several vocational and university qualifications lead to a pathway into the sports industry from sports management and coaching to sports science. Sport is a sector highly reliant on volunteer work and shows a growing trend towards fixed term contract and casual roles. As a result, potential individuals who might have sought a career in the sport sector are choosing a different career path with sports course numbers reducing from previous years. Industry employers have also indicated a loss of more experienced staff as they move to other industries.

## National training package updates to increase workforce attraction and retention through occupational mobility

The SIS Sport, Fitness and Recreation training package updated in 2022 offer multiple electives to enhance occupational mobility. The opportunity to work across multiple jobs, across industries such as sport, recreation and aquatics improves

employment prospects and supports work casualisation income until a full-time opportunity becomes available.

## Sports governance training leading to improved performance benchmark outcomes

Professionalism in sport is being enhanced through improved sports governance. In 2022, several free governance training options for sporting staff became available through organisations such as the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC) and Sport Australia. In 2022 \$2.1 million was allocated through the “Every Club Grant Scheme” for regional and metropolitan local government organisations to support sport and recreation clubs in their organisational management, including governance training.

The ability to manage governance and economic requirements is of utmost importance given the legal requirements and decision-making requirements of a sports board and committee. Often sport staff do not have governance skills initially because their sport pathway was as an athlete, coach, volunteer, official or general administrator. Training is therefore important. An Australian Sports Commission Governance national benchmarking report found governance training development programs were successfully achieving results, with 45 sports increasing governance performance across standard benchmarks in 2022 compared to the previous year<sup>14</sup>. However, those in smaller sporting associations are indicating they are trying to keep up with the governance, policy and administrative work, yet it can be challenging at times given their small staff numbers and volunteers with limited time.

## Continued trend towards time flexible and unstructured sport

A megatrend identified in a 2013 CSIRO report on the future of Australian sport, predicted as people’s calendars became more densely packed with immovable events and appointments, they would seek out and switch to time flexible physical activity.<sup>15</sup> Evidence suggests that this megatrend has become true. Organised sport for adults and children is decreasing in popularity<sup>16</sup> and predicted to continue to do so. There is however an increasing population, a continued focus on health, and major sporting event on-flow to increase informal sports participation to offset the loss.<sup>17</sup>

The impact on workforce development is that the need for sports coach’s, instructors and umpires has remained the same over the last few years and this trend is predicted to continue. The exception is for major sports such as AFLW<sup>18</sup> and funded instructors such as for the Sporting Schools program where the Australian Government has indicated a \$79.6 million investment in the 2022-23 budget<sup>19</sup>.

### Shift towards adventure and outdoor sport

One of the other CSIRO megatrend predictions was a shift towards lifestyle exercise. This is described as an adventurous change. Examples given were mountain biking and trekking.<sup>20</sup> This megatrend prediction has also materialised. Outdoors and/or adventurous exercise is increasing in popularity.<sup>21</sup> In a 2022 AusPlay report it indicated that surfing and skate sports have experienced growth in participation, especially for women.<sup>22</sup>

## Employment and health values of sport participation

There are 5,715 full time equivalent staff working in the sport industry in Western Australia.<sup>23</sup> Sport is pursued not only for physical health but has been found to contribute \$1.8 billion in mental health benefits and \$205.5 million in suicide prevention.<sup>24</sup> Sport offers a sense of belonging, inclusion, and purpose. Kidsport is a government funded system offering financial assistance of up to \$150 towards club fees per calendar year, which is essential in reducing barriers to youth participation, given up to 17% of Western Australia’s children are living in poverty<sup>25</sup> and the reduced household discretionary income for some families across Western Australia.

## Skill need in sport media and social management

A report released in October 2022, titled “Out of Bounds: Coal, gas and oil sponsorship in Australian sports” explained that those that manage sports sponsorships are increasingly having to discuss and make decisions around the ethics of their sponsorship income. Increasing media and public scrutiny, in this case climate change, is causing sport staff not only to have the skills to evaluate their financial situation but their ethical stance and possible alternative sources of income. The challenge of these sponsorship review skills was highlighted in the management of the controversial withdrawal of the \$15 million Hancock Prospecting sponsorship from Netball Australia. Two million dollars of these funds had been allocated for Netball WA. One of the evolving trends in sport is to income diversify through membership. The West Coast Eagles broke their membership record posting over 100,000 members in 2021.<sup>26</sup>

Sports broadcasting continues to increase in revenue growth in line with increased sport employment and wage growth. In September 2022, a sports broadcasting deal of \$4.5 billion over seven-years for the AFL was announced. This was the biggest broadcasting rights deal in Australian sporting history. In November 2022 Tennis Australia announced their largest broadcasting deal worth more than \$265 million with Channel Nine. This highlights the continued need for athletes and staff to be equipped with media management skills. Currently these skills are taught and offered on a consultancy basis by those with media and public relations qualifications and experience.

## What does all this mean for skill development for the sport industry in 2023?

There will be a focus on skill development in sport surrounding financial and media management such as governance, sponsorship and media training. There will be continued inclusion, mental health and safety policy development training. Professional development will be a focus as a staff retention strategy and the management of volunteers will continue to be a priority. There will also continue to be a focus on the skill development of women as leaders in sport.

## Industry Initiative Reports 2022

**Sports Governance Standards Benchmarking Report 2022** – Sporting associations have an important role to ensure legal and financial compliance and sound decision-making practices. The 2022 report by the Australian Sports Commission showed governance improvements across benchmarking criteria with an average 3.12, on a 1 to 4 scale, with 4 representing high maturity.

**Sport Volunteer Coalition Action Plan 2022-2026** – Australian Sports Commission released an action plan to encourage attraction and retention of community sport volunteers. The Commission found only 82% of pre-Covid 19 and current volunteers have, or are likely to, return in the next 12 months, creating workload pressure.

**WA Sport Industry Remuneration and Benefits Report 2022** – SportWest commissioned the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries to provide an updated version of sport workforce remuneration and benefits. The previous report was conducted in 2014 and the 2022 report shows significant change comparisons.

**Sport in Western Australia: Social Return on Investment** – SportWest partnered with ACIL Allen to create a quantitative report on the value of sport in Western Australia. Value was measured at an estimated \$10.3 billion gross per year and included a break down of this figure for economic and employment benefits, physical and mental health benefits, personal wellbeing and broader social benefits.

**Mental Health and Wellbeing Community Sport Framework** – SportWest created a framework of guiding principles for community sporting clubs on how to approach mental health and wellbeing support.

[National Principles for Child Safe Organisations WA: Guidelines](#) – SportWest held a Child Safeguarding in Sport Forum in October 2022 and referred sporting associations to the Commissioner for Children and Young People 2019 guidelines as a basis to develop sport child safeguarding policies.

[Every Club Grant](#) – Each year regional and metropolitan local governments can apply for a government grant to support sport and recreational clubs by improving their organisational capacity. This can include funding for governance, management, learning and development and enhanced partnerships.

[FutureNow Sport Career Resources](#) – case study interviews of sporting personnel and an overview of key sport interests, skills and working environment including sport educational career pathways are accessible via the FutureNow website.

## FutureNow

### **We would like to hear from you**

FutureNow continually seeks feedback from the sport sector to facilitate workforce development, and the development and delivery of responsive training and skills sets to meet emerging sector needs. If you can contribute to this in any way or require further information, please contact

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