

Board Diversity

Why it matters and how clubs can achieve it

Gender equity at board level is quickly becoming a standard expectation in sport governance, funding and club development. Constitutional provisions for gender equity on boards is one important way that clubs can build stronger, more sustainable and future-focused leadership.

Don't be left behind

The National Gender Equity in Sports Governance Policy and Activate! Queensland Strategy is driving increased focus on gender diversity in sport leadership. Government agencies, councils and sporting bodies are increasingly linking funding, accreditation and governance outcomes to diversity and inclusion standards.

FOR CLUBS, THIS IS LIKELY TO INFLUENCE:

- Grant funding opportunities
- Council leases and tenure arrangements
- Affiliation and accreditation requirements
- Governance reviews and partnerships

Clubs that plan and modernise their governance structures will be better placed for future funding, participation growth and long-term sustainability.

Why board diversity benefits clubs

A mixed-gender board helps clubs:

- Broaden the pool of capable leaders
- Better understand a range of customer segments including women, families and juniors
- Create more welcoming and inclusive environments
- Bring different skills and perspectives into decision-making
- Improve club culture and long-term sustainability
- Strengthen participation and member retention

Evidence from Australia and around the world shows significant untapped interest among women in golf, particularly at clubs that are perceived as modern, welcoming, flexible and family-friendly.

Practical strategies to achieve better board diversity

A constitution clause alone will not create change. Sustainable improvement requires clubs to actively identify, encourage and support a broader range of people to become involved in leadership.

Clubs should consider:

- Identifying potential future board members well before the AGM
- Establishing a nominations committee to proactively identify and encourage suitable candidates for board and committee roles
- Using the nominations committee to consider the skills, experience, diversity and future needs of the club as part of succession planning, rather than relying only on existing networks or whoever is willing to nominate at the time
- Directly approaching women and other underrepresented members with relevant skills, experience or interest, including younger members, newer members and people with relevant professional or community experience
- Creating leadership pathways through sub-committees, advisory groups, project teams and short-term working groups, which can help build confidence and capability for people who may not yet see themselves as 'board ready'
- Providing induction, mentoring and ongoing support for new and emerging board members
- Ensuring meetings are professional, respectful and flexible, and accommodate different work and family commitments
- Promoting board and committee roles as opportunities to contribute skills and make a positive difference to the club
- Reviewing board culture and practices to ensure all members can contribute effectively
- Surveying female members to better understand participation and leadership barriers within the club.

The board should reflect both the club's current membership and the community it wants to attract. If the club wants to grow participation among women, girls, families, juniors, flexible members, social golfers and community users, those perspectives should be represented in governance discussions.

Leadership roles matter too. Diversity should extend beyond board seats to key positions such as president or chairperson, captain, treasurer and major committee chairs. A board can look diverse while influence and decision-making remain concentrated in traditional roles.

IN SHORT

Strong clubs evolve and diverse leadership helps ensure they remain relevant, financially sustainable and connected to the communities they serve.