



BRUNSWICK ZEBRAS FOOTBALL CLUB

WOMEN'S STRATEGY 2019

Brunswick Zebras has a proud history of supporting women's football.

We have had girls' teams dating back to the early 1990's, a number of girls playing in boys' teams, and the club's first senior women's team commencing in 2003. We have had some distinguished Zebras going on to play for the Matildas, the Young Matildas, W-League clubs, and NPL clubs.

We are committed to making the Brunswick Zebras a welcoming and supportive club for women and girls at all levels of football. We want to offer opportunities for girls and women to be involved as players, coaches, team managers, committee members and volunteers. We recognise the importance of women in leadership roles, to ensure that the needs and interests of girls and women at our club receive equal attention to the needs of boys and men.

We acknowledge that girls and women come to football for a variety of reasons, and we will always endeavour to meet these different needs as best as we can. Women and girls choose to play football for some or many of the following reasons:

- health and fitness (physical and mental)
- to have fun
- to play with their friends,
- to meet new friends,
- to be part of a team,
- to develop skills and confidence,
- to win,
- to play at the highest level possible
- to become professional footballers.

Some women and girls give priority to their social connections, and wish to stay at the club for many years. Others see the club as a development opportunity to higher levels of football, or other sports. We want to be able to cater to all needs. We appreciate that doing so can be difficult with limited resources and volunteer organisers, and commit to being transparent about this with our members and potential members.

We note that the key to player engagement is good coaching. While this applies across the board, women and girls generally have specific requirements of coaches, including:

- **fairness** and encouragement, rather than yelling and winning at all costs
- **understanding** that women and girls can multi-task – i.e. if they talk during training, it is not always that they are not concentrating
- **recognising** that girls are more likely to have a range of commitments beyond football, e.g. other sports, other activities, family responsibilities
- **understanding** that girls, and adult women in particular may not have had the same exposure to sport and ball skills from as young an age as boys and men, and may lack confidence and experience.

We also recognise that while many girls and women want to play within a traditional structure (11-a-side, full length games on full sized pitches in a weekly competition), others may prefer a less formal level of participation, including small-sided games, skills development without competition, less regular time commitment, less time on the pitch and more time engaged socially. Brunswick Zebras will remain primarily committed to competitive team football, however we will explore ways in which these additional services can be offered as a means of engaging more girls and women.

Finally, Brunswick Zebras will always be a club for the whole community – women and men, girls and boys, people of different abilities and diverse backgrounds. We are committed to working to serve all, but always in the context of club unity and mutual support between all our members.

Mission: To make Brunswick Zebras the club of choice for women and girls in the inner north

1. Recruit new players across all age groups, from Saturday Skills, through juniors to seniors
 - 1.1 Develop a marketing plan and establish a brand for women's football at the Zebras (including possible employment of a professional designer at the initial stages) including:
 - 1.1.1 Redesigned and regularly updated website and social media platforms
 - 1.1.2 Regular match reports and team news from the various teams
 - 1.1.3 Short videos of club activities
 - 1.1.4 Tell our story, project our strengths, including history, culture, personal testimonies
 - 1.1.5 Promote female football in schools and local community
 - 1.2 Hold an annual Open Day for Saturday Skills players and their families with information about transitioning to junior teams in the club
 - 1.3 Appoint a Junior Girls' co-ordinator who can be the contact for players and families in this age group, to ensure timely response to queries and provision of vital information
 - 1.4 Provide a single gateway for new players into the club
 - 1.5 Enhance transparency about our fee structure and what is provided
2. Encourage a life time of involvement at the club for females, from juniors to seniors, to coaches, administrators, and parents with children at the club
 - 2.1 Establish teams in every age group for girls
 - 2.2 Ensure that there is a pathway for female players from sub-juniors, to juniors, to seniors
 - 2.3 Establish a number of senior women's teams to cater for both competitive players, and those who give greater priority to social playing
 - 2.4 Consider alternative formats of the game such as 'Soccer Mums', walking football etc
 - 2.5 Source, train and support excellent coaches with skills relevant to coaching women and girls
 - 2.6 Provide coaching and leadership training to women who are interested, including structured support structures, mentoring, and enforcing Codes of Conduct to support coaches and volunteers
 - 2.7 Extend the opportunities for different teams to train together – build stronger bonds
 - 2.8 Conduct annual player/family surveys to identify strengths and weaknesses
 - 2.9 Improve social opportunities within and across different teams
 - 2.10 Improve physical facilities, such as a more comfortable club house, appropriate changing rooms, provision of facilities for players with babies, such as change table, enclosed child play area – design and facilities changes to be undertaken based on consultation with members

3 Promote girls' and women's football in general

- 3.1 Exploring links – either formal or informal – with NPL clubs to assist transition players who wish to play at a higher level, as well as work with Melbourne Victory as their community partner as a means of introducing girls and women to the W-League
- 3.2 Maintain dialogue with Football Victoria, Moreland Council and other clubs around sustainable numbers of clubs and teams in various levels of competition (to minimise player poaching and lopsided leagues).

