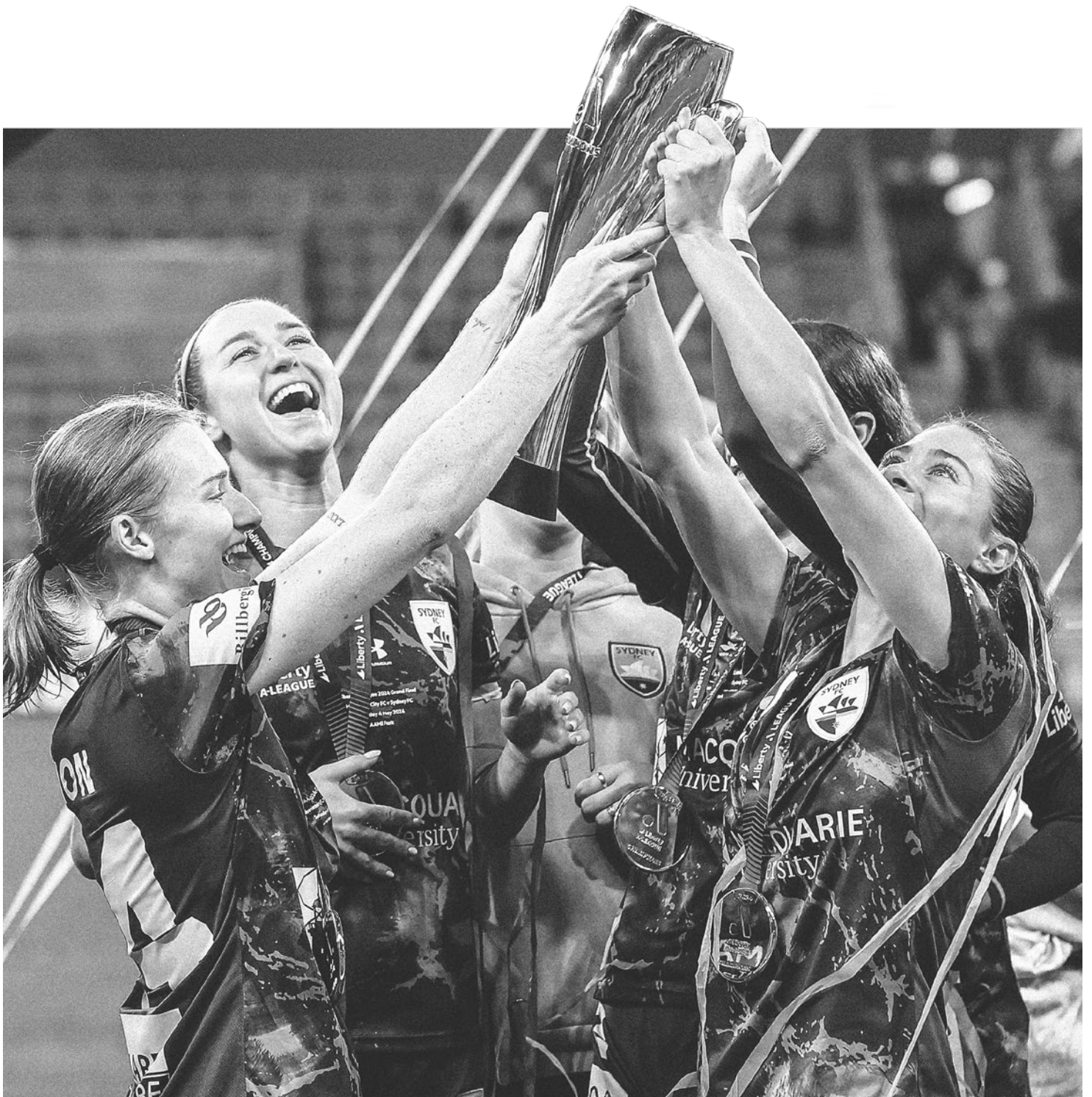




A-LEAGUE WOMEN REPORT

2023 - 24



SUPPORTING THE PLAYERS BUILDING THE GAME



Professional Footballers Australia

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FROM THE CO-CEOS



FOREWORD

Kate Gill & Beau Busch

In 2017, the W-League players supported a bold vision for women's football in Australia. Titled *From Grassroots to Greatness*, this six-year plan aimed to establish a clear pathway for Australian players, enabling them to progress from junior football to becoming full-time professionals and, ultimately, international footballers.

The vision aimed to revolutionise football in Australia by transforming the W-League into one of the best leagues in the world, and, in the process, power the Matildas to ongoing World Cup and Olympic success.

While progress has been made over the past six years, through expanded playing opportunities and collectively bargained conditions, the players' vision has not fully materialised.

Meanwhile, women's football globally has experienced exponential growth. Key markets like the United States, England, and Europe were early movers, with leagues, clubs, broadcasters, and partners fuelling rapid progress. Women's World Cups have reached new heights. New investors have emerged with a belief in and vision for women's football.

Leagues that once trailed the A-League Women now serve as benchmarks for success, enticing many of our own Matildas and Australian talent abroad.

Domestically, other sports have also surged ahead. The Women's Big Bash League, AFLW, and NRLW have launched new competitions, with attractive pay and working conditions, while Super Netball has relaunched, eroding the A-League Women's head start.

Once a frontrunner both globally and domestically, the A-League Women is facing an uphill battle against the dual forces of international and domestic competition.

We have seen an inflection point like this before. In 2015, it was the Matildas who were told that their demands for professional dignity and sustainable livelihoods were unaffordable.

In hindsight, it's clear that our game could not have afforded not to have made the investments which have ultimately created the cultural, commercial, and sporting phenomenon that is the Matildas.

As with the Matildas then, the A-League Women players are telling us about the opportunities of action and the risks of standing still, not only for their careers but for the broader game. This report shares some of that feedback, which has been consistent and emphatic through surveys and player meetings.

In 2015, the determination of the players overcame resistance from administrators who could not see the opportunity in front of them. Now, it is A-League Women players who are calling on decision-makers who share their ambition to step up, and for those who do not to step aside.

In this report, the players are clear about what steps are required to propel the domestic game toward these goals.

Full-time professionalism must be delivered by 2026, enabling clubs to attract and retain the best talent, and supporting players to reach their full potential as athletes. We need elite workplace environments, matchday infrastructure, and broadcast quality, if we're going to tell players, fans, investors, and partners that this is an elite product.

The players accept that these developments will not (and should not) be achieved amid business as usual. League and club leadership must join the players to craft an ambitious vision in which professionalism,

commercialisation, product quality, and investment all evolve in parallel.

Looking at the progress of the Matildas and other leagues, this will be a leap based more on evidence than faith. The Women's Asian Cup provides a timely springboard, should we leverage it fully. We cannot afford to miss this opportunity.

Kate Gill & Beau Busch

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2023-24 PFA A-League Women Report highlights both the incredible progress of the competition and the risk to its future of resting on those laurels.

The League Assessment section of the report explores the growth of women's leagues abroad, and its impact on the ability of the A-League (ALW) to attract and retain talent.

For example, the UK Women's Super League (WSL) has witnessed a seven-fold increase in attendances since taking the step to relaunch as a full-time professional league in 2018. The US National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) has increased its salary cap by 40% to A\$4.1m for the 2024 season, off the back of a broadcast deal worth 40 times the previous one.

A new American professional league, the United Soccer League's Super League (USLS), is launching in 2024-25, with plans to expand from eight to 20 clubs by 2026-27.

The ALW has already had its top-end talent siphoned off over the past five years, and these new developments risk seeing its middle hollowed out. Sixty-three of the 106 foreign player moves into the ALW since 2018 were Americans. Forty-six percent of imports (of all nationalities) are drawn directly from the NWSL.

This flow of talent from the US is under threat from the rapidly advancing club scene there. The NWSL overtook the ALW as a preferred league for ALW players in 2023-24 (the WSL still clearly leads both options).

The ALW is growing, but superior playing opportunities are growing faster. For this reason, this report's key recommendation is for the ALW to become fully professional for the 2026-27 season, reflecting the timeline deemed 'acceptable' to players in the PFA's end of season survey.

This change would also alleviate significant wellbeing challenges for players under the

current part-time dynamic, where 62% work in another job outside football. The playing cohort's self-reported satisfaction with 'life balance' was at a record low in 2023-24.

Allowing players to focus on football full-time would improve development outcomes, enabling clubs to tap into growing international revenue opportunities. The women's transfer market is growing exponentially, rising to A\$9.3m in 2023 after nearly doubling each year since 2019. Australian clubs received over A\$600k from FIFA for preparing World Cup players, with around two thirds of that going to ALW clubs. The women's pot is a fraction of the men's, so if FIFA closes this gap even partially, the opportunity for ALW clubs will be significant.

The league's commercial potential would also be boosted by the leap to full-time. Average crowds did increase by 72% off the back of the Women's World Cup, and compare favourably to the top tiers in Japan and Sweden and the AFLW. However, this growth was largely organic, and the report's second recommendation is that APL and FA work to leverage the 2026 Women's Asian Cup in Australia in a more strategic and aligned way.

The ALW, Japan's WE League, and Sweden's Damallsvenskan, all skew younger than the WSL and NWSL, boding well for our league's capacity to develop talent. Players aged 18 and under accounted for 11% of match minutes in the ALW, ahead of the Damallsvenskan (7%), WE League (6%), NWSL (2%) and WSL (1%).

On the other hand, the data shows that the ALW struggles to retain its talent and support career longevity. Only 10% of the ALW's match time was played by players older than 28, while those players accounted for 17% of minutes in the Damallsvenskan and WE League, 28% in WSL, and 29% in NWSL.

In the player survey, 69% of ALW players said they would consider leaving football

early for some reason other than form or fitness, with low club salaries being by far the most-picked reason.

The Employment Framework section of the report reveals that total player payments reached a record \$8.4m. This was due to the addition of Central Coast, the increase of the minimum salary to \$25,000, the movement of Scholarship players outside the salary cap, and the addition of the Women's World Cup Legacy Player cap concession. Average payments per club were \$700k, \$100k above the cap. These figures reflect the progress baked into the 2021-2026 Collective Bargaining Agreement, although no more major changes are scheduled for its remaining two years.

In the Club Benchmarking section of the report, Adelaide's Coopers Stadium was rated by the players as the best regularly-used venue with regards to pitch quality and atmosphere. However, the report's third recommendation is that the league needs a consistent and appropriate venue strategy when it relaunches as fully professional.

One of the issues with some of the small suburban venues and glorified training pitches currently used is that they provide insufficient protection from extreme heat. Eighty-eight percent of players want more done to address that issue, with 28% of matches in 2023-24 impacted by extreme weather.

Melbourne City achieved the highest score in the PFA's 'Club Performance Index', which aggregates player survey results regarding clubs' performance across operations, facilities, and culture.

The report's fourth and final recommendation is that clubs continue to improve their workplace environments in 2024-25, with the Index scores showing significant room for improvement in some areas.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1



Full-time professionalism by 2026-27

Last year's report made full-time professionalism its top recommendation; this year we plant a flag in the sand for two seasons' time.

This timeframe is what the vast majority of players have said is acceptable. The report clearly illustrates the continued strain on both players' wellbeing and the quality of football caused by the current part-time dynamic.

This year's report also lays out the threat to the ALW of standing still against the backdrop of rapid progress in women's football overseas and women's sport here. The league has already suffered a siphoning of its top-end talent; it next risks having its middle hollowed out by superior opportunities in the US in particular.

We cannot wait for progress to happen to us. The evidence around talent retention shows that an incremental approach is likely to lead the league backwards. Rather, it is time to take the exciting leap forward into a future which enables the ALW to fulfil its potential, kicking off the virtuous cycle of growth seen in other leagues and the Matildas.

To those who see women's football purely as a cost, accepting this recommendation will look unaffordable. The data in the report shows that we can less afford not to. It is time for those who recognise this moment as an opportunity to invest in football's biggest growth centre to step up, and for others to step aside.

2



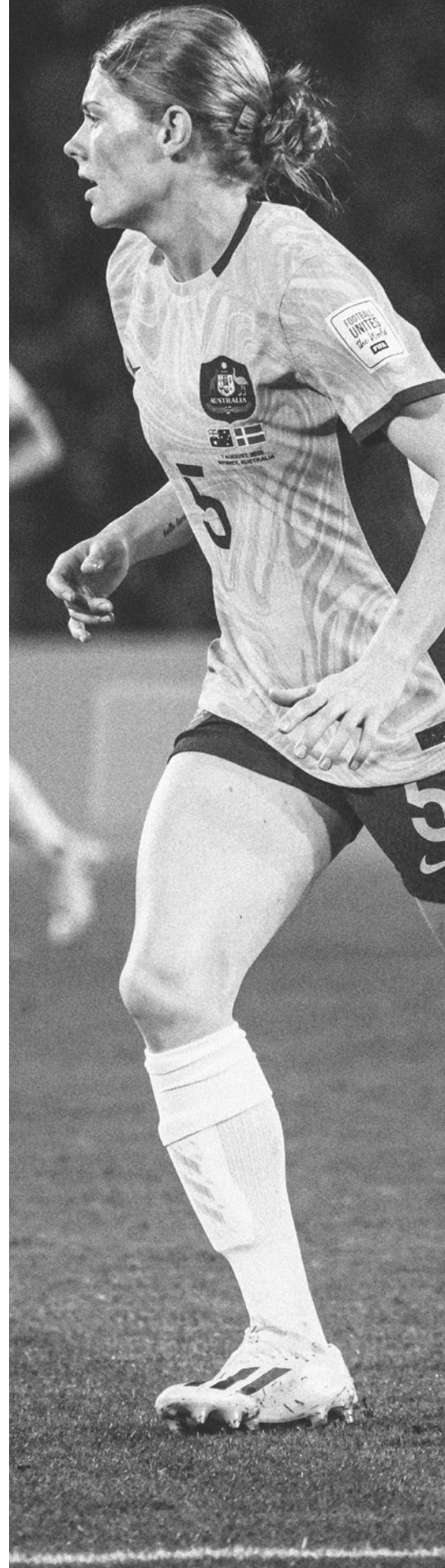
Capitalise on the 2026 AFC Women's Asian Cup

The 2023 Women's World Cup was a missed opportunity for the ALW. Australian football has been gifted a second chance.

The report shows that there has been organic growth in ALW attendances and memberships off the back of the World Cup, but this was absent an aligned strategy to funnel new converts to women's football towards the domestic competition.

The most obvious opportunity is to promote the ALW to fans who attend international matches, in stadiums and digitally. In fan focus groups conducted by the PFA, new Matildas superfans said they were ignorant to basic details about the ALW teams and schedule because of the lack of this bare minimum action.

The APL and FA have admitted to a strategic disconnect since separation. The national team and the national league are interdependent. Both parties have a responsibility to address this for 2026, which opportunely leads into a season which should represent an exciting relaunch of the competition.



3



(Re)define the ALW's match presentation

The report again describes how ALW matches are played in venues ranging from 50,000-seat cauldrons to glorified training pitches.

Some clubs alternate between the two extremes throughout the season, giving their would-be fans whiplash from the contrast in experiences and denying them an opportunity to build a consistent match-going habit.

As a result of the varied lighting and camera placement at different venues, the broadcast product is similarly inconsistent.

When the league steps forward into a fully professional future, the presentation of matches must reflect an elite product, with a stable suite of appropriate venues. Fans' positive reviews of Leichhardt Oval point to it being close to the Goldilocks solution.

Getting right-sized infrastructure for club football has been a perennial challenge, but the power of women's football and the Asian Cup can be leveraged to this end.

4



Continue to improve club environments

The PFA's Club Indices provide a systematic tool for tracking the quality of club environments via the end of season player survey.

To reward success, this report identifies the top four performing clubs with regards to football operations, training facilities, culture, overall performance, and club integration. It deidentifies lower-ranked clubs, as recognition that all have met with the PFA to discuss their results and identify opportunities for improvement.

There has been an increase to average scores since 2022-23, which indicates that things are generally moving in the right direction. But the scores make clear that some clubs are delivering an unacceptable experience in some of these areas.

The players expect to see further progress in 2024-25. Just as full-time contracts will help players be their best, elite environments are a prerequisite to making the ALW product fulfil its potential.



SURVEY METHODOLOGY



Where you see this symbol, the Report shares findings from the PFA's player surveys. This includes the 2023-24 A-League Women end of season player survey as well as post-match surveys conducted throughout the season. 197 players responded to the end of season survey, a record number. This included at least 14 from each club, so the sample is representative and provides for robust comparison between subgroups. Responses were collected on a voluntary basis between the 17th of April and 14th of May 2024 via an online survey. Not every player responded to every question.

The results are sometimes contrasted against the A-League Men survey, which received 191 responses this season, or against previous iterations of the survey. The fact that the vast majority of the playing groups from both A-Leagues complete the survey speaks to the players' high level of engagement in their industry and provides a powerful source of information for policy-makers.





LEAGUE ASSESSMENT

10. Global landscape | 12. Competition for talent | 16. Player profiles | 17. Attendances
19. International revenues | 20. Competitive balance

GLOBAL LANDSCAPE

INSIGHT

Leading women's football leagues are rewriting the rulebook

To understand the ALW's standing at this moment in time, one must appreciate the incredible trajectory of women's football around the world.

The UK **WSL** was launched in 2010, two years after the ALW (then called W-League). Until 2018, the WSL ticked along with average crowds around 1,000. It then took the bold step to relaunch with full-time professionalism for the 2018-19 season. This requirement caused some clubs to fall away, while others stepped up with increased investment.

This reform kick-started a cycle of virtuous growth. In 2019, Barclays committed around A\$20m as title sponsor over the next three seasons. Despite COVID-19 interrupting the league's growth during that term, Barclays tripled its investment for its 2022-2025 renewal, and media reports suggest it could double that amount again in the next extension.¹

As Sports Pro Media writes: "When Barclays first sponsored the WSL five years ago it believed it was investing in potential. Now the bank is enjoying the rewards of its commitment."

The WSL now averages over 7,000 fans per match. Arsenal Women would be ranked in the top ten clubs for average attendances if it was in the men's Premier League.

The league signed a A\$15m per year broadcast agreement with Sky and BBC in 2021, which it has recently extended to 2025 to give it more time to negotiate a new deal.

This growth has been achieved while the WSL has been administered by the Football Association. From 2024-25, the league will be governed by a new independent body focused solely on its success. Across UEFA, 39% of first division women's clubs operate independently of men's clubs.²

The US **NWSL** began play in 2013. Its crowds started at a higher base than the WSL, ranging from about 4,000 initially to 6,000 in 2018. Despite losing the 2020 season to the pandemic, it too has seen incredible growth on and off the pitch in the past six years, with average attendances now over 10,000.

The 2021-2023 NWSL broadcast deal with CBS was worth around A\$2.3m per season. The new 2024-2027 deal with CBS, Amazon, ESPN, and Scripps brings in A\$92m per season, a 40x increase.

In the latest round of expansion, Bay FC and an unnamed Boston team bought licences for A\$82m apiece. This is about 50 times what Angel City FC paid in 2020. Angel City FC has more recently been valued at over A\$250m.

A rival American league, the **USLS**, is set to kick-off in August 2024. It will initially have eight clubs, with stated plans to expand to 20 clubs by 2026-27.³

Unlike the NWSL, the USLS will run over the same inter-year calendar as the WSL and ALW.

One USLS entrant, Lexington SC of Kentucky, exemplifies the ambition of this venture. The club was founded in 2021 with men's and women's teams in the lower tiers of USL. Ahead of the inaugural USLS season, the club is building a new 5,000-seat stadium at its training base, with the ability to expand capacity to 11,000 later on. The stadium is estimated to cost around A\$45m, with the training complex overall worth A\$164m.⁴ Lexington's population is 320,000.

In 2025, Canada will launch its own professional women's league starting with six clubs. None of this is to mention the progress of European women's leagues outside of the UK. To stand still against this backdrop is to move backwards.

1 <https://www.sportspromedia.com/news/wsl-barclays-title-sponsorship-deal-extension-womens-championship-fa/>

2 https://editorial.uefa.com/resources/027e-174740f39cc6-d205dd2e86bf-1000/ecfl_bm-report_2022_high_resolution.pdf

3 <https://www.uslsuperleague.com/faqs/>

4 <https://www.kentucky.com/sports/soccer/article280067229.html>

VIEWPOINT

SETTING FOR SUCCESS: BEST PRACTICE APPROACHES IN WOMEN'S LEAGUES



- Moya Dodd AO

Secretary of the Board of the Women's Leagues Forum, former Matilda

Women's leagues are growing around the world, creating professional opportunities for an increasing pool of elite players. While the situation of each league is different, emerging best practices include the following:

A shared vision in which players are key assets

The best leagues have the best players. Having a vision where players are the centrepiece – aligned with clubs, sponsors, media and fans – means they are treated as key assets. This informs approaches to well-being and safeguarding, as well as ensuring healthy dialogue between leagues, clubs

and player unions so that resources are spent on things that matter most to attract top talent and help the league succeed.

A commercial focus on sustainable growth in the women's game

Top leagues and clubs have a laser focus on building the narrative that supports sustainable revenue and valuation growth. We have seen exponential growth especially in the US, with focused and dedicated resources for the women's game, and an appreciation of its different heritage and fandom. They invest and innovate with confidence, and success follows.

A women's football lens on support services and structures

Strong leagues are built around clubs who create a high-performance environment purposefully made for women's football. That includes a healthy culture, good facilities access, and dedicated roles for staff with the right skills to support women athletes (e.g. medical support specific to women). It also includes ED&I awareness in all governance and management appointments, and a leadership commitment to growing gender equity.

COMPETITION FOR TALENT

INSIGHT *The ALW's ability to retain players is increasingly under threat*

The ALW minimum wage was \$25,000 in 2023-24, with the salary cap at \$600,000. These figures represent rapid progress under the 2021-2026 A-Leagues Collective Bargaining Agreement.

But the challenging reality is that leading overseas leagues like those cited above now offer far greater remuneration. The NWSL's minimum wage is over A\$50,000 and its salary cap increased 40% to around A\$4.1m for the 2024 season, nearly seven times as large as the ALW cap.

The WSL has a 'soft' cap related to club income, so the capacity to pay varies by club. An analysis of 2022-23 WSL club finances found club salary expenses (including players and staff) ranging between A\$3m and A\$12.5m, having collectively grown 45% on 2021-22.

Average salaries in both leagues are thought to be around A\$100,000-A\$150,000, which is what the top players in ALW might currently receive. The top flights in Spain and Italy feature average salaries between A\$50,000-A\$75,000.⁵

Outside of salaries, top overseas clubs provide a year-round elite environment, while ALW contracts run 35 weeks and coaches and staff are generally not employed for the full 12 months.

This gap has widened quickly over the past five years, contributing to a notable change to the ALW's playing profile.

In the 2019-20 season, all but three of the Matildas from Australia's 2023 Women's World Cup squad played in the ALW. One of those three absentees, Clare Hunt, was based here but did not play due to injury, and another, Sam Kerr, had played in all 11 previous seasons of the competition before leaving for Chelsea that season.

It might be hard for newly converted Matildas to fathom, but prior to the pandemic, practically all of Australia's best players could be watched here in the flesh, weekly. But Kerr's departure was a sign of things to come. In 2020-21, only 11 of those 23 World Cup players featured in the ALW. By 2022-23, it was just four.

During the 2010s, many Matildas played in both the ALW and the NWSL each year, to create for themselves a fuller calendar of elite football. The ALW enjoyed their presence without ever being able to support world class careers by itself. But the explosion of fully professional women's football in Europe blew that dynamic out of the water, leading to the recent exodus.













































































































































































































The ALW's ability to recruit top tier foreign players has also diminished. Last decade, the competition was able to attract established international stars like Kim Little, Jess Fishlock, and Emily Sonnet, among others. With all due respect to more recent imports, that calibre of player is now out of reach.

The league has done well to attract or retain a number of high-profile Matildas this past season, supported by the introduction of a World Cup Legacy Player salary cap concession. But this has not stopped peak-aged Matildas like Cortnee Vine and Kaitlyn Torpey from pursuing opportunities in the NWSL.

If the ALW has already seen most of its top tier talent whisked away, it next faces the threat of its middle being hollowed out. Around half of its foreign players in 2023-24 were American, and a large chunk of these have already signed for USL clubs which are hungry for players and reportedly offering superior salaries.

⁵ <https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/4220125f7600a8a2/original/FIFA-Women-s-Benchmarking-Report-2023.pdf>

ALW clubs represented by the Matildas 2023 Women's World Cup squad

	2008-09	2009	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	ALW Matches
Clare Polkinghorne																152
Katrina Gorry																142
Tameka Yallop																139
Steph Catley																127
Lydia Williams																120
Kyah Simon																108
Caitlin Foord																106
Alanna Kennedy																106
Emily van Egmond																101
Sam Kerr																95
Mackenzie Arnold																93
Aivi Luik																88
Cortnee Vine																87
Hayley Raso																86
Clare Wheeler																79
Alex Chidiac																75
Ellie Carpenter																58
Kyra Cooney-Cross																57
Courtney Nevin																43
Clare Hunt																37
Charlotte Grant																34
Teagan Micah																13
Mary Fowler																7

INSIGHT

Booming North American leagues are a pressing threat to ALW's quality

The PFA has analysed every player move in and out of the ALW for the past six seasons. From 2018-19 to 2023-24, there have been 165 times when a player moved from an overseas league to the ALW. Individual players can account for multiple moves.

Of those moves, 51 were made by Australians and eight by New Zealanders.

Of the remaining 106 'true' imports, 63 were Americans (not counting players with American heritage who represent other nations). The other 43 foreign imports were drawn from 21 other nationalities, with none providing more than five players each.

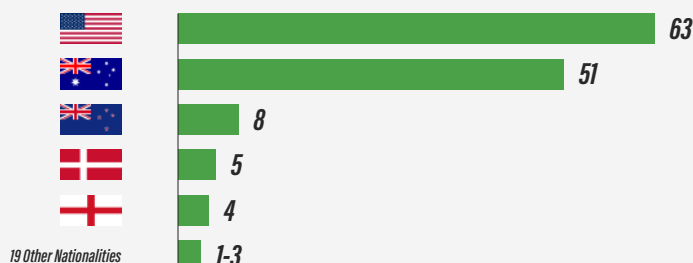
In terms of leagues, 76 of the 165 overseas imports (of all nationalities) have moved to the ALW directly from the NWSL. The next largest sources have been the Norwegian Toppserien (13 players) and the Swedish Damallsvenskan (11).

So the NWSL is by far the greatest source of imported talent, and Americans make up the majority of foreign imports. The rapid development of the NWSL, and the introduction of the USLS on the inter-year calendar, are clearly great threats to the ALW's ability to import talent.

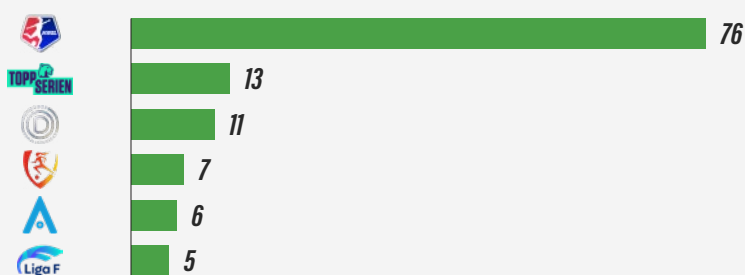
Now let's consider outgoings. There have been 171 times when a player left the ALW for an overseas club between 2018-19 and 2023-24. Seventy-nine of those moves were to NWSL clubs, with no other league attracting more than 14 of our players during that time. Once again, this highlights the flood of traffic between NWSL and ALW.

Looking only at the 73 Australian and New Zealander player departures, the picture changes. The WSL has attracted 13 such players, ahead of the Damallsvenskan (11), then NWSL (8), followed by other top European leagues. We have not yet felt the full force of the NWSL's resurgence with regards to losing our homegrown talent.

Nationalities of ALW imports, 2018-2024



Top source leagues of ALW imports, 2018-2024



Top destination leagues of ALW exports, 2018-2024



Destination leagues for Australian/New Zealand players, 2018-2024



INSIGHT

More ALW players would now prefer to play in the NWSL than here

The ALW has slipped behind the NWSL in the players' list of preferred leagues to play in, with the WSL entrenching itself as the frontrunner.

Players ranked the ALW, WSL, NWSL, and 'other overseas league' from first to fourth as their most preferred to play in in the PFA's past two end of season surveys.

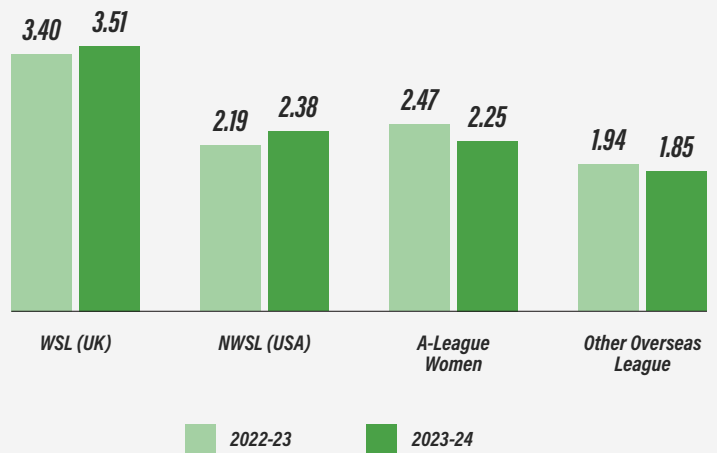
By allocating each player's rankings a score from 1 (least preferred) to 4 (most preferred), and averaging the scores, we see that the WSL was a clear leader both years.

But while the ALW was rated slightly higher than NWSL at the end of 2022-23, those rankings have now flipped.

Put another way, in 2022-23, 56% of ALW players put the ALW ahead of NWSL on their lists, but in 2023-24, only 41% of ALW players did the same.



Which of these leagues would you most prefer to play in?
(Each player ranks leagues 1st through 4th. Rating score on 1-4 scale.)



VIEWPOINT

WHY I LEFT THE A-LEAGUE WOMEN FOR THE USL SUPER LEAGUE



- Cannon Clough

A-League Women Player 2021-2024

Recently, I made a huge move back to my homeland in the United States of America to take up an opportunity to play for the Carolina Ascent FC. Having been so far from my family for the last five years, it was a unique opportunity to play for the team in Charlotte, North Carolina, only minutes from where I grew up. The decision was also a "leap of faith" to join a brand new league and team.

Some of the other factors in coming home were the fact that the contracts were a full year long, unlike the situation in Australia for most players. The club also provides health insurance plans for the players so that if anything happens to us off pitch or outside of training we are still covered. The investment into this league in its first year makes it desirable to play in, as well as the choice to be on Peacock (a streaming service from NBC Universal) for the broadcast.

At our club specifically, I have noticed the investment into an entire team whose job is to create awesome marketing strategies so that we are visible to the public, and a great ticket sales team that is constantly pushing to sell us out going into the inaugural season, creating a fan experience that fans want to be a part of. We have a high performance and medical staff that is available to us 24/7. Our owner comes to training occasionally and is on first name basis with the girls and doesn't fail to let us know he backs us. I've not been in an environment like that before.

I have absolutely loved my time in Australia and specifically playing in the A-League. The A-League gave me the opportunity to live out one of my dreams! It has a huge place in my heart and if I can make my way back over there at some point to play again I would do it in a heartbeat! In terms of

lifestyle, Australia is the place to be. Some of my best friends for life are in Australia in the A-League.

Having the PFA in Australia was instrumental because without it, clubs and the league are less accountable. We do not yet have a players' union for the USL which I believe needs to happen ASAP.

Some of the factors that would make it more desirable for internationals coming to Australia would be:

- 12-month contracts
- Multi-year deals
- Higher minimum wage
- More visibility through broadcast
- Improvement of high performance environments

PLAYER PROFILES

INSIGHT The ALW skews younger than comparator leagues

The PFA analysed every match minute played in the most recently completed seasons of the ALW, WSL, NWSL, Damallsvenskan, and Japan's WE League.

All of these league seasons besides the Damallsvenskan featured 12 clubs playing a full home-and-away schedule of 22 rounds. The 2023 Damallsvenskan included 14 clubs and 26 rounds.

The ALW, Damallsvenskan, and WE League provided far more opportunities for young players than the WSL and NWSL. The share of match minutes going to players aged 21 and under was 28% for ALW and 27% for Damallsvenskan and WE League, but only 13% for WSL and 6% for NWSL.

Players aged 18 and under accounted for 11% of match minutes in the ALW, ahead of the Damallsvenskan (7%), WE League (6%), NWSL (2%) and WSL (1%).

The ALW diverged from the Swedish and Japanese top flights with regards to older players. Only 10% of the ALW's match time was played by players older than 28, while those players accounted for 17% of minutes in the Damallsvenskan and WE League, 28% in WSL, and 29% in NWSL.

There are two sides to this ALW story. On the one hand, it could be seen as a positive for the league's youth development function that a higher share of its minutes went to young players, especially compared to the WSL and NWSL, which more regularly import readymade stars from elsewhere.

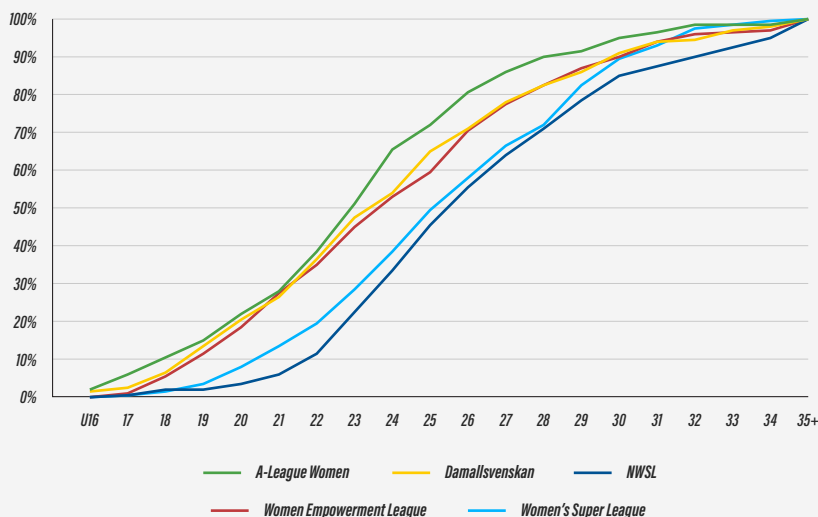
On the other hand, the data suggest that the ALW is not supporting career longevity. The triple threat of other leagues, other sports, and other careers is evident in the ALW's inability to retain players into their thirties. In the PFA's 2023-24 player survey, only 31% of ALW players said they would play as long as

they could rather than potentially cut their careers short.

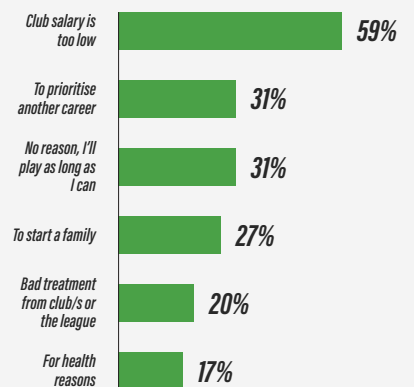
The other 69% chose a range of reasons of shown in the chart, with low club salaries being the clear top option. This represents at least some improvement since the PFA's 2016 *W-League Workplace Conditions Report*, which found that 80% of players at that time would consider leaving the game early.⁶ But greater and faster progress is urgently required.

⁶ <https://pfa.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/PFA-W-League-Conditions-Report-pdf>

Sharing of playing minutes by age, seasons commencing 2023



For what reason/s might you leave football early? (select all that apply)



Note: 'Other' not shown

ATTENDANCES

INSIGHT

ALW crowds increased 72% off the back of the World Cup

Average attendances for regular season ALW matches increased from 1,233 in 2022-23 to 2,117 in 2023-24, a 72% rise.

This was a season where the number of matches grew to 132 from 99 due to the addition of Central Coast Mariners and the extension of the season to a full home-and-away with 22 rounds. This larger denominator makes the increased average attendance all the more impressive.

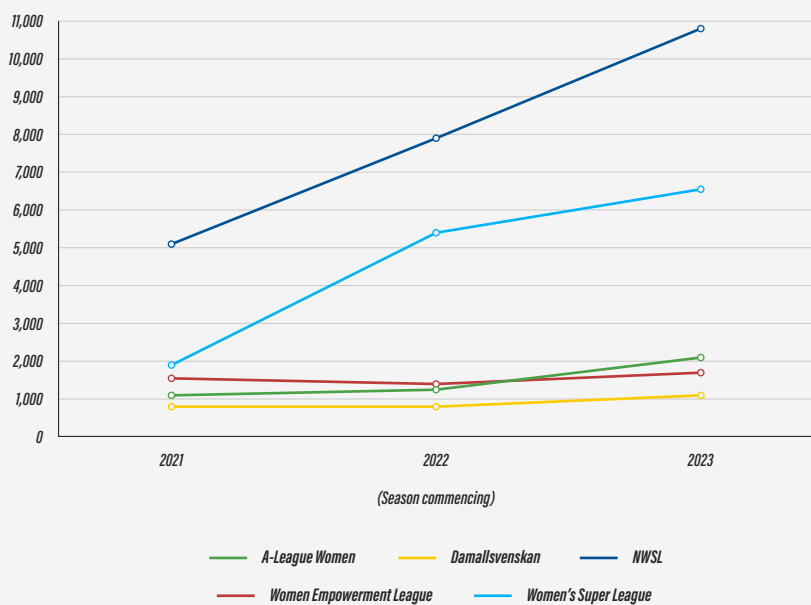
The aggregate attendance of ALW regular season fixtures rose to 279,482 from 122,031, well over double. The aggregate attendance back in 2021-22 was 78,748.

The AFLW recorded an average crowd of 2,606 for its 2023 regular season, but across only 90 matches. Its aggregate was 234,525. However, it does not have double headers.

In part due to the Women's World Cup, the ALW is stacking up well compared to some comparator football leagues.

It has leapfrogged the WE League and pushed clear of the Damallsvenskan, which still attract less than 2,000 fans on average. All these leagues trail the NWSL and WSL, which have quickly grown to attract averages above 10,000 and 7,000 respectively.

Average attendances for past three seasons (regular season)



Note: A-League data via Andrew Howe. Other leagues data via FBref.



V I E W P O I N T

PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR ENGAGING A-LEAGUE WOMEN FANS



- Majella Card

The Roar Corps

The ALW provides fans access to the world of football. Passion for ALW feeds into and is fed by broader interest and engagement with the Matildas and overseas leagues as we follow and support favourite players across their careers. Connecting with other fans on games days or through social media creates a sense of belonging and community.

The ability to interact with players at the end of games, and clubs generating engaging content with players that tells their stories builds that connection as well. There is also excitement about being part of the larger progress of women's sport that promotes positive change in sports through its inclusivity and diversity.

Attending ALW is a welcoming experience. It's a little bit different to the sometimes aggressive and gatekeeping positioning

of other mainstream sports, which is considered a plus and is an attitude that The Roar Corps has tried to embody.

The location, quality of facilities, and scheduling are important factors to the game day experience. Understanding that ticking all boxes can be difficult, some general advice for clubs when hosting their games:

- use the same location so fans have consistency
- locations with pre-game/post-game dining venues
- accessible by public transport
- appropriate to crowd size to maximise atmosphere
- sufficient catering options and other facilities (there is nothing worse than missing the game because you've had to spend 20 minutes in a canteen queue)
- shade cover, and/or schedule games in

the late afternoon/evening, especially in Australian summer. It is safer for players, provides a more entertaining standard of football and more comfortable for fans.

General marketing and awareness of games and the league continues to be an issue. We'd like to see greater leverage of Matildas games by clubs, especially when there are games locally.

As active supporters we are very much about creating an atmosphere and making noise in support of our team. We appreciate that not everyone at matches wants to sing and chant, so it would be great for people to be aware that certain sections of the ground are for active support.

INTERNATIONAL REVENUES

INSIGHT

ALW clubs received record revenues from transfer market and FIFA Club Benefits

While the growth in women's football globally presents some challenges for the ALW, it also creates opportunities. The burgeoning transfer market for women's players is one example.

Global spending on women's players is on an exponential growth trajectory. It has nearly doubled every year since 2019, rising from around A\$1.1m in that year to A\$9.3m in 2023. The trend looks to continue into 2024; the January window saw expenditure around A\$3.2m, up more than 150% compared to the same period in 2023.⁷

Kaitlyn Torpey and Lysianne Proulx contributed to that January 2024 total, with Melbourne City recouping significant (undisclosed) fees in the context of the ALW economy.

FIFA's July 2024 announcement of 2023 Women's World Cup Club Benefits distributions provided another boon for ALW clubs.

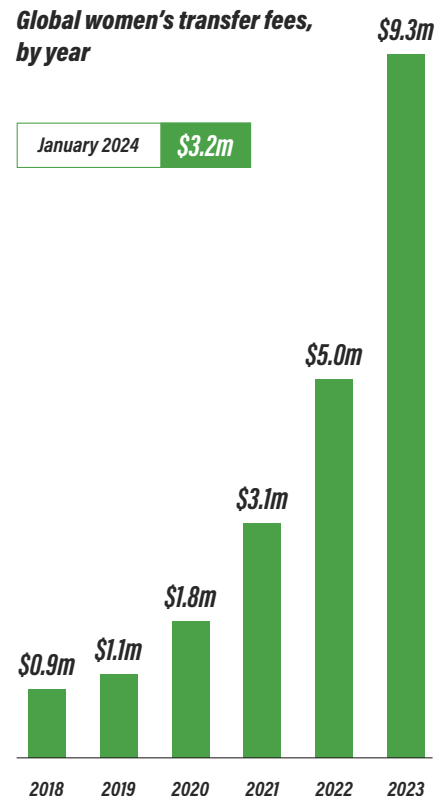
Australian clubs collectively received over A\$600k, with around two thirds of that going to ALW clubs for training and releasing players for the tournament.

The total pool for the 2023 Women's World Cup was US\$11.3m, a fraction of the US\$209m awarded for the 2022 Men's World Cup. With the men's pot growing to US\$335m for 2026, FIFA would only need to close the gender gap slightly for the women's fund to become a transformative stimulus package for women's football.

Both of these revenue intakes have been a product of ALW clubs developing and recruiting elite talent. Their ability to exploit the rapid growth of these sources is dependent on their ongoing investment in players.

⁷ https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/787e8f5282d9fd80/original/International-Transfer-Snapshot-2024_final.pdf

Global women's transfer fees, by year



COMPETITIVE BALANCE

INSIGHT

This season was tightly contested, but similar clubs dominate

Melbourne City won the 2023-24 Premiership with 41 points from 22 matches, accumulating 1.86 points per match.

This was less than Sydney FC achieved as table-toppers in the 2022-23 (2.22) and 2021-22 (2.5) seasons respectively, reflecting a tighter season overall.

The first 12-team edition had a competitive title race and most teams were within reach of the six finals berths until the last few rounds.

With the salary floor increasing rapidly under the 2021-2026 Collective Bargaining Agreement, the league is no longer seeing teams which are not at all competitive.

Competitive balance can be measured within seasons and also across seasons. The ALW is seeing the same few clubs tend to be successful year after year.

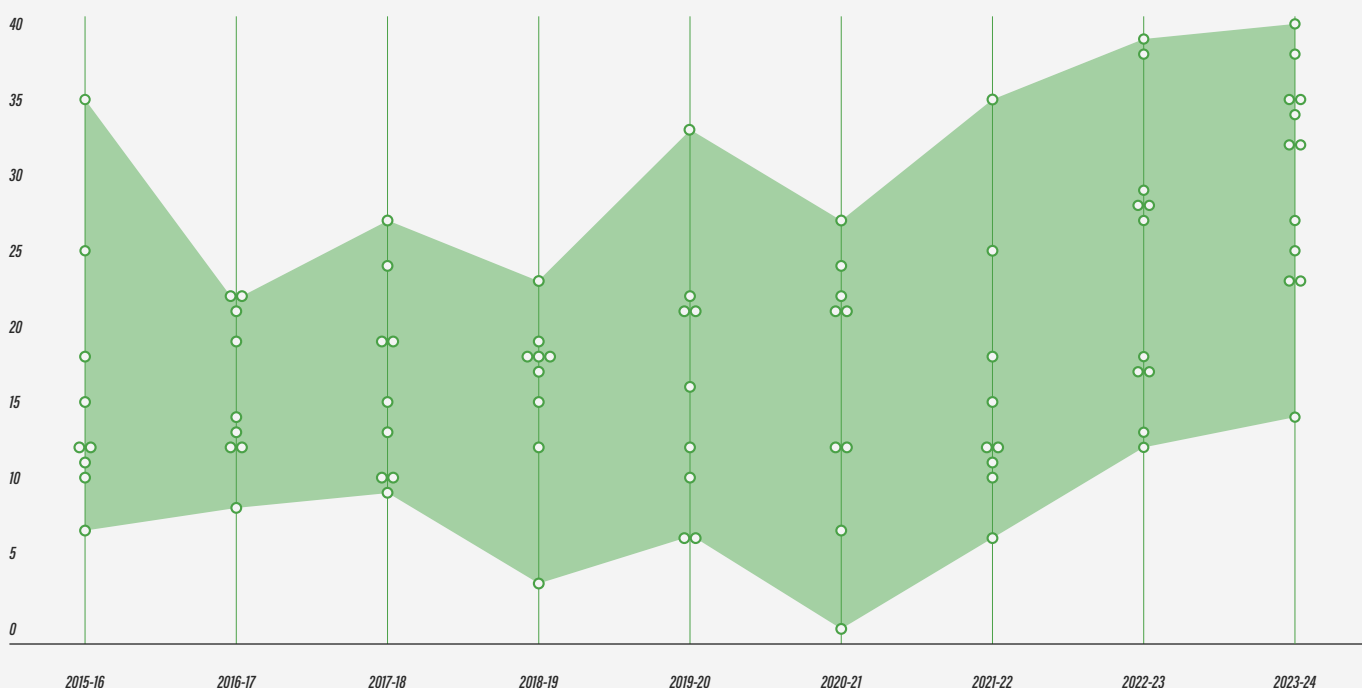
Sydney FC continued its run of never missing the top four and City has only missed out twice in its history. Melbourne Victory has been in the top four six times in a row and Western United has done the same in its two seasons, making the top four the same for the past two campaigns.

Competitive balance mechanisms such as salary caps come with trade-offs. Under the current framework, every team is competitive to a degree, but there are still consistently successful clubs. Those clubs

are apparently capable of entrenching their dominance without being allowed to invest freely in raising the bar at the top end.

This dynamic needs to be constantly reviewed to assess whether it is serving the competition's best interests.

Points spread comparison





EMPLOYMENT FRAMEWORK

23. CBA progress | 25. Part-time tug-of-war | 27. Road to full-time professionalism
28. Heat and scheduling | 30. Agents

CBA PROGRESS

INSIGHT

Third year of 2021-2026 CBA drives record player payments of \$8.4m

2023-24 represented the third season of the five-year A-Leagues CBA, and the last in which ALW conditions were scheduled to rapidly advance.

The minimum salary rose from \$20,608 in 2022-23 to \$25,000 in 2023-24, reflecting that contract lengths extended from 29 to 35 weeks as the season grew to a full 22-round home-and-away schedule plus finals.

The salary cap rose from \$500k in 2022-23 to \$600k in 2023-24, and the salary floor lifted from \$385k to \$500k. Clubs were also allowed to contract up to two 'Women's

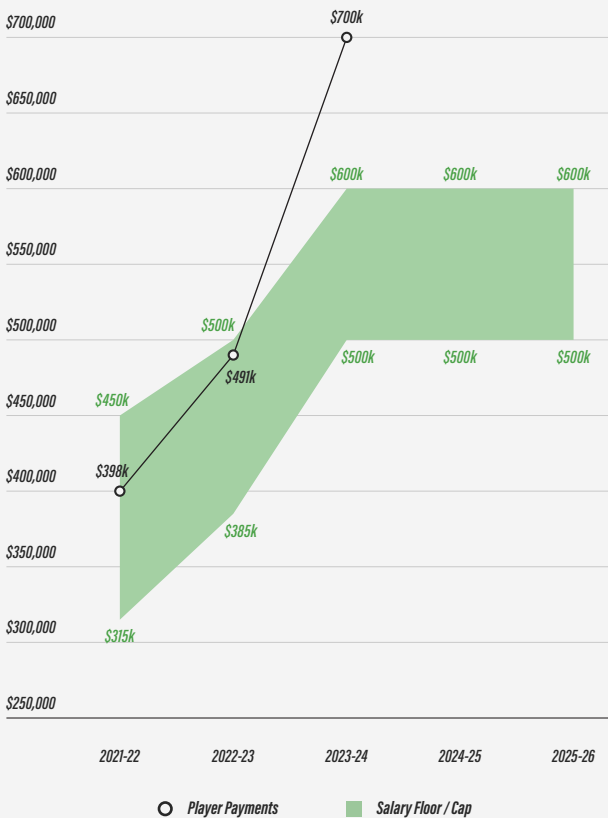
World Cup Legacy Players' outside the cap, a concession which continues for 2024-25. Payments to Scholarship players also moved outside the cap in 2023-24.

A number of clubs took advantage of these concessions, meaning that the average player payments per club reached \$700k, \$100k above the salary cap.

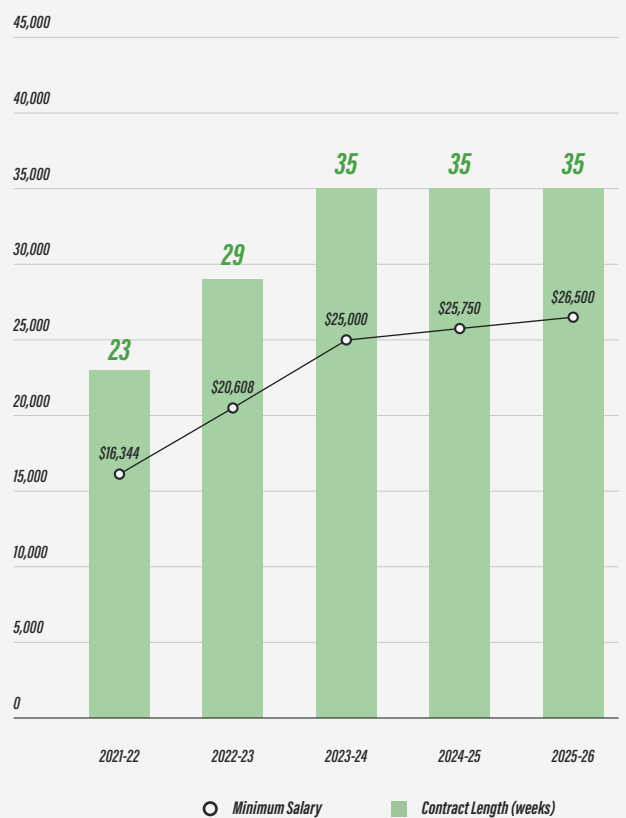
These developments, along with the addition of Central Coast Mariners, saw total payments to ALW players rise to \$8.4m, more than double since the first season of the CBA.

For the remaining two seasons of the CBA, there are no more scheduled changes to the salary cap or floor or the lengths of contracts, and the minimum salary is set to increase by \$750 each year.

Total Player Payments (per club)



Minimum Salary



VIEWPOINT

WHAT COLLECTIVE BARGAINING HAS MEANT TO A-LEAGUE WOMEN PLAYERS



- Dylan Holmes

Adelaide United player

The Collective Bargaining Agreement has been paramount to the success and growth of the A-League Women's competition over the last eight years. My first year playing in the A-League was the 2014-15 season, where there was no CBA in place to ensure minimum standards across the league. As a result, the majority of players did not get paid to play, we only played 12 games, many of which were played on synthetic pitches. Travel arrangements were largely inadequate and not conducive to an elite level competition and there were no minimum medical standards.

After the introduction of the first CBA, the players were guaranteed minimum standards, as well as guaranteed that these standards would continue to

improve over time. The agreement ensures all clubs, as well as the league itself, uphold these standards. As a result, the A-League Women's competition has grown significantly.

The strong involvement of the players in shaping the CBA has made us feel like we have an active role and a voice when it comes to what the league looks like and what it will look like into the future. The CBA has achieved so many things for the players, including minimum medical standards, a full home and away season, increases to the minimum wage and so much more.

Compliance with the CBA is so important to the players, because it means the clubs are invested and proactive in ensuring the

players have the best working conditions possible to perform to their best. When clubs fall short in certain areas, it is incredibly frustrating and distressing for the players because it goes against everything that we fought to achieve in ensuring minimum standards in our workplace. It can also become an uncomfortable situation for the players to report non-compliance of their clubs to the PFA.

The CBA works to ensure that the players have optimum working conditions to perform at their best on the field, so when clubs don't comply with the CBA it feels disrespectful to the players who sacrifice so much to play the sport professionally.

PART-TIME TUG-OF-WAR

INSIGHT

The ALW is losing players early due to unsustainable career dynamics

The players' self-reported satisfaction with their 'life balance' was at a record low in 2023-24 as expanding football commitments clashed with supplementary employment.

The PFA's end-of-season survey found nearly two thirds of players were either 'not at all satisfied' (15%) or only 'slightly satisfied' (48%) with their balance between football and other commitments.

Dissatisfaction with life balance rose linearly with hours worked outside of football; only 4% of those who did not have other jobs were 'not at all satisfied', compared to 18% of those who worked between 11 and 20 hours in the average week and 44% of those who worked more than 20 hours.

This dynamic impacts more than half of the playing cohort. More than three in five players (62%) in the sample worked outside of football this season (rising to 64% if we exclude players still in high school).

Although the minimum salary has increased rapidly to \$25,000 under the 2021-2026 CBA, contracts at or slightly above the minimum still do not enable most players to support themselves financially.

Another survey question tested the impact of this issue on career longevity. When asked why they might leave football early, 59% of players said low club salaries would be a reason.

Worryingly, only 31% of players said they would pursue football as long as their fitness or form would allow them. In the Player Profiles section earlier in this report, it was shown that the ALW has a lower share of players playing into their late twenties and thirties than comparator leagues.

The player comments highlighted the impacts of this dynamic on both them and the league. As people, those trying to juggle football with work or study reported struggles ranging from sleep, mental health, and financial wellbeing to performance at work or university. As players, they indicated that the tug-of-war is preventing them from fulfilling their potential, which undercuts the value of the league's talent.



Player survey comments regarding commitments outside football

There is not much balance. My job was flexible but it is hard to hold down a job when you take up the majority of the working day with training/gym.

It's been hard trying to find the balance of working and not being too tired for training/matches ... I've not been used to working alongside football (while) playing in the WSL.

The average wage is still far too low that in order to live above the poverty line ... there's no time to work because trainings take up majority of the day but the pay is not enough to be stable.

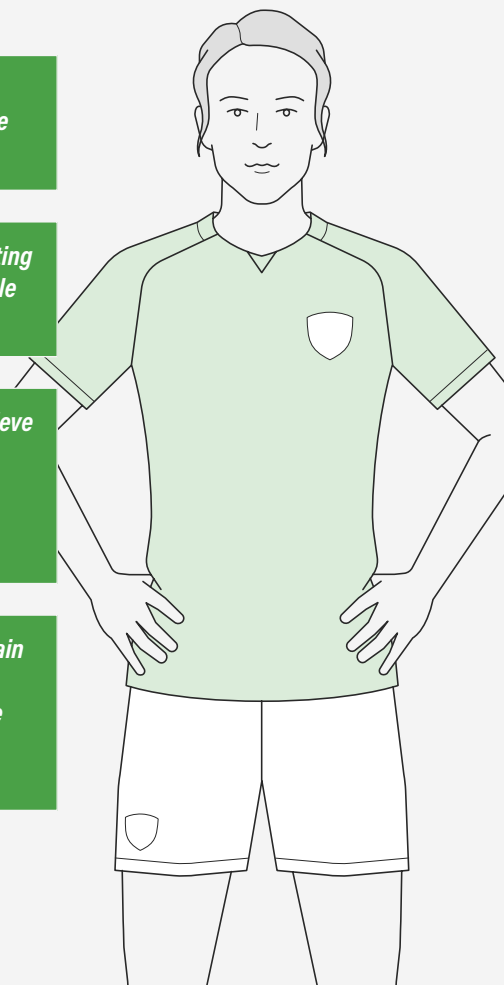
It is so hard to compete with other students as they have so much more time.

I work until late at night due to starting shifts later, therefore I really struggle with adequate sleep during season.

If I could just focus on football I believe I would be much better because I would have more time to get fit, recover and focus on my mental health/getting a break

I feel as though if I was able to sustain living cost without work outside of football the game across the league would improve as players would be able to fully prioritise football.

Note: Comments lightly edited for length



VIEWPOINT

AN UNSTAINABLE LIFE BALANCE: BORN OUT OF NECESSITY, NOT CHOICE



- Tash Rigby

Retiring Perth Glory player

I balanced full-time work for six of my total eight years playing in the A-League. I was 'working' approximately 55 hours a week, not inclusive of interstate travel for games or compulsory player appearances. I continued to work full-time because I needed to support my living costs. The club wage was not close to being able to support this, and still isn't for a large portion of players, particularly in the current cost of living crisis.

Contracts only lasted six to nine months and the certainty of getting another one was not always consistent or secure. There is also the risk of injury and football not always being 'forever'. Therefore, I was eager to pursue my professional career in sport management after attaining my undergraduate degree.

In the final two years of my playing career, I put my sports management pathway on hold and coached casually in the afternoons instead. It was a difficult decision, but it was necessary as I was incredibly burnt out and my mental health had taken a significant hit. I was sacrificing time with family, friends, and my relationships, which was pertinent to my wellbeing.

I worked with my GP and psychologist to manage my anxiety and reduce my workload and stress. This also gave me more time to improve my nutrition, sleep, recovery, and sense of control. It is difficult to perform at one's best when these things cannot be prioritised due to workload.

I was very fortunate to work in organisations with supportive managers who allowed me

flexibility with my work, particularly around travel requirements. Not every player has this luxury. This could potentially result in a lack of support, guilt, and a poor reference from an employer who does not understand the requirements of professional sport.

Security is key. I personally believe that annual contracts should be prioritised to ensure a reliable and secure income for a minimum of 12 months. Coupled with this, I would love to see the minimum wage increased to decrease the amount of other work and income required, to allow players to prioritise their playing. One of the factors that influenced my retirement was the want to purchase my own home and this was hindered by my inability to provide a secure and consistent income stream to my bank.

PATH TO FULL-TIME PROFESSIONALISM

INSIGHT

Players target next CBA cycle for full-time professionalism

The vast majority of ALW players believe 2026-27 is an “acceptable timeframe” for the league to achieve full-time professionalism, while only 4% think 2030 is acceptable.

The PFA asked the players to choose between 2024-25, 2026-27, and 2030 in the end-of-season player survey. A quarter chose the upcoming season, and another 71% picked the middle option, which immediately follows the expiry of both the CBA and the current broadcast deal.

The survey also asked the players how much they would need to earn from football “to focus on it full-time”. The question was specifically worded this way to focus on the outcome that the money would enable – a threshold beyond which all stakeholders would benefit from enhanced player development and performance.

Two thirds (66%) said \$60,000 would be enough, which included the 28% for whom either \$40,000 or \$50,000 would get them there. Another third chose \$70,000+.

The collective bargaining agreements signed by AFLW and NRLW players in 2023 included a pathway to full-time professionalism by 2027, when those deals end.

The PFA recognises clubs may currently find it difficult to afford this shift. But we would also ask: can we afford not to?

This report has outlined the talent drain impacting the league under current settings, jeopardising its ability to attract greater fan interest, commercial support, and international revenues associated with developing elite talent.

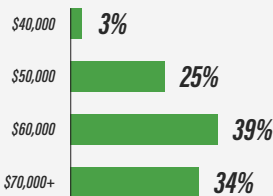
The previous vignette from Tash Rigby highlighted the stresses placed on players by this phase of the league’s development.

At the same time, the growth of leagues abroad and the Matildas at home suggests that the ALW has far more potential than is currently being realised.

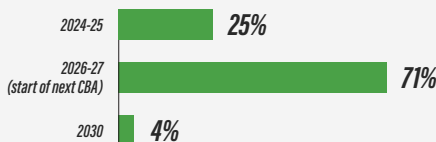
If the question is not ‘if’ but ‘when’, we would ask: what is the plan to transition from here to there? How can the Women’s Asian Cup be leveraged in a way the World Cup was not? How will the league evolve to its next phase if not by unlocking the untapped potential in our playing assets? Does the current structure of the leagues and clubs enable the investment required?



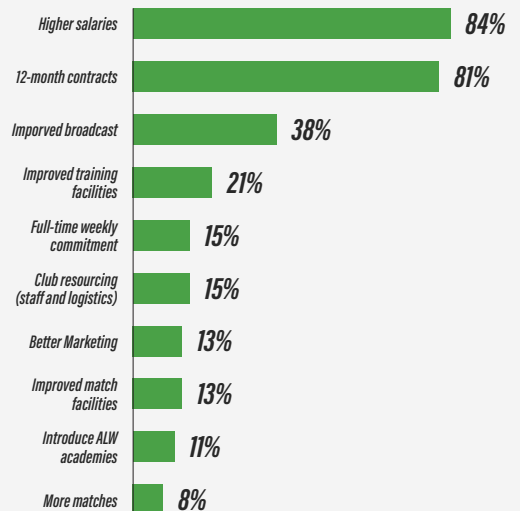
What is the minimum you would need to earn from football annually to focus on it full-time? (N/A excluded)



What would be an acceptable timeframe for the league to achieve full-time professionalism?



What are your top three priorities for the A-League Women going forward?



HEAT AND SCHEDULING

INSIGHT

Despite new initiatives, 88% of players want more protections from extreme heat

Playing through the Australian summer means that the A-Leagues are in the firing line of extreme heat and other weather events.

This challenge is intensifying. In March 2024, the PFA released *Stoppage Time: A PFA Report on the A-Leagues and Climate Change*, which found that the instance of days over 35°C at A-Leagues venues is set to increase by 65% by 2050, compared to the 1981-2010 average.⁸

There are a number of measures in place to protect player welfare. The APL's Heat Policy mandates interventions ranging from drinks breaks to postponements when weather conditions exceed certain objective thresholds. The thresholds set by APL are more conservative than those recommended by FIFA.

Despite this, player feedback collected by the PFA from 2019 to 2023 via post-match surveys found that several players each season were suffering health impacts from heat-affected matches. According to ALW players, 29% of matches in that period were impacted by extreme weather.

The fact that only 15% of A-League Men matches were impacted pointed to two aggravating factors: the ALW's earlier average kick-off times and smaller match venues.

Ahead of the 2023-24 season, APL agreed to eliminate kick-offs before 5pm in Australia during the summer months. This was a positive step taken in good faith, outside the realm of collective bargaining and beyond the official Heat Policy. APL also proactively monitors forecasts ahead of a weekend's fixtures, in consultation with the PFA, to get ahead of issues and potentially reschedule matches with less disruption than on-the-day decisions.

Unfortunately, data from the 2023-24 season suggest that the scheduling initiative did not provide much relief for players. The post-match surveys revealed no real change in the share of matches impacted by extreme weather, or where the player felt the match should have been pushed back.

This was reflected in the PFA's 2023-24 end of season survey, in which only 12% of ALW players felt no further action was needed to address extreme heat. A majority of players thought the pre-5pm blackout should be extended beyond the summer months (58%), and the most popular intervention was that facilities should be improved (63%).

The smaller suburban venues where ALW play most of their matches often do not have the same shade cover as larger stadia, and sometimes lack basic cooling infrastructure such as air conditioning in change rooms and sufficient showers and refrigeration. Players have reported being hotter inside than out in the elements.

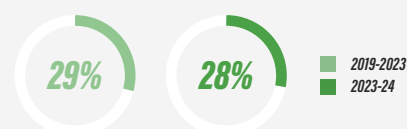
The PFA has presented an extensive analysis to APL identifying which venues did not have adequate cooling in change rooms and which did not have shaded benches. For the upcoming 2024-25 season, APL has extended the pre-5pm blackout into March. Facilities will be managed with APL and the clubs on a case-by-case basis.

The players are respectful of the broadcaster's imperative to stagger its content and air games at optimal times, but in the long term, the welfare of players, the quality of the product, and the experience of fans will be threatened by increasingly frequent extreme weather.

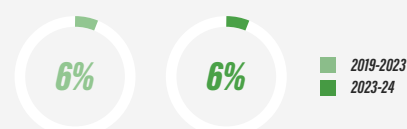
⁸ <https://pfa.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Stoppage-Time-PFA-Climate-A-League-Report-FINAL.pdf>

Share of ALW matches impacted, according to post-match surveys

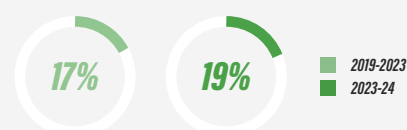
Was there any extreme weather during the match? (e.g. Heat, air quality, lightning, etc.)



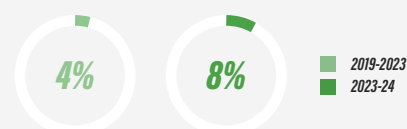
Do you think the match should have been postponed because of the conditions?



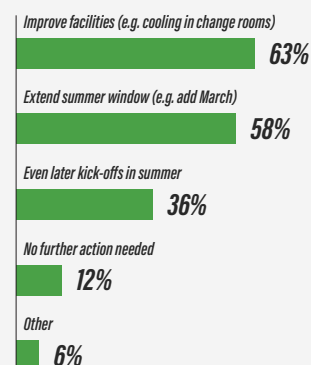
Did the weather conditions make it difficult to perform as well as usual?



Have you experienced any health problems resulting from the conditions during the match?



This season the APL agreed to eliminate kick-offs before 5pm in Australia from December to February. Do we still need to do more to address extreme heat? (select all that apply)



VIEWPOINT

CONFRONTING EXTREME HEAT, AS A PLAYER AND ACTIVIST



- Emma Hjoski

Canberra United, 2020-2024

Playing in the ALW is a dream for my peers and me. However, the extreme heat in recent seasons has posed challenges for us to uphold the quality of our league. Playing a winter sport in summer impacts the brand of football in Australia but more importantly, player health and welfare.

Extreme heat has caused several drinks breaks, last-minute scheduling changes, medical attention during and after matches, and other disruptions. There are risks of skin cancer and heat stroke, on top of needing to recover from the higher physical demands.

Performing at our best during the peak of summer is difficult both physically and mentally, affecting the overall quality of spectators. Increased memberships and attendances at ALW matches are promising trends, but extreme heat might cause fans to stay and home, hindering our progress. It is essential we protect fans as well.

Scheduling games later in the summer months has been beneficial. This showed that the voices of the players were taken into account. It also leads to fewer interruptions throughout the week and on game day, allowing for full concentration on the 90 minutes ahead.

Further investment is required in facilities. For example, improvements including ventilation, air-conditioning and ice baths in change rooms, as well as shelter over the team benches, and stadiums suitable for the fans to be comfortable as well, would improve the gameday experience.

As the world game, football has a role in drawing attention to the impacts of climate change. While sport contributes to climate change, we still have a role to raise awareness of our footprint and make small or large changes where possible.

Unfortunately, grassroots and junior football will be the most impacted by climate change due to the limited resources in comparison to professional teams. Involving the grassroots in climate awareness would mean the future of our game is in safe hands, inspiring the next generation of talented footballers to care about the climate and its impact on football.

As Our Greener Pitch goes into its second year with brand new goals and aspirations, we are extremely proud of the Green Games and being able to raise awareness to inspire more game changers to continue to foster an inclusive and safe environment in football.

AGENTS

INSIGHT *A majority of ALW players now have an agent*

The PFA's end of season player survey found that 58% of ALW players had an agent last season, up from 46% in 2022-23.

The practice of players engaging agents (or vice versa) is clearly spreading quickly as the women's game continues to professionalise.

The PFA understands that a majority of players are managed by a handful of agents who are active in this space. These agents are generally good operators: 31% of players with an agent were 'extremely satisfied' and another 38% were 'very satisfied'. That left nearly a third who were either 'not at all satisfied' (4%) or 'slightly satisfied' (27%).

This level of concentration is not surprising given that most of the players themselves are not able to make a full-time living from football. Lucrative deals are rare, so some agents appear to be building broad stables in the hope that they will capture a few of the players who break through to higher earnings.

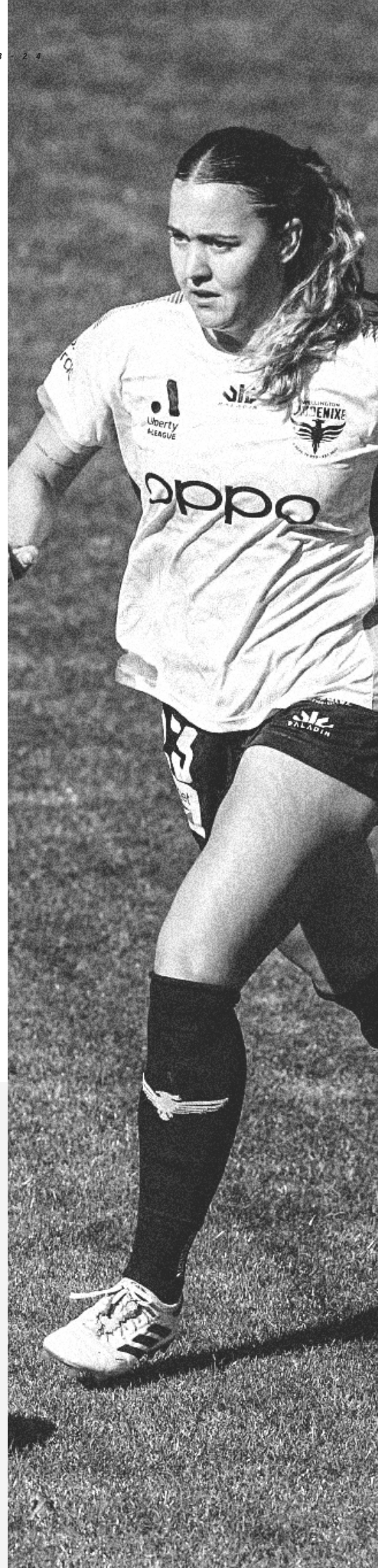
Indeed, several players commented that their contracts contain a conditional clause

where a commission rate kicks in above a salary of \$50,000.

In the meantime, around half of players with an agent – 48% – indicated that their agent did not take a commission in the form of a share of their salary. This share was highest (54%) among players earning under the minimum salary of \$25,000 (such as Scholarship players) and dropped to 36% among players earning more than \$35,000 for the season.

With players connecting with agents at a younger and younger age, the risk of them being exploited with disadvantageous terms increases. In response, the PFA's player education is key. Every season, PFA staff present to all players at each A-League club about agents, regulations, and other industry issues. This includes a specific induction session for new players. Any player should approach the PFA before signing on with an agent.

Similarly, the PFA focuses on elevating the standard of agents by hosting an annual Agents Conference, which provides access to experts and industry insights.



Overall satisfaction with agent





CLUB BENCHMARKING

32. Club indices | 34. Pitch and atmosphere ratings

CLUB INDICES

INSIGHT

Melbourne City tops the PFA's player-driven Club Performance Index for ALW

ALW players' satisfaction with their clubs' operations, facilities, and culture generally increased from 2022-23 to 2023-24, with Melbourne City rated the highest in both seasons.

The PFA reconfigured its end of season survey in 2022-23 to produce Index scores for the three aforementioned areas in order to compare clubs against each other and track standards over time.

The Club Operations Index aggregates feedback on coaching, sports science, medical, performance analysis, sports psychology, and logistics/travel. The Club Facilities Index covers ten physical features ranging from the training pitch to the showers and social area. The Club Culture Index assesses eight statements describing the club environment,

measuring interpersonal aspects such as communication, respect, and unity of purpose.

These three Index scores feed into each club's overall Club Performance Index, providing one number on a 1-4 scale as a simple benchmark. The average score for the Club Performance Index at ALW clubs rose from 2.96 in 2022-23 to 3.01 in 2023-24.

A separate battery of questions about the club's integration of and respect for its women's team feeds into a Club Integration Index, which sits outside the Club Performance Index. Only dual-team clubs are included. Every club either improved or maintained their Integration Index score this season, causing the average to rise from 2.19 in 2022-23 to 2.44 in 2023-24.

The PFA has decided to publish the top four clubs for each Index in this report, in order to publicly acknowledge their success and progress. The PFA has met with senior staff at every club and the APL to present the full, identified results.

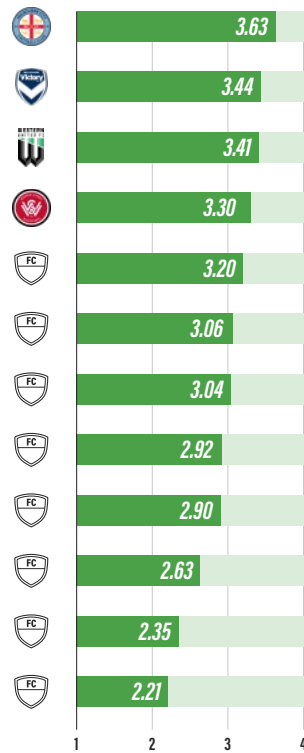
The Index scores show a strong positive correlation with on-field results, and thus provide clubs with a powerful tool to identify areas of opportunity and drive improvements. To their credit, every club has engaged with the PFA's feedback process and received the results in this spirit.



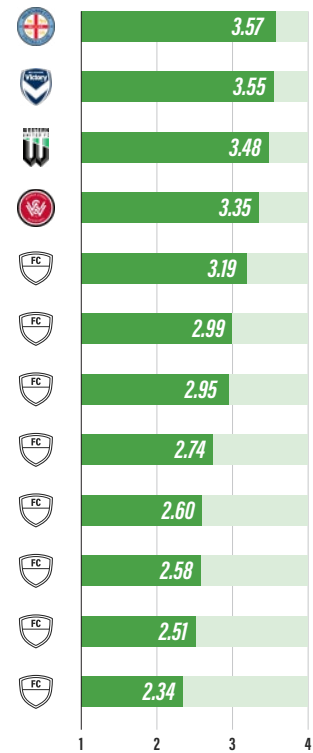
Index methodology

At least half of every ALW squad answered the survey, providing a sufficient sample for robust club-by-club comparison. Each Index has a 1-4 scale where 1 would be total dissatisfaction from every player in every aspect, and 4 would be universal satisfaction. 2.5 is the midpoint. N/A responses are excluded.

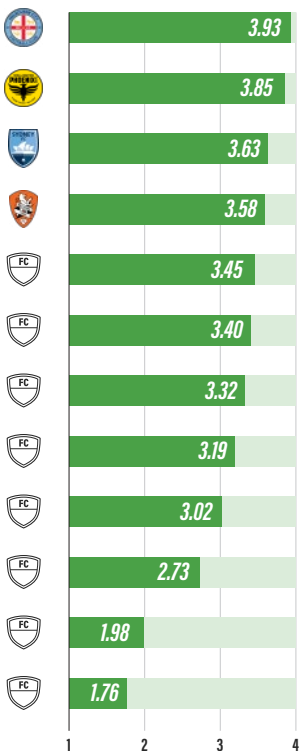
Club Performance Index



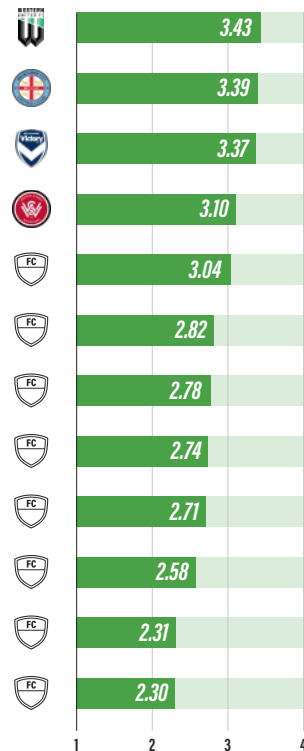
Club Operations Index



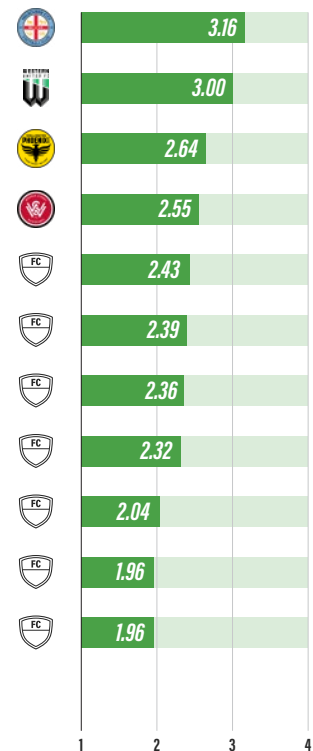
Club Facilities Index



Club Culture Index



Club Integration Index



PITCH AND ATMOSPHERE RATINGS

INSIGHT

Coopers Stadium recognised by players as ALW's best venue

Adelaide United's Coopers Stadium was the best match venue in the ALW this season, scoring a perfect five stars for its pitch and 4.8 for atmosphere.

A-League's players rate the quality of the pitch and atmosphere on a scale of 1-5 after every match, alongside other match factors such as extreme weather and the refereeing.

Coopers had the highest average ratings among venues used at least five times. Some other stadia received excellent feedback based on a smaller sample. Sydney's Allianz Stadium received full marks for both pitch quality and atmosphere across three matches. North Hobart Oval

also received a perfect 5.0 for atmosphere in the one game held at the venue, while Western United's new Regional Football Facility in Tarneit and Carrington Park in Bathurst received a 4.0 for overall pitch quality and 5.0 for atmosphere in their own single fixtures.

Other venues to score well included Sydney's Leichhardt Oval (4.0 for overall quality and 3.9 for atmosphere), Newcastle's No.2 Sportsground (3.6 for overall quality and 4.1 for atmosphere), Melbourne's AAMI Park (4.5 for overall quality and 3.5 for atmosphere) and Paramatta's CommBank Stadium (4.7 for overall quality and 4.7 for atmosphere).



The ALW's mixed venues strategy presents an inconsistent product

Adelaide United's captain Izzy Hodgson, CEO Nathan Kosmina, and Coopers Stadium General Manager Kate Russo welcomed the success of Coopers in a PFA article at the end of the season.⁹ But Adelaide's alternative ground, Marden Sports Complex, received among the lowest average scores for regular venues, with 2.7 for pitch quality and 3.0 for atmosphere across six fixtures.

This finding highlights the ongoing challenges for ALW with regards to infrastructure. Match venues range from our world class major city venues with 50,000 capacity, to 'boutique' mid-sized stadia, to underserved suburban grounds, to glorified training pitches.

It is at those latter two categories where the broadcast quality is often compromised due to insufficient lighting or suboptimal camera placement, and where players report a lack of basic amenities such as cooling or ventilation in the change rooms.

Just as the players are torn between professional football commitments and other jobs, in this phase of its growth, the league finds itself caught between the cost-savings of smaller venues and the improved experience that comes with larger stadia. Twenty-eight venues were used this season, up from 23 in 2022-23.

The result is a league product that is presented inconsistently both across the competition and within some clubs that chop and change venues. Ultimately, the ALW needs to decide what it is and pursue a venues strategy which reflects that identity.

In addition, the sport must align in a push for public funding for right-sized football venues in the 5,000 to 20,000 capacity range.

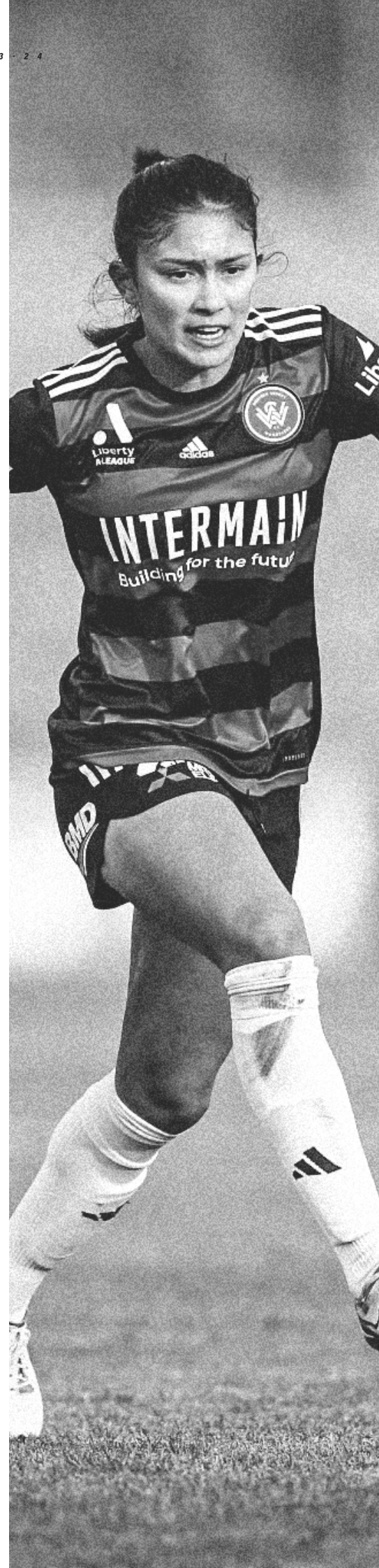
Pitch ratings

Stadium	Home Club	Pitch Quality	Atmosphere
AAMI Park		★★★★★★	★★★★★
AAMI Park		★★★★★	★★★★★
Allianz Stadium		★★★★★★	★★★★★★
Ballymore Stadium		★★★★★	★★★★★
Carrington Park		★★★★★	★★★★★★
City Football Academy Field		★★★★★	★★★★★
City Vista Recreation Reserve		★★★★★	★★★★★
CommBank Stadium		★★★★★★	★★★★★★
Coopers Stadium		★★★★★★	★★★★★★
Go Media Stadium		★★★★★	★★★★★
HBF Park		★★★★★	★★★★★
Home of the Matildas		★★★★★	★★★★★
Industree Group Stadium		★★★★★	★★★★★
Leichhardt Oval		★★★★★	★★★★★
Leichhardt Oval		★★★★★	★★★★★
Leichhardt Oval		★★★★★	★★★★★
Leichhardt Oval		★★★★★	★★★★★
Macedonia Park		★★★★★	★★★★★
Maitland Sports Ground		★★★★★	★★★★★
Marconi Stadium		★★★★★	★★★★★
Marden Sports Complex		★★★★★	★★★★★
McDonald Jones Stadium		★★★★★	★★★★★
McKellar Park		★★★★★	★★★★★
No.2 Sportsground		★★★★★	★★★★★
North Hobart Oval		★★★★★	★★★★★★
Perry Park		★★★★★	★★★★★
Porirua Park		★★★★★	★★★★★
Regional Football Facility Tareina		★★★★★	★★★★★★
Sky Stadium		★★★★★	★★★★★
Suncorp Stadium		★★★★★	★★★★★
Sydney Olympic Park Athletic Centre		★★★★★	★★★★★
Wanderers Football Park		★★★★★	★★★★★

⁹ <https://pfa.net.au/news/coopers-stadium-voted-best-in-the-liberty-a-league-women-by-players/>

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