

*2023*  
AFLW PLAYERS'  
ALUMNI HANDBOOK

**AFL  
PLAYERS**



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[afplayers.com.au](https://afplayers.com.au)



Jess Duffin and Kara Antonio are chaired off after their last AFLW match in Season 7.

# WELCOME TO AFLW PLAYERS' ALUMNI

The AFL Players' Association's Alumni program recognises the contribution every past player has made to our great game.

Whether you played 30 AFLW games or just one, you will have full access to our comprehensive support network.

**Page 5 - 8**  
Specific to only recently retired/delisted players

**Page 9 - 19**  
Specific to all Alumni members

## THE TEAM

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# FROM THE CEO PAUL MARSH

This handbook has been developed for all AFLW past players, including those who have finished up at the end of Season 8. While transitioning from a sporting career can be challenging, taking the time to understand and utilise the services available to you as a member of the AFLPA will help you through this period.

AFLW continues to go from strength-to-strength and, as a former player, you've laid the foundations for the competition we see today so you should be proud of your achievements.

However, it doesn't define who you are. We at the AFLPA value the person behind the athlete and exist solely to benefit our members.

At our core is ensuring that players are able to maximise opportunities from their time in the game, and build on their life skills, education and experience to provide a positive transition and future.

This handbook will outline all of the programs and services available to you as an Alumni member, so we encourage you to familiarise yourself with the options outlined, as there will be things in here that will benefit you that you may not have been aware of.

Your Regional Manager will be in touch throughout your transition from the game, so please engage with them to ensure they can best support you and answer any questions you have. They're your contact at the PA, as well as your Alumni team (contacts are outlined within this guide), and are passionate people who care about you and want to see you thrive.



Paul Marsh

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

**PATRICK DANGERFIELD**

Congratulations on your AFLW career. We are grateful for the contribution you have made to the game during your tenure. You are part of a trailblazing group who continue to break through barriers and forge a pathway for young talent all over the country.

We know the commitment and sacrifices you've made in order to play AFLW; the extra hours – often late at night, while studying and/or working. Playing in extreme weather conditions, all the while trying to find a balanced lifestyle, which has only become more difficult in recent years. That's an achievement in itself and shouldn't be understated.

We hope you take a moment to reflect on all you've accomplished in the game and begin to look forward to your future ahead. The Alumni Handbook will help connect you to important professional and personal development opportunities in a myriad of fields so take the time to read through it.

The AFLPA is here for you and the programs and services available are some of the best in world sport so please reach out if you have any questions so your time in the game is remembered fondly.



# BUILDING YOUR FUTURE



## WE'RE HERE TO HELP. CONTACT US:

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Exiting the AFLW system will present a period of transition, which can be both daunting and exciting. We have a few tips to help you navigate the transition:

### 1. TUNE-IN TO OPPORTUNITY:

In times of stress or change, the brain's default mode is to notice what is wrong, to tune-in to threat and loss. We often become blind to our personal strengths, resources and opportunities available to us. Take time to intentionally tune your brain in and capitalise on the opportunities available to you right now.

### 2. VALUES-BASED ACTION:

Make your choices in ways that reflect your personal brand and values. What do you stand for in life? E.g. respect, family, achievement, compassion.

### 3. SOCIAL SUPPORT:

You have a network of friends, family and professionals around you that can help you manage this transition. Be proactive – tap into the people and resources you have around you.

### 4. BUILD (DON'T BURN) BRIDGES:

It is normal to have strong emotions at this time and the challenge is to not let this take charge of your behaviour. Let off steam with the people you know and trust but think twice before saying or doing something that you may regret down the track.



Melbourne champion Daisy Pearce called time on her coveted AFLW career after the Demons premiership win in Season 7.



# END OF THE SEASON 8

**The following information and dates are relevant to your transition out of the game at the end of the Season 8.**

## CONTRACTS

All standard playing contracts entered into between players and clubs are now year-round, running from 1 January to 31 December, and all agent agreements expire at the end of your playing contract. If you want to be represented by your current agent or a new agent after the end of your current playing contract, you must enter into a new agent agreement.

The Player Re-Signing Period opened on 30 October and runs until 16 December. Within this timeframe, the AFLW Trade Period, Delisted Free Agency Periods and Restricted Free Agency period are all taking place.

Please contact your AFLPA Regional Manager with any questions you may have about your individual contractual situation.

## THE EXIT MEDICAL

The CBA mandates your club to arrange, at its expense, an exit medical examination. This examination should be comprehensive and identify all further medical treatment, including any rehabilitation, that may be required as a result of injuries suffered during the course of your employment with the club. The club must provide a copy of the report to you within 4 weeks.

## WHO CONDUCTS THE EXIT MEDICAL?

The exit medical is to be conducted by a doctor to be mutually agreed by you and the club. If you do not want to use the club doctor for your exit medical, you and the club can agree to another doctor. The exit medical can occur at a time and place advised by the club with reasonable notice.

## WHY THE EXIT MEDICAL IS IMPORTANT

The exit medical documents your injuries and conditions at delisting. This may become important in relation to accessing two key benefits your contract provides:

1. Gap cover for 18 months post-delisting for injuries incurred in the course of your football employment, provided that you maintain top-level health cover and that the club approves of the medical providers; and
2. Loss of non-football earnings arising from injuries suffered in the course of your employment, including losses caused by surgery and/or treatment in connection with the injury, whether or not post-delisting. It may also assist in any future support you may require from the Injury & Hardship Fund.

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## OFF-SEASON CONTACT

Clubs may allow players to use their facilities and medical staff as well as provide general fitness and nutrition plans but cannot require players to participate in any activities or training sessions.

# ALUMNI MEMBERSHIP

**Recently retired and delisted AFLW players who join the AFL Players' Association as an Alumni member receive access to a range of services.**

## HEALTH & WELLBEING

### COMPLIMENTARY WELLBEING CONSULTATIONS

Alumni members have access to our National Psychology Network. All consultations are completely de-identified and funded by the AFL Players' Association.

**For more information, contact wellbeing@ aflplayers.com.au or 1800 448 903**

## CONCUSSION SUPPORT

The AFL coordinates and funds a past player program for concussion which facilitates individual assessment, including brain imaging, as individually required by past player participants. Following a review into various issues relating to concussion in the AFL, the AFL is continuing to address the recommendations that were made with a view to improving the health outcomes of those already in the program and past players who may join in the future. We are continuing to work with the AFL to progress adoption of the recommendations. Past players are encouraged to contact the AFL directly at [concussion@afl.com.au](mailto:concussion@afl.com.au) to find out more about this program.

## CONCUSSION RESEARCH

The AFLPA and AFL are committed to ongoing concussion research to improve prevention, detection and management of sports related concussion and improve outcomes for past and present players at all levels of Australian Football. An important aspect of such research are the learnings that can be obtained from brain donation and analysis by brain banks.

The AFL is currently developing a longitudinal research program to be launched in the future, which will additionally offer participation in a brain donation program. While this research program is being developed, we continue to encourage past players to consider brain donation.

Please email the AFL directly at [concussion@afl.com.au](mailto:concussion@afl.com.au) if you are thinking about donating your brain and would like some more information and/or to register your interest in brain donation. For further information about brain banks in Australia please see links below:  
- Australian Sports Brain Bank: <https://www.brainbank.org.au>  
- Sydney Brain Bank: <https://www.neura.edu.au/scientific-facility/sydneybrainbank>

## DOCTORS NETWORK

Members are able to receive timely, bulkbilled, consultation, diagnosis and advice on treatment, referral and support on musculoskeletal issues and any ongoing injuries or illnesses related to their football career, regardless of their financial situation, through the AFL Doctors' Association. The network provides significant geographic coverage across the country.

## CONTINUED EDUCATION

### EDUCATION AND TRAINING GRANTS

Past players can access Education and Training Grants (E&T) for up to three years post retirement or delisting. These grants may be used for university studies, TAFE courses, short courses and licences. A copy of your receipts, completion certificate or university results must be submitted at the time of application. You can only claim course fees for study in the same year as an approved grant.

**For more information, please visit the Players Portal at [MEMBERS.AFLPLAYERS.COM.AU](http://MEMBERS.AFLPLAYERS.COM.AU)**

## FINANCIAL PROSPERITY

### FINANCIAL CONSULTANTS

Access to AFL Players' Association affiliated financial management support and advice.

For more information, please visit the Player Portal.

## THE AFL PLAYERS' SUPERANNUATION FUND

The AFL Players' Superannuation Fund is open to all Alumni members to join. The ability to become a member of a large group superannuation plan and its associated buying power, enables members' access to a range of discounts and concessions.



# AFL PLAYERS' INJURY AND HARDSHIP FUND

**Established in 2017, the AFL Players Injury & Hardship Fund provides ongoing support for the health and wellbeing of past players. The Injury & Hardship Fund has various payments and benefits which may be applicable to past players. Through the recent CBA deal, we have agreed with the AFL to a substantially increased financial investment to the Fund, with a view to expanding and increasing the payments and benefits (including those outlined below) for eligible former players.**

## 1. LIFETIME HEALTH CARE PROGRAM

AFLPA Alumni members may be eligible for reimbursement of medical costs and expenses for joint surgery. Medical costs and expenses for a dental injury incurred whilst training or playing with an AFLW club may also be reimbursable under the program.

Members with private health insurance are eligible for reimbursement of up to \$8,000, while those without private health insurance can access up to \$6,000.

Hardship support may be available to members who do not have private health insurance due to financial hardship.

## 2. HARDSHIP FUND

As life doesn't always work out the way it was intended, support may be available to Alumni members in financial hardship.

The Hardship Fund has assisted 168 past players with more than \$1.6m since the launch of the Alumni Program in 2017.

## 3. HOSPITAL EXCESS REIMBURSEMENT

AFLPA Alumni members can apply for reimbursement of any excess paid for a hospital stay or procedure conducted in a hospital up to \$500. For lifetime health care, past player hardship support, hospital excess reimbursement and the AFLPA Alumni program in general, contact Tim Harrington, Chris Smith or Rebecca Gross (details at the start of the handbook).

## AFL PLAYERS' INJURY & HARDSHIP FUND – BOARD

- **Paul Marsh**  
AFLPA CEO (Chair)
- **Paul Henderson**  
Medical negligence lawyer
- **Joan Fitzpatrick**  
Experienced company director
- **Dr Andrew Potter**  
Adelaide FC club doctor

## THE TRANSITION EXPERIENCE FOR AN ATHLETE GREATLY INFLUENCES HOW THEY REMEMBER THEIR TIME

By Alison Downie, Former AFLW Player

Being delisted is not a great experience. It's a conversation you can never be ready for. In saying that, I'm not sure there's a right way to tell individuals that their career is over.

Most players will tell you they have some good footy left in them but some never get that second chance to prove they're right. Thankfully I was able to play two more seasons and 20 extra games.

The transition process was a strange one. I got told by my player agent on the way to a club function towards the end of the season that my time was up. I was an inaugural AFLW player, with 39 games for the club. It would've been nice to be part of that conversation.

My experience wouldn't be unique.

When you're on the inside, things are great. There's a lot of talk of values, being people-focused and how appreciated you are to the place – until you're not and then you're reduced to a number, which was eye-opening and confronting. It's a brutal industry.

I was lucky in some respects. I didn't earn big dollars and my life outside of sport was already established. I can imagine a world, though, where that extra layer abruptly ends along with your sporting career.

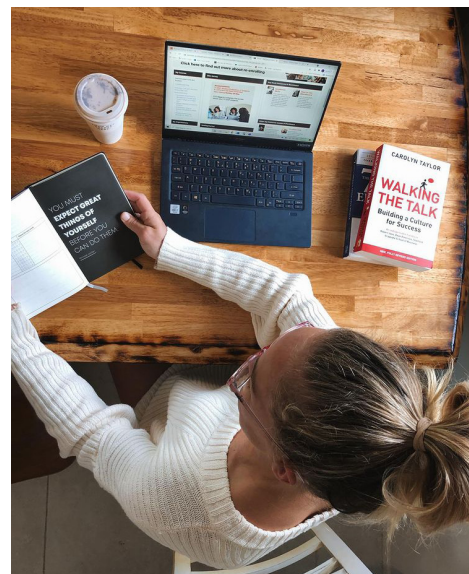
The way the football industry handles players exiting the game needs a lot of work. It needs open and honest communication, but I know there are difficulties involved with that. Relationships are on the line and feelings can get hurt but, as a former athlete, I know they'll appreciate the honesty as decisions are being worked through.

That call from the AFLPA made all the difference for me. Understanding the support they provide and how the transition process works is so valuable. It's a period of great uncertainty but they answered all my questions, which instantly made me feel more comfortable.

Time has healed my wounds and I was lucky to finish my football career at a club that handled that exit better. But the transition experience for an athlete greatly influences how they remember their time in the game. What do we want that lasting impact to be?



# TORRENS UNIVERSITY AUSTRALIA



AFLPA Alumni member and TUA ambassador, Leah Kaslar.

## The benefits on offer to you via the partnership are:

- 25% off **ALL** enrolments for **ALL AFLPA** members
- Dedicated Education Services Officer. This will streamline the enrolment process and provide you with a direct contact to keep you on track while studying

If you are interested in enrolling or wish to apply for a scholarship please contact your **Regional Manager** or **Janine Greaney (0410 464 659 or [jgreaney@alfplayers.com.au](mailto:jgreaney@alfplayers.com.au))** who can guide you through the process.

**Torrens University Australia is the Higher Education Partner of the AFLPA. The partnership allows all AFLPA members exclusive access to study with TUA.**

The partnership provides those wishing to commence or continue their study with an outstanding opportunity to learn in a flexible learning environment either online, on campus or taking advantage of Torrens' hybrid courses.

From 2021, TUA have opted not to utilise ATAR as an entry requirement and continues to boast significant support networks, making it an ideal place to commence or continue your tertiary education.

The AFLPA is particularly proud of continuing to partner with TUA due to our shared values and we look forward to growing the partnership even further throughout the coming years.

# WELLBEING AND LIFE PERFORMANCE

**Life after footy can be a time of significant change and the AFLPA Wellbeing Services Team is available to players who are looking to manage the post-career challenges as smoothly as possible. Think of this as a friendly but focused service to help you navigate and grow through change.**

## WHAT CAN I EXPECT?

A confidential conversation with one of the AFLPA's in-house psychologists, who understand and help navigate the typical post-career challenges that past players face.

These conversations often result in a face-to-face session/s with one of the AFLPA's independent and experienced network psychologists, in their private practice rooms (not at the AFL Players' Association). Phone/Skype consults can be arranged where face-to-face meetings are challenging.

## WHY DO PAST PLAYERS CONTACT THE SERVICE?

Via this service, past players have access to a traditional range of mental health services, as well as more proactive services to build resilience, perform optimally and flourish in life.

A range of topics such as transitioning out of football, relationship issues, feeling flat or anxious, drug, alcohol and gambling related behaviour and other issues that pop up in their lives are often addressed.

If you're unsure about what our psychologists can help with – call and have a chat or come for an initial session. Think of it as a proactive health check.

## DO PAST PLAYERS USE THE SERVICE?

Absolutely. Approximately one-half of all members who access the Wellbeing Service are past players (male and female).

## DOES IT MATTER IF I'VE NEVER USED THE SERVICE BEFORE?

No. While many past players may have already accessed our psychology network during their playing career, some have never done so. Members find the independent and confidential service appealing because while our network psychologists understand the AFL industry, the focus of discussion can be much broader.

## WHAT DOES IT COST?

This service is provided at no direct cost to current or past players, as one of the many benefits of your AFLPA membership.

## CONTRIBUTE TO THE VISION

We are always looking for current and past players to share their ideas and get involved with campaigns we promote or to provide a players' perspective on current and new services. You don't need a psychology degree – you just need to have an interest or passion for enhancing wellbeing, building resilience and preventing mental illness.

Contact us at [wellbeing@alfplayers.com.au](mailto:wellbeing@alfplayers.com.au) or 1800 448 903



# NEXT GOAL WORK PLACEMENTS



AFL SportsReady in partnership with the AFL Players' Association has been delivering career and personal development programs to players since 2002.

## WHAT IS THE NEXT GOAL PROGRAM?

A Next Goal Placement is an opportunity for current and past AFL/AFLW players to engage in their chosen field or industry to gain work experience. The program enables players to build their skills, network and enhance the opportunities for their future careers.

The program is voluntary and offers players the opportunity to undertake a short work experience placement where they can gain an understanding of an industry before making a longer-term commitment.

During the Next Goal Placement participants will engage in activities like observing practitioners, shadowing mentors, attending meetings and undertaking supervised activities. Participants will not be engaging in substantive work for the host employer.

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS TO ME?

Apart from undertaking work in an area or business you have a passion for, you will also:

1. Gain practical skills
2. Build up your resume
3. Learn more about what is required to be successful in your industry
4. Work flexible hours to fit in with your training schedule
5. Have a host employer who will work with you to give you a great experience
6. Network with people in the industry

In addition, many players on completion of their work placement go on to work part-time or full time with their host employer or even further studies relating to their industry.



Former AFLPA Board member, Meg Downie.

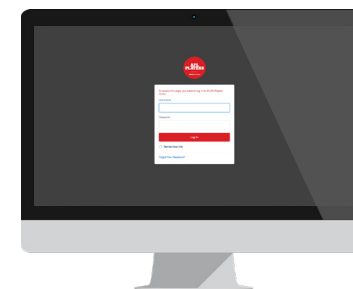
## AFLPLAYERS' PORTAL

[MEMBERS.AFLPLAYERS.COM.AU](http://MEMBERS.AFLPLAYERS.COM.AU)

The AFL Players' Portal is a resource designed for all players to assist in keeping important personal details up to date whilst also providing key information on programs and services offered by the AFL Players' Association.

### Players can access and update information relating to:

- Updating personal contact details
- Access financial information and payments
- Manage grant applications
- Membership application and details



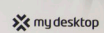
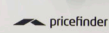
Your username and password will allow you to log into both of the listed resources on this page. Please contact your Regional Manager if you are not sure of your username.

### USERNAME

### PASSWORD



## Domaingroup



If you would like to gain experience in an industry you are interested in, please contact Rayden Tallis.

Rayden Tallis  
Manager – Next Goal Program  
E: rayden.tallis@aflsportsready.com.au  
M: 0407 162 229



We exist to make young people's lives matter

Ladder is the official charity of all AFL and AFLW players. It is an independent not for profit, founded in 2007 by AFL players who recognised the power of sport, and the AFL industry, as being a powerful vehicle for social change.

Ladder is a leader in youth mentoring and development, delivering specialist programs and vital opportunities to disadvantaged young people in communities across Australia. Ladder has proven success in working with some of the most complex young people, in the most marginalised and socially disadvantaged communities in Australia. Approximately 80 per cent of young people Ladder supports have complex needs, including mental health issues, and behavioural and social challenges, and 28 per cent identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI).

Ladder programs support young people aged between 16 and 25 to build their capacity across key life domains including self-belief, community connection, health and wellbeing, independent living skills and education, employment, and training. Upon graduating Ladder programs:

- 83% of young people are now engaged in education, employment or training.
- 90% say Ladder supported them to achieve their goals (e.g., find a job, engage in education).
- 100% of young people feel more connected to their community.
- 100% of young people feel positive about their future.

Since 2007, AFL players have been at the heart of Ladder, contributing financially, as volunteers, staff, advocates and mentors. If you are interested in hearing more about how players (past and present) have directly supported our young people to achieve their goals, check out [ladder.org.au](http://ladder.org.au), contact Guy Walker on [guy.walker@ladder.org.au](mailto:guy.walker@ladder.org.au) or call 03 9416 0064.



AFLPA delegate and Adelaide premiership player, Marijana Rajcic, hung up the boots at the conclusion of Season 7.

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