

A red circular logo with the text "AFL PLAYERS" in white, bold, sans-serif font.

**AFL
PLAYERS**

A black and white photograph of two AFL players embracing. The player on the left is smiling broadly, showing her teeth. The player on the right is looking down with a smile. They are wearing dark jerseys with "COTTON" and "BMD" visible. A patch on the right player's jersey features the AFL logo, a star, and the text "GRAND FINAL".

**INSIGHTS &
IMPACT REPORT**

EDITION 3

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ABOUT THE AFL PLAYERS' ASSOCIATION

The AFL Players' Association (AFLPA) is the official representative body for current AFL and AFLW footballers, as well as almost 5,000 AFLPA Alumni members. The Association also accredits and regulates all 106 Agents. Working across the industry with players, agents, clubs and the AFL, the Association is uniquely positioned to provide:

- Insights into player opinions and perspectives on industry matters
- Identification of current and emerging trends and issues within the industry
- Recognition of best practice within the industry
- Understanding of the factors that determine best practice.

For more information on the AFLPA, please visit www.aflplayers.com.au

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

I am pleased to introduce edition 3 of the AFL Players' Association's Insights & Impact Report.

This annual publication serves as a platform to convey the collective voices, insights, and experiences of our AFL and AFLW players, as well as highlighting the impact the AFLPA is making in supporting our members.

In this edition, we highlight the critical developments and initiatives of the past year, reflecting our ongoing commitment to enhancing our players' professional and personal lives. Central to our efforts has been the landmark joint Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), a new agreement that will take us through to 2027 and has our players well positioned as genuine partners in the game.

The completion of this historic CBA - the result of strong player unity, and extensive negotiations and collaboration - underscores a pivotal moment for our industry. It represents a comprehensive commitment to not only the financial wellbeing of our players but also to creating a more inclusive, supportive, and equitable environment for every AFL and AFLW player.

Notably, we've achieved an improved revenue share for players, now at 31.7% of industry revenues, which equates to \$2.26 billion over the five-year term of the deal.

Enhancements include:

- An immediate uplift in AFLW player pay from an average of \$46,000 to \$60,000 and increasing to an average salary of \$82,000 by 2027 (a 77% increase).
- A 36% increase to AFL player pay, with the average AFL player salary increasing from \$387k to \$519k by 2027.
- An enhanced past player Injury and Hardship Fund with \$54.2m allocated to this group over the five years.
- A world leading pregnancy policy.
- Improvements to player development programming and support through the re-introduction of the Industry Governance Committee.

These changes, among others detailed throughout this document, mark significant progress in ensuring the financial stability and wellbeing of our players.

In 2023, the Fit Minds research project - an essential initiative to address the mental health and wellbeing of our athletes - was delivered. The insights gained from this project will be critical in guiding our approach to providing the necessary support structures for our

players, further emphasising our holistic commitment to their welfare, and are highlighted within this report.

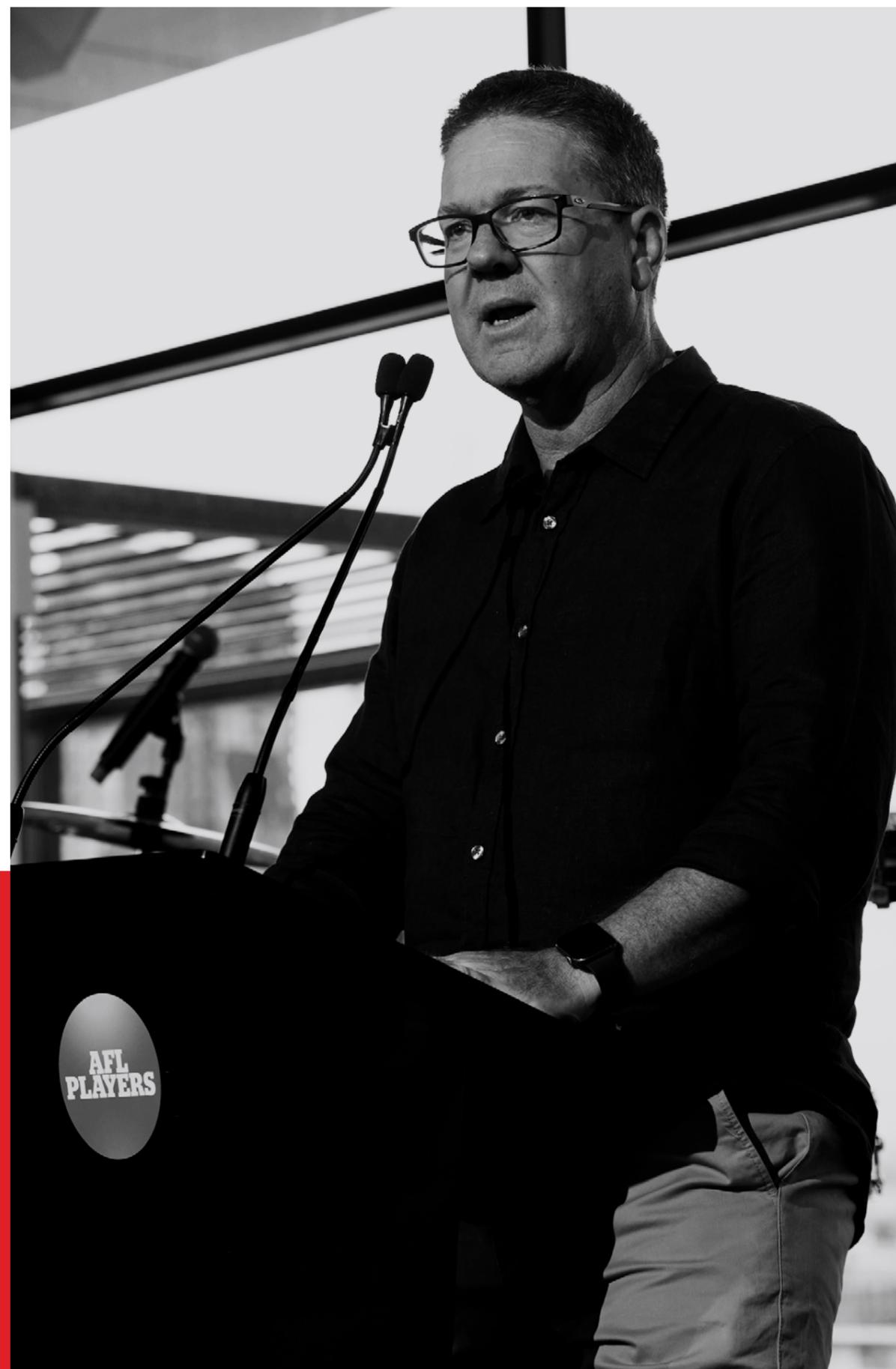
As we navigate the opportunities and challenges ahead, this report highlights the impact of our initiatives, from player development and transition support to advocating for human rights within our sport. It celebrates the strides we have made while acknowledging the work that remains in areas such as gender equality, racism and mental health.

The Insights & Impact Report is a reflection of our collective journey, and I extend my gratitude to everyone who has played a part in bringing this report to life, from the players who share their experiences to the staff and stakeholders who contribute to our shared vision and do the work required to produce this report.

Together, we are forging a path towards an exciting future for Australian football, marked by professionalism, respect, and an unwavering commitment to excellence.



Paul Marsh
CEO



EDITION 2 HIGHLIGHTS

Edition 2 of the Insights and Impact Report provided a comprehensive overview of the collective insights and experiences from AFL and AFLW players, as well as highlighting the impact the AFLPA had in 2022 in providing support to its members.

Key insights included:

- A continued focus required for AFLW to achieve equity across areas including integration, respect, venues, and facilities.
- Workplace culture continuing to be linked to ladder success.
- Players' CBA negotiated time off being eroded by some clubs.
- Increases in unreported concussions.

- Mental health continuing to top the list of societal issues for AFL and AFLW players, with social media ranked as the second highest concern.

- Improved workplace culture measures for AFLW players and better support for off-field development and care.

The edition also highlighted the significant impact of the AFLPA in advocating for player support and spearheading positive changes within the industry.

THEME	RECOMMENDATION	PROGRESS	STATUS
CLUB ENVIRONMENT	Review of AFL off-season scheduling commitments with AFL seeking to free up club time in the post-Christmas period.	The CBA enshrines return dates and Christmas leave for the next 5 years, balancing out the needs of players and clubs. Discussions to continue in respect of AFL commitments post-Christmas, particularly given earlier start to season (Opening Round, Gather Round).	COMPLETED
	Clubs to make AFLW integration a priority within their organisation, implementing dedicated steps to connect players and staff.	AFLPA player survey data demonstrates that 73% of AFLW players rated their program as 'completely' or 'somewhat' integrated. Ongoing work to be done by clubs to continue to prioritise integration.	IN PROGRESS
TRANSITION	Implementation of compulsory industry training and development standards via the creation of an education and wellbeing framework and expanded centralised systems of support for AFL and AFLW players.	The re-instated Industry Governance Committee (IGC) will develop and recommend minimum standards and best practice guidelines for staff working in player development and wellbeing to ensure a consistent and aligned industry approach.	COMPLETED
PLAYER DEVELOPMENT	Embed the Athlete Database System (ADS) developed in conjunction with AFL and clubs for the management of player off-field development and data capture.	The ADS is a mandated requirement for club Player Development Managers (PDMs) under the new CBA.	COMPLETED

THEME	RECOMMENDATION	PROGRESS	STATUS
AFLPA PROGRAMS AND SERVICES	AFL and AFLPA to review Industry Governance Committee (IGC) to ensure best practice player development outcomes.	As agreed in the new CBA, the Industry Governance Committee (IGC) will be re-instated with a review to take place by the end of 2024. The reinstatement of the IGC is to ensure a consistent industry strategy, programming and approach to player education and development throughout the AFL and AFLW player lifecycle.	COMPLETED
HEALTH AND SAFETY	Conduct additional research to understand the under-reporting of concussion and continue to advocate for enhanced education and understanding regarding concussion issues.	AFLPA has conducted player surveying with specific concussion reporting questions and continues to work with the industry to progress concussion issues and understanding.	IN PROGRESS
	Enshrine industry responsibility and accountability for past player support through a revised funding and benefits model.	New \$54.2m fund negotiated through CBA with delivery of benefits to commence in 2024.	COMPLETED
	Implement all recommendations from the AFL review into Associate Professor Paul McCrory, including extending resources for past player support and enhancing governance structures and accountability.	The AFL has provided AFLPA with reporting on recommendations implementation progress. AFLPA maintains an ongoing focus on this progress.	IN PROGRESS
	Review AFL venue criteria for AFLW venues to ensure their suitability for specific AFLW needs and inspect grounds of concern prior to the commencement of Season 8. Continuously monitor these grounds during the season and advocate for necessary change or action where required.	AFLPA reviewed venue criteria and provided feedback to the AFL, resulting in updated assessment criteria. AFLPA inspected grounds of concern prior to the commencement of, and throughout, Season 8 with player delegates. Ongoing AFL discussion for any issues raised.	COMPLETED
HUMAN RIGHTS	Implementation of a whistle-blower policy that allows AFLPA members to make anonymous disclosures about real or suspected wrongdoing in their workplace or industry.	New whistle-blower policy developed for AFLPA members and will go live in 2024.	COMPLETED
	Human Rights framework to be developed and implemented across the AFL Industry.	Commitment to joint AFLPA and AFL Equity, Inclusion and Safety Committee enshrined in the CBA. To be finalised and introduced in 2024.	IN PROGRESS
AGENTS	Review and redesign the Agent Education Framework in line with best practice education principles.	The review (which included agent feedback) determined that there should be a balance of in-person and online education to be delivered to agents by the AFLPA in 2024.	COMPLETED

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT

WHAT IS A COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT (CBA)?

A Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) is a legally binding agreement between an employer and a group of employees, represented by a union or employee association - in this case, the AFLPA who represents all current AFL and AFLW players, and past player members. A CBA outlines the rights, salaries, benefits, and conditions of employment for all parties involved, ensuring clarity and fairness.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

A CBA plays a crucial role in safeguarding the interests of players—ensuring they receive fair compensation, work under safe conditions, and have access to necessary support services. It serves as the backbone of the professional relationship between players and the league, promoting a stable and productive environment for both.

WHAT GENERAL AREAS DOES A CBA COVER?

A CBA typically covers a wide range of areas including, but not limited to, player salaries and bonuses, training and work conditions, health and safety protocols, grievance and disciplinary procedures, and retirement and post-career support. The CBA is comprehensive and designed to address all aspects of the players' professional lives.

WHAT IS THE AFLPA'S ROLE IN NEGOTIATING CBAS?

The AFLPA has been negotiating CBAs on behalf of its members since 1990, acting as a powerful advocate for player rights and welfare. Through rigorous negotiation processes, the AFLPA strives to achieve the best possible outcomes for players, ensuring their voices are heard and their careers supported.

WHY IS THE CURRENT CBA SIGNIFICANT?

The current CBA, negotiated in 2023 and running until the end of 2027, holds unprecedented importance as it is the first time in the code's history that AFL and AFLW players came together under the one agreement - tying the league's 1,300 elite players to a revenue share model and enshrining them as true partners in the game. This landmark agreement reflects the AFLPA's commitment to the development of a unified vision for all players, emphasising the push towards equality and reinforcing the AFLPA's human rights focus. The integration of the AFLW players into the CBA signifies a major step forward in achieving equity across the league, highlighting the AFLPA's dedication to fostering a fair and inclusive environment for every player.

WHERE CAN I FIND DETAILS ON THE KEY OUTCOMES OF THE CBA NEGOTIATIONS?

Various outcomes of the CBA negotiations are detailed throughout this report, signifying the comprehensive efforts and achievements of the AFLPA on behalf of its members.

There were also some key projects negotiated as part of the CBA that the AFLPA and AFL have agreed to conduct together. To ensure the industry has visibility over, and remains focused on, delivering these outcomes, these projects have been captured as recommendations throughout this report despite some items already being in progress.



The CBA Outcome icon signifies sections related to the CBA, guiding readers through the specific advancements and commitments enshrined in the agreement.

The 2023 – 2027 AFL and AFLW Collective Bargaining Agreement can be found at: www.aflplayers.com.au/cba



"This CBA is not just a contract: it's a testament to the strength, unity, and forward momentum of the AFL and AFLW players, working with the AFLPA in the relentless pursuit of progress and equality."

PAUL MARSH, AFLPA CEO



CLUB ENVIRONMENT

The club environment serves as a cornerstone for the development and wellbeing of AFL and AFLW players. It encompasses more than just the physical spaces where players train and compete; it's about creating a culture of respect, support, and continuous improvement.

The AFLPA works closely with players to gain insights on the workplace environments of all 18 clubs. Through regular player surveys and insights, the AFLPA reports on workplace culture measures, as well as key issues impacting players and the competition.

WORKPLACE CULTURE

Since 2013, the AFLPA has been collecting survey data from AFL players on their club's workplace culture and player development experience. This was extended to include AFLW players in 2022.

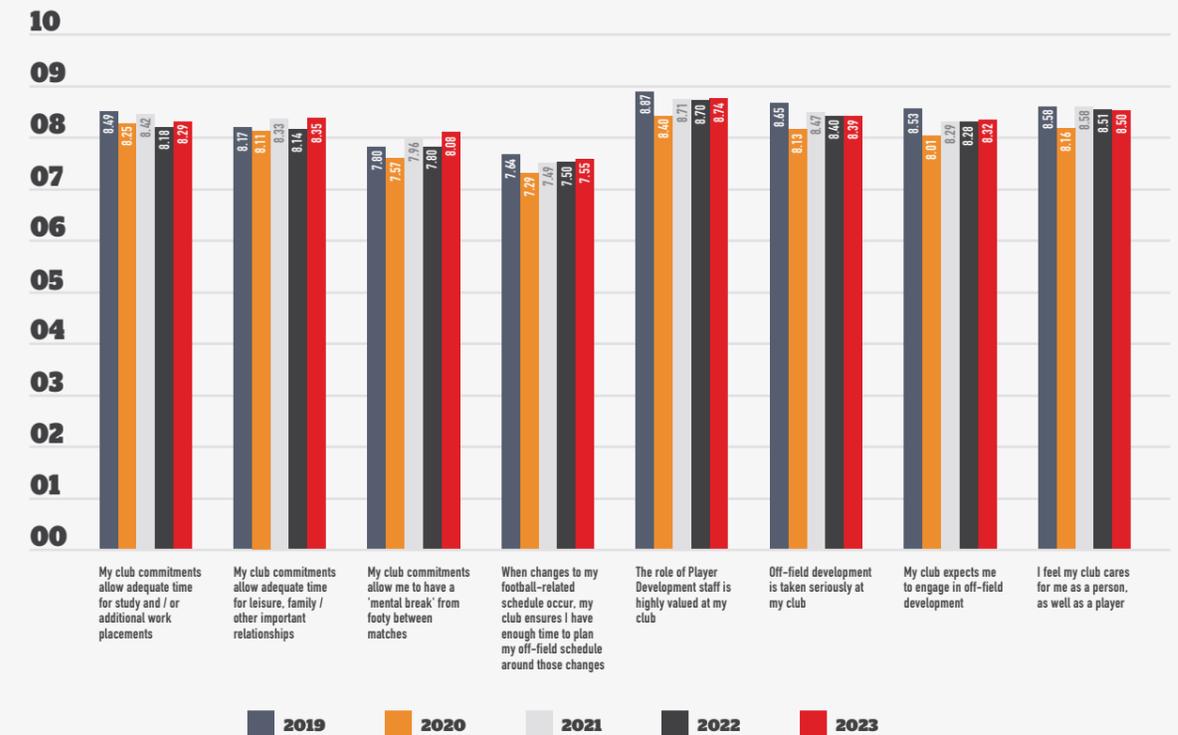
The survey covers a spectrum of issues, from how clubs manage scheduling and time off for other commitments, to the club's attitude towards player development and the extent of care provided to players.

The 2023 survey results, outlined below in comparison with recent seasons, affirm the AFLPA's commitment to elevating club environments. Through ongoing evaluation of these measures and by sharing insights with both clubs and players, we will continue to promote and drive high standards within club environments.

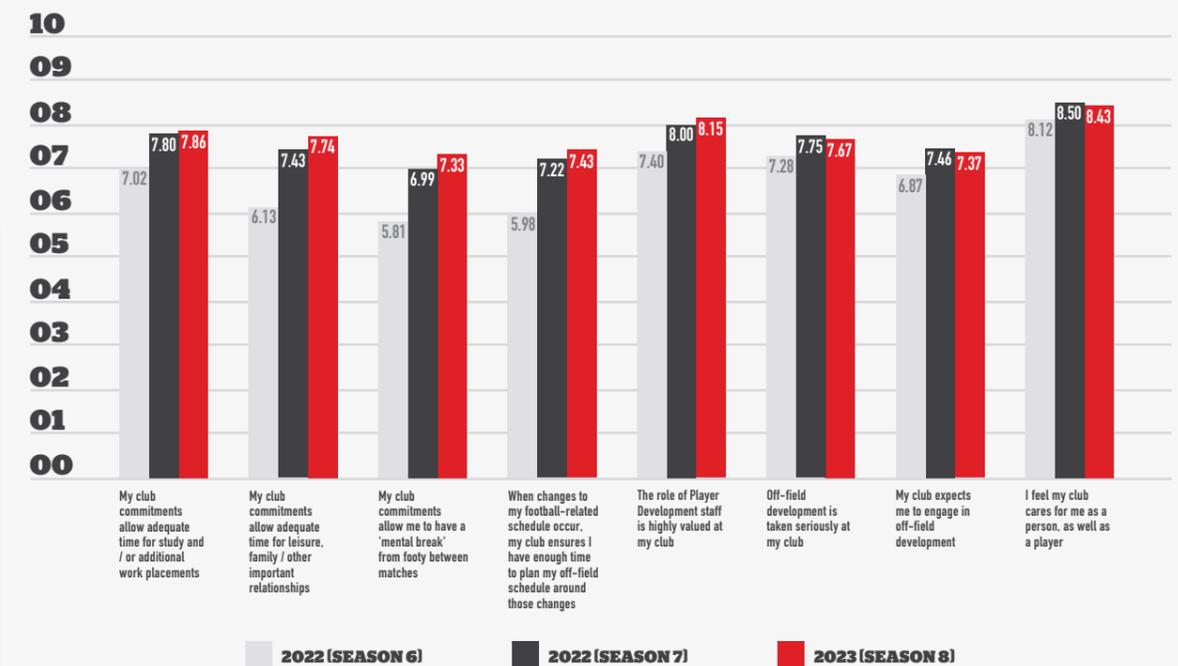
! For a list of survey questions and club-specific comparisons of each individual measure, see Appendix pages 70–79.



PERCEPTIONS OF WORKPLACE CULTURE 2019-2023 (AFL PLAYERS)



PERCEPTIONS OF WORKPLACE CULTURE 2022-2023 (AFLW PLAYERS)



INSIGHT

AFLW CLUB ENVIRONMENT RESULTS SEE SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS BUT MORE WORK REMAINS

There has been a notable increase in AFLW club environment scores, from an average of 6.82/10 across the eight measures in 2022 to 7.75/10 in 2023—an almost 14% improvement in just over 12 months.

Key workplace developments, advocated for by the AFLPA and achieved through CBA negotiations, such as salary increases, increases in hours (which saw players go from 15 contact hours with clubs in Season 6, to 20 hours for Seasons 7 and 8), and a concerted focus by clubs

on improving AFLW player workplace conditions, have been instrumental in this progression.

Despite these gains, AFLW club environment scores remain below those of their AFL counterparts, underscoring the need for ongoing efforts to fully integrate AFLW within clubs and the broader industry. Clubs operating within the limitations of the AFLW soft-cap face barriers in providing AFLW players with support at a level comparative to their AFL counterparts, as adequate resourcing and retention of quality staff remains a challenge.

While this gap between AFL and AFLW environment scores is expected to partly narrow as salaries and hours rise through the life of the current CBA, monitoring these trends and implementing necessary actions remains vital.



INSIGHT

CONCERNS OVER COMPETITIVE BALANCE REMAIN ACROSS THE COMPETITION

Despite the AFL's significant efforts towards delivering competitive balance, feedback from ongoing discussions between the AFLPA, players and clubs highlight persistent concerns regarding the current state of genuine competitive balance across the competition.

Key issues identified include:

- **Cost of living variations:** Disparities in living costs across different states pose challenges in attracting and retaining players and staff, particularly for clubs in northern states that tend to have fewer players drafted from their home state.
- **Inequalities in second tier competitions:** Variations in rules, quality, and restrictions on clubs participating in second-tier competitions outside the VFL are affecting competitive equity.
- **Travel requirements:** The differing travel demands placed on teams can contribute to competitive imbalances.
- **Fixturing imbalances:** Some teams face advantages or disadvantages based on the fixture schedule.
- **Structural, geographical and historical club differences:** Historical, geographical and structural disparities between clubs can also impede player retention.

Addressing these concerns requires a comprehensive and holistic approach. It is encouraging that the AFL has committed to undertaking a competitive balance review in collaboration with the AFLPA as part of the Collective Bargaining Agreement. This review will include a focus on addressing the off-field challenges some clubs face, in addition to ongoing efforts by the AFL to enhance second-tier competitions and the talent pathway.

The review will take place during 2024.



**GROWTH IS OUR OPPORTUNITY,
AND IT BEGINS WITH BALANCE**
BY ADAM KINGSLEY, GWS GIANTS AFL COACH

Competitive balance is bigger than one club, it contributes to ensuring the strength of the game across the entire country and that's where our biggest growth opportunity is.

Since moving from Melbourne, I've seen first-hand the challenges that northern clubs face. No doubt all clubs have individual challenges, but the ones up here are stark.

As a code, we have to grow participation so we can recruit

locally and not have 80 per cent of a club's list come from another state, which inherently impacts player retention.

As a code, we have to develop quality coaches and compensate them accordingly, so we don't have coaches having to make a choice between living in the same state as their families or pursuing a career at an AFL club.

And as a code, we have to understand that if we want to

be a national competition, we should treat every aspect of the game as an opportunity to reach new people and teach them about the game we all love.

It's a big challenge but it's the greatest opportunity for our industry to grow and for all those across the industry to be rewarded off the back of that.

INSIGHT

PLAYERS ARE INCREASINGLY ENGAGING IN THE STRENGTH AND GROWTH OF THE GAME

Through club visits conducted by the AFLPA across the league, players have shown genuine interest in growing the game, societal issues, and health and safety. They also recognise their crucial leadership roles in these areas, and their role in growing the sport and the league into the future.

With a five-year CBA now negotiated, there is a unique opportunity for the AFLPA to work with players in defining their vision for the game—identifying and advocating for priorities that players consider vital for ongoing progress.

Additionally, the CBA includes provisions for the AFLW season length to grow to up to 14 home and away games in any season from 2025, if average home and away attendance reaches at least 6,000 fans and television ratings attract over 100,000 viewers.



INSIGHT

FRAGMENTATION AND UNDER-RESOURCING IN AFLW'S SECOND-TIER SYSTEM IMPEDES AFLW DEVELOPMENT

The development pathway for AFLW players faces significant hurdles due to a fragmented and underfunded second-tier system. Despite the AFL's initiatives, gaps in the pathways for emerging AFLW talent persist, with many players not participating in enough senior football—either in state leagues or the AFLW—to ensure timely progression. As of 2023, there is notable inconsistency in AFLW teams' use of state league competitions, with various challenges discouraging clubs from utilising off-season state league competitions for development.

Challenges affecting development include:

- **Alignment and development concerns:** AFLW teams without an in-house state-league team face development hurdles, particularly when a player's state league experience doesn't align with their objectives due to different game styles and roles.
- **Standards gap:** The widely perceived quality gap between AFLW and some state leagues risks inadequate development or skill regression.
- **Venue and support issues:** Concerns over poor venue conditions and insufficient medical or conditioning support, often due to underfunding, deter coaches from allowing state-league participation.

- **Risk management:** The smaller AFLW list sizes amplify injury concerns, particularly for top draft picks, limiting their playing time and impacting development.
- **Regulatory hurdles:** Varied regulations on AFLW player participation in state leagues present additional barriers to maximising development opportunities.

All of the above factors combine to create a development gap for young players needing more game time to hone their skills. This impacts their preparedness to play at the AFLW level, and ultimately can negatively affect the standard of the AFLW competition. With 31 players under 22 playing fewer than three AFLW games in 2023, and a quarter of under-20s not playing any AFLW games in their first season, opportunities are needed for these players to develop in adequate second-tier competitions to support a stronger AFLW competition.

If on-field player development is to be streamlined, effective and efficient, a national approach to second-tier competitions should be undertaken, and a review of its resources should be included.

IMPACT



CBA NEGOTIATED OUTCOMES

As outlined throughout this report, the Collective Bargaining Agreement delivered key outcomes that will have significant positive impact on the lives of AFLPA members. CBA negotiated outcomes specific to the Club Environment include:

Player Contracts and Salaries

- Improved combined AFL and AFLW revenue share – now 31.7% (increased from approx. 30.5%).
- Everything Paid to Players and the AFLPA (EPPA) over the term = \$2.26b.
- Outperformance mechanisms for both AFL and AFLW revenue streams.
- AFL Total Player Payments (TPP) to rise by 37% over the term. AFL Primary List minimum base salaries (excluding first to third-year players) increasing immediately from \$115k to \$125k and will reach \$155k by 2027.
- Regulated payments extended to first to third-year AFL players (previously only applied to first and second year AFL players).
- AFLW TPP to increase by 90% over the term, with Tier 4 salaries moving from \$39k in 2022 to over \$72k by 2027.
- AFLW players now eligible for multi-year contracts of uncapped length, enhancing opportunities for increased financial stability.

AFL Program Hours

- Enhanced leave arrangements (compared to those agreed in 2017-2022 CBA) with locked in three-week Christmas break, and later annual leave return date for most players.

AFLW Program Hours

- Work week set at 22 hours for 2024-2025, increasing to 25 hours for 2026-2027.
- Includes 20 hours for high-performance football programs, with the remainder for development and off-field initiatives.
- Option for daytime training to be agreed with players, with normal business hours otherwise protected for players' off-field endeavours.
- Joint AFL and AFLPA review of use of hours in AFLW program, including club utilisation and efficiency.

- 14-week pre-season focusing on education and development in initial two-weeks.

AFL H&A Season Length

- Continuation of a 24-round season to allow for Gather Round.

AFLW H&A Season Length

- 11 rounds in 2024.
- 12 rounds from 2025, with potential to grow to 14 games if attendance and viewership targets are achieved.

2020 AFL Listed Player Recognition

- Compensation for the 29.7% salary reduction agreed by players during the 2020 season due to the impacts of COVID-19, with 25% of the pay cut to be reimbursed from the first outperformance payment post-CBA (amount to be calculated on an individual basis).

AFLW Medical Standards and Professional Support

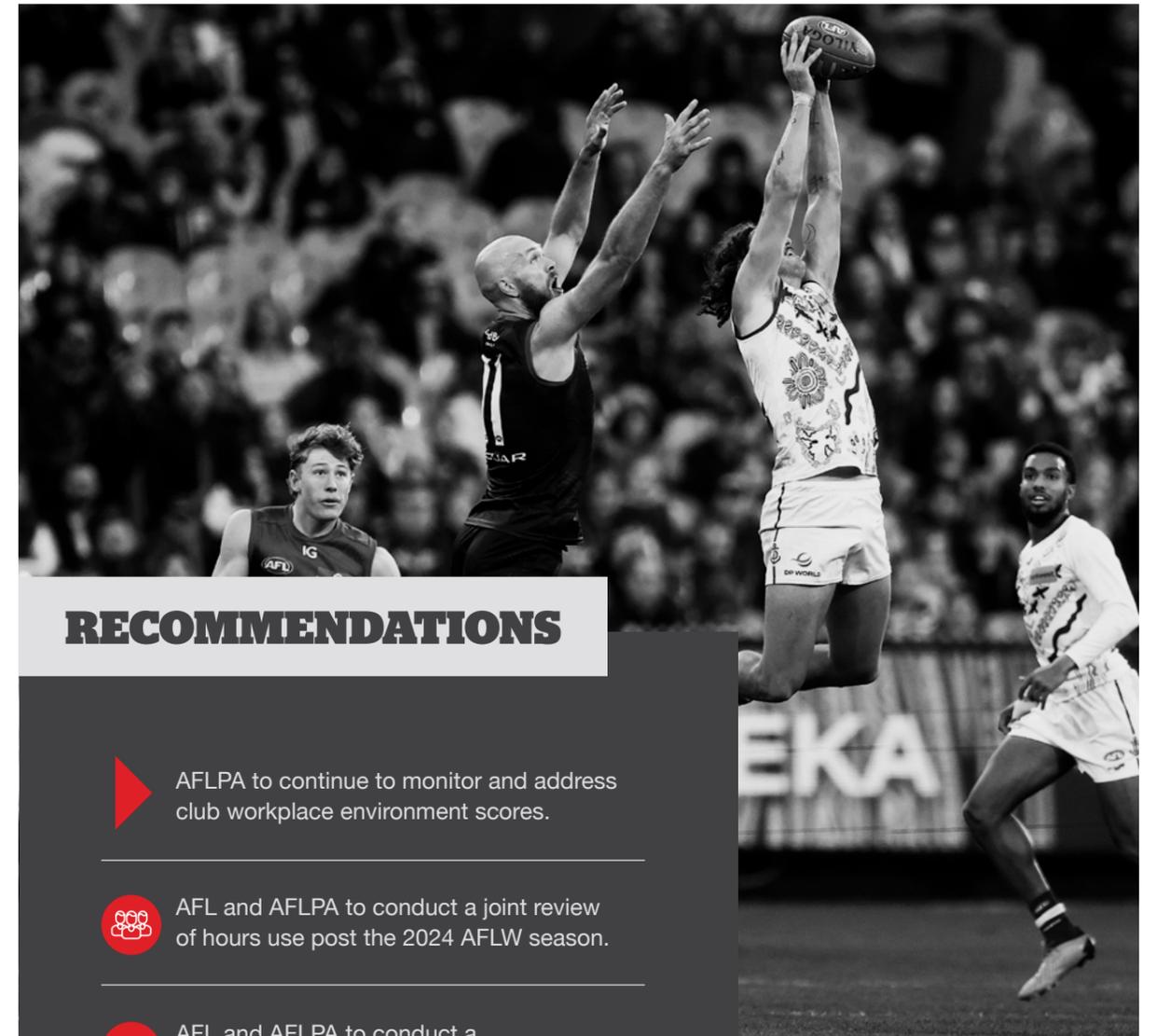
- Equalisation of medical standards and professional support to AFL men's program prescribed standards.
- Equal access to mental health, career transition, finance, education, and cultural development programs.
- Introduction of a new Education and Wellbeing curriculum for AFLW player transition into, through and out of the game.
- Dedicated, fully qualified Player Development Managers (PDMs) for AFLW.

AFLW Relocation Allowance

- Aligned with the men's model, first-year players receive allowances for relocation costs, living allowance, flights and accommodation for family travel.
- Traded, international and de-listed players also eligible for some categories of allowance.

AFL Player Mid-Season Trade

- Agreement on the potential for a mid-season trade period, with processes and procedures to be defined between the AFLPA and AFL.



RECOMMENDATIONS



AFLPA to continue to monitor and address club workplace environment scores.



AFL and AFLPA to conduct a joint review of hours use post the 2024 AFLW season.



AFL and AFLPA to conduct a competitive balance review for both AFL and AFLW competitions.



AFLPA to engage with players to develop and advance a collective vision for the future of the game.



AFL and AFLPA commit to annual growth forums to create industry alignment on strategies to grow the AFLW game.



PLAYER DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSITION

Player development and transition initiatives are integral to enhancing the career longevity and overall wellbeing of AFL and AFLW athletes. By focusing on both the professional growth within the sport and the personal development beyond the field, these programs aim to ensure athletes have the tools and support needed for a seamless transition into, during, and post their football careers. From career planning to skill-building and mental health support, these efforts reflect a comprehensive approach to nurturing the athlete's journey at every stage, fostering a well-rounded and fulfilling career lifecycle.

INSIGHT

PART-TIME WORK NOW THE PRIMARY NON-FOOTBALL EMPLOYMENT OF AFLW PLAYERS

In recent years, AFLW player hours and payments have been significantly improved, which have enabled increased support of player professionalism. Increased salaries and professional hours have led to a stronger work-life balance for AFLW players, affording them greater flexibility in pursuing careers outside of football, with part-time employment now emerging as the primary employment status for the AFLW cohort.

Since the commencement of the AFLW competition in 2017, the AFLPA has consistently tracked the non-football employment status of its players.

Initially, approximately 60% of AFLW players held full-time jobs outside of football. However, as the league has evolved towards greater professionalism, this dynamic has shifted.

Enhanced salaries and increased club contact hours have allowed football to become a more substantial source of income, resulting in 36% of players in 2023 working part-time outside of their football commitments.

Meanwhile, the prevalence of casual employment or the absence of non-football work has risen over the last seven years, with full-time employment outside of football dropping to 16%.

This transition, while positive in many respects, also poses potential challenges. It suggests that players might be prioritising jobs that simply complement their football income - potentially at the expense of pursuing work aligned with their long-term career ambitions.

Despite a gradual increase in the number of AFLW players with written development plans, only 41% reported having such plans in 2023. This indicates a risk of players concluding their AFLW careers without adequately exploring or preparing for their future professional pathways.



INSIGHT

ENHANCED FOCUS ON POST-FOOTBALL CAREER PREPARATION ESSENTIAL FOR PLAYER TRANSITION

Research indicates a critical need for players to engage more in post-football career exploration and preparation while still active in the league.

A study by Rist et al. (2023) on the transition experiences of both AFL and AFLW players suggests that the extent of career exploration and the strength of athletic identity significantly influence the ease of transitioning to life after the sport.

Both delisted AFL and AFLW players exhibited a stronger athletic identity compared to

those retiring, indicating a more challenging and prolonged transition for this group.

While not statistically significant, there were notable differences in financial confidence and career exploration between delisted and retired athletes, with the latter being more financially secure and better prepared for their post-football careers.

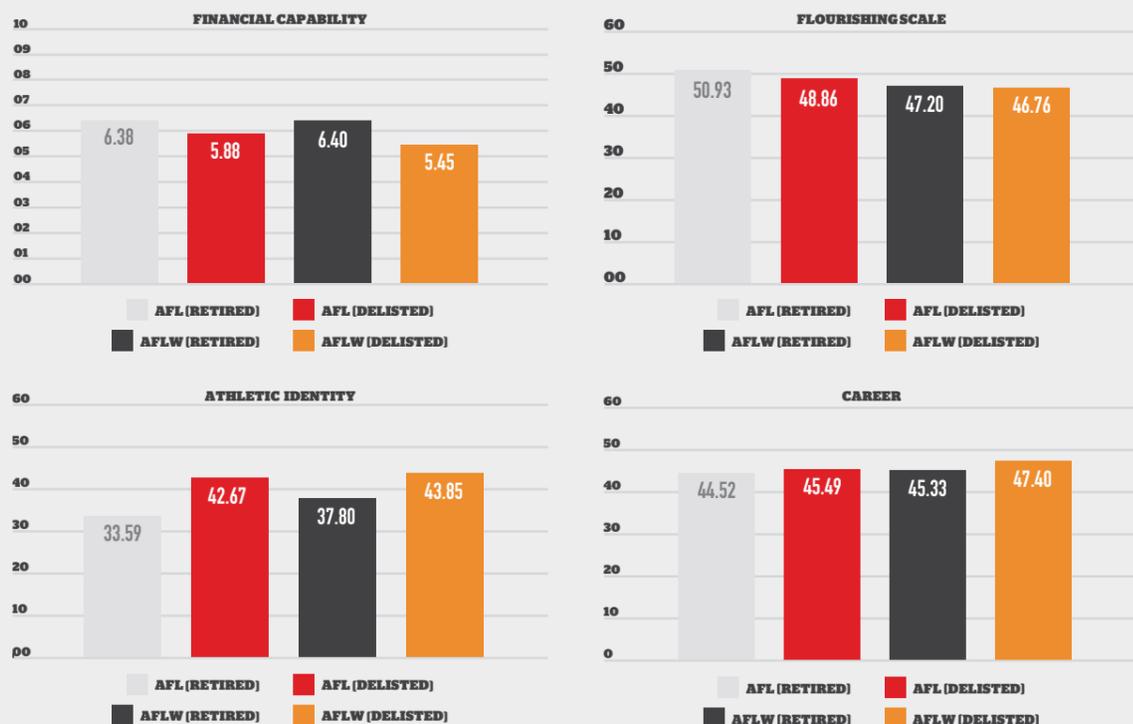
The Player Retirement Account (PRA) plays a vital role in assisting AFL players financially during their transition. Contributions are made annually to players' individual

accounts based on their years of service, and players can choose their investment profile.

During the 2017-2022 CBA, AFL players received a portion of their PRA funds within 12 months of retiring or being delisted, with the remainder invested for three more years. However, requests from transitioning players for earlier access to these funds prompted a review of the fund's rules, including eliminating the three-year re-investment window.

! For access to the full study, please see Appendix page 82.

COMPARISON OF TRANSITIONING AFL AND AFLW PLAYERS



LET GO OF THAT FOOTBALL IDENTITY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE
BY MITCH WALLIS, RETIRED WESTERN BULLDOGS AFL PLAYER

Transition is a scary topic for athletes and often one that is left until they are forced to go through the process. However, the more players prepare for this during their careers, the less daunting that process will seem when the curtains finally close.

The key aspect of any transition into a career post your sporting journey is the shift in identity. Footballers spend the first 18 years of their lives cultivating the identity of being a footballer. Once we arrive in that environment, we endeavour to protect and reinforce that identity.

Everything is centered around you; almost every action and every decision you make is aligned to fostering this football identity.

When football is ripped away from you, there is a huge

battle within, between letting go of this identity and wanting to hold onto it. I believe the players that attempt to preserve it will initially struggle and prolong the transition into the next phase of life.

The best thing an athlete can do is shape their non-athletic identity before they finish their careers. Nurturing this identity will help athletes deal with the emotions and challenges of the transition period.

One-size doesn't fit all, and the end can feel confronting, but athletes need to get into a rhythm of building on new and existing skills that are transferable to their future workplace.

It's understandable to feel sore and sorry for yourself during your days off within a season. Video games and golf are, at times, necessary to mentally

and physically freshen up, but the commitment to continually invest in yourself for the future will reward you when it's needed most.

This is where individual responsibility is required. The AFLPA and the industry have so many services at the players' fingertips. If they don't ask the questions, be curious and take ownership of these opportunities, then transition will continue to be a daunting process.

Things tend to be given to players in this industry but that is not how the world works. How do they make that leap? Call the AFLPA, the club PDM, the coach and say, 'what can I do, who can I talk to' and take control.



INSIGHT

UNIFIED APPROACH NEEDED FOR AFL AND AFLW PLAYER SUPPORT

There is consensus within the AFL industry for enhanced clarity and coordination around the roles that the AFL, AFLPA, clubs and agents play in supporting the off-field development needs of AFL and AFLW players.

The pandemic era created scenarios around support services such as:

- **Duplication**, particularly in the wellbeing, financial advice and off-field development spaces, being sourced and offered by multiple stakeholders in the industry causing unnecessary,

siloeffort. This also led to confusion among players as to which option to use.

- **Ad hoc execution** which resulted in inconsistent experiences for AFL and AFLW players based on varying standards of delivery.
- **Challenges with staff capacity** due to reductions in football department spend, causing club staff to spread their time across multifaceted roles, which in some cases reduced the time available to dedicate to player support.

These issues highlight the need for structural realignment in the industry in order to properly define the roles of each stakeholder, eliminate duplication, ensure accountability, and direct time and funding into the most impactful areas for player off-field development. As agreed in the CBA, these items will be resolved through the re-establishment of the Industry Governance Committee for Player Development (IGC) - see recommendation on page 29.

INSIGHT

VISA RESTRICTIONS IMPACTING AFL AND AFLW IRISH PLAYERS' CAREER AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Visa restrictions pose challenges for Irish AFL and AFLW players in building lives and securing financial stability in Australia.

The impact is particularly glaring in AFLW, with a growing number of Irish players in the competition (32 participants in Season 8). There were 11 Irish players on AFL lists in 2023.

Unlike their Australian counterparts, who are able to utilise the off-season for career development or advancement,

study, or skill development, Irish players' visa restrictions can limit their employment opportunities and access to educational loans, healthcare, and welfare support.

Consequently, many opt to return to Ireland during the off-season, reverting to amateur Gaelic football and other short-term engagements, thus delaying important non-football life decisions and career planning.

This situation not only hampers their Australian Rules football

development but also places them at a disadvantage in preparing for life after football, and is particularly prevalent with AFLW players.

The AFLW's growing Irish contingent reinforces the urgent need for systemic changes to support these players' on and off-field development and wellbeing.

WE'RE LIVING TWO LIVES, AND THAT TAKES ITS TOLL

BY AILISH CONSIDINE, RETIRED NORTH MELBOURNE AND ADELAIDE CROWS AFLW PLAYER

I spent six years living two lives – one in Australia and one back home in Ireland.

It's a reality all Irish imports face, especially AFLW players, who, due to visa restrictions, can't work, study or grow outside our AFLW commitments.

During my time in the AFLW, and even now, the money we earn can't sustain 12-months of the year and, because we can't find other employment and studying as an international person isn't financially viable, we have no other choice but to return home.

Each season would roll around, which meant packing your bags, flying to Australia, and sometimes missing a few weeks of pre-season if we didn't time the visa perfectly. Then, as the season continues on, there's this thing hanging over your head knowing you have to leave not long after its completion: "I'm forced to return to my homeland, pick up my life where I left it, and start over again. Will I get to come back? Do I even want to?"

This also means our lives in Australia are spent focusing solely on football. We're out here to play, which is an incredible experience, but that's all we're here to do – that's all we can do.

While that seems like a dream to most players, and it was great for our development early days, it hinders your connections with people. Making a network outside footy is difficult when you're in a place with no family and no ability to make friends at other workplaces or university. Every connection is football-related, which isn't an overly balanced experience when you're constantly surrounded by it, always thinking about it.

Despite this, I always came back. At the end of the day, the opportunity was too good to pass up, but it took its toll.

You deal with it because you must, but every aspect of your life is on hold – family, friends, relationships, social networks, furthering your career, and off-field development.

It's funny because since retiring and leaving the country once again, even though my football career, the country and its people were a big part of my life for six years, right now it all feels so far away.

If I could offer some advice for the decision-makers it would be to allow international players to work outside of the sport and a smoother application process, especially given we're servicing the game over multiple seasons, showing loyalty to the code, marketing

the game internationally, entertaining the community and paying taxes.

With that in mind, I'd also love to see years of playing being rewarded with a more permanent visa rather than being forced to return home the minute you finish playing.

We just want to live a life outside of the sport, contribute to Australia in other meaningful ways, and ultimately share in what this great country has to offer.



IMPACT



MANDATED INDUSTRY PLAYER DEVELOPMENT DATABASE

Historically, one of the administrative challenges in the player development space was that clubs had different systems where they would collate information on meetings with players, educational history, workshop participation, individual development plans, etc. Since these systems were club-based, when a player was traded or transitioning away from the game, this information was not consistently available to the player or the new club.

The Athlete Database System (ADS) revolutionises player development tracking in the AFL, addressing past challenges of inconsistent information transfer when players change clubs or exit the game. Initiated in 2021, this pilot project standardised how player development data is collected, managed, stored, and shared, ensuring continuity in line with Australian Privacy Standards.

The 2023-2027 CBA has mandated its adoption across all clubs for both AFL and AFLW players. Education sessions in 2024 will ensure all club Player Development Managers are fully equipped to use this system, enhancing the support structure for players throughout their careers and beyond.

AFL PLAYER TRANSITION SUPPORT

AFL player transition support saw significant engagement in 2023, with 77% (92 out of 120) of retiring or delisted AFL players participating in career transition meetings facilitated by their AFLPA Regional Managers.

AFLW PLAYER TRANSITION SUPPORT

AFLW player transition support was provided to 47% of retiring or delisted players, with 43 out of 91 engaging in career transition meetings with their AFLPA Regional Managers.

TORRENS UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIPS

The AFLPA's partnership with Torrens University offers higher education scholarships to all AFLPA members, inclusive of all current and past AFL and AFLW players. This collaboration helps players develop essential skills for smooth transitions into their post-football careers. In 2023, 37 AFLPA members commenced their studies at Torrens University, benefiting from these scholarships. In mid-2023, Torrens University increased the AFLPA scholarships from 20% to 25% and extended this offer to all AFLPA accredited player agents. There are now over 100 AFLPA members studying with Torrens University.

FOOTBALL INDUCTION PROGRAM

The AFL Football Induction Program saw significant engagement from players in 2023 across both AFL and AFLW competitions.

The AFL Induction Program attracted 497 engagements from 112 players over six modules, achieving an average session impact score of 4.57 out of 5.

In comparison, the AFLW Induction Program recorded 125 engagements by 66 players across two modules, with an average session impact score of 4.31 out of 5. This highlights the program's effectiveness in orienting new players to the AFL industry.

CLUB ELECTIVE PROGRAM

In addition to the standard programs administered by the AFLPA, clubs may apply for funding to run additional sessions that address specific needs or areas of interest to their playing groups.

The Club Elective Program in 2023 saw the AFLPA allocate \$98,900 in player development programming funds to support 69 programs delivered by clubs - emphasising the investment in player growth and development through tailored club initiatives funded by the industry.

Examples of these programs in 2023 included: cooking classes, defensive driving, public speaking and communications, first aid, and resilience building.

IMPACT

AFLW PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

The AFLPA programs and services for AFLW athletes have continued to evolve, ensuring players have equal access to a comprehensive suite of programs and services, as well as bespoke services for the AFLW cohort.

Highlights include:

- Expanded Mental Health and Wellbeing services
- Career Transition support
- Financial advice
- Education and Training Grants
- Monash IVF Education Partnership.

Dedicated Player Development Managers (PDMs) have provided qualified support to the AFLW playing group, further enriching the players' professional experience.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING GRANTS

Players can access Education and Training Grants to subsidise university, tertiary study and short courses. This funding is available to all current players and players transitioning out of the game to support them in their off-field development and help prepare them for life and careers after football. In 2023, over \$1.2m was paid out to more than 460 members through the grant program.



For access to the application data, please see Appendix page 82.

RECOMMENDATIONS



AFLPA to create a central career support service, offering personalised guidance for players while on AFL or AFLW lists, to streamline their transition into post-football careers.



AFLPA with the AFL to communicate and implement the new Player Retirement Account rules, including eliminating the three-year reinvestment requirement, to better support players' post-football career transitions.



AFLPA and AFL to re-establish the Industry Governance Committee (IGC) with representation from the AFL, AFLPA, clubs, and expertise in athlete support to:

- Drive an industry-wide strategy and consistent standards for player development across the AFL and AFLW through the IGC.
- Ensure AFLW clubs offer suitable player development structures for holistic growth, focusing on personal and athletic development.
- Develop a wellbeing education framework for the high-performance program.
- Establish impact measures for programs and services delivered by the AFL, AFLPA, and clubs.
- Implement governance around funding.
- Ensure high-performance schedules allocate adequate time for player personal development.
- Enhance industry capability to meet identified player needs.



AFLPA PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

AFLPA programs and services represent a comprehensive support system, designed to enhance the personal and professional lives of AFL and AFLW players. This holistic approach addresses the multifaceted needs of athletes, ranging from mental health and legal assistance to financial guidance and career development. Through a wide array of targeted initiatives, the AFLPA ensures that players have access to essential resources and expert advice throughout their careers and beyond.

INSIGHT**ENHANCED SUPPORT CRUCIAL FOR PAST PLAYERS' HEALTH AND WELLBEING POST-FOOTBALL**

Past players are increasingly seeking financial assistance and support to assist with transition into their post-career lives, especially relating to the impacts of Sports Related Concussion (SRC) and other health-related issues.

The Injury and Hardship Fund, introduced by the AFLPA in 2017, includes a Football Ending Injury benefit aimed at assisting AFL players financially if they can no longer play due to injury.

Given the unique nature of their employment, AFL players are not eligible for WorkCover, making this fund a critical resource for addressing health related concerns.

This fund is entirely financed through the players' share of revenue, with current players advocating for improved support for their predecessors.

Since its establishment, the fund has supported 38 members with Football Ending Injuries. Of these, thirteen (34%) related to SRC, making it the most prevalent injury among members whose careers are cut short by injury.

The evolution of AFLW and the expansion of the competition exacerbates the growing number of former players, thereby intensifying the demand for such support.


COMMITMENT, RIGOUR, AND IMPACT CONTINUES TO INCREASE
 BY BEN SMITH, AFLPA GENERAL MANAGER OF MEMBER PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Through this CBA, players have continued to grow their commitment towards supporting the transitional journey out of the game for their peers, including supporting those players who came before them.

As the commitment, rigour and impact of playing professional football continues to increase, the AFLPA is focused on ensuring that we have comprehensive support services in place to meet the needs of players as they exit the game and transition to a life outside of football.

IMPACT

MARKETING FUND

An outcome of the CBA was the agreement between the AFL and AFLPA to develop and introduce a Marketing Fund from 2024 onwards. This initiative is set to enhance the earning potential for 50-80 of the most prominent players across the industry, including at least eight AFLW athletes. Players participating in the fund will be paid for additional AFL marketing activities

in areas including, but not limited to, game development, AFL sponsorship appearances, the promotion of licensed products and/or the use of their personal IP. The design of the fund is due to be finalised in the coming months and will see a minimum of \$34.6 million paid to players over the term of the CBA.

PLAYER RETIREMENT ACCOUNT (PRA)

The Player Retirement Account (PRA) saw significant disbursements in 2023, reflecting its role in supporting AFL players post-retirement. Key details include:

- An initial lump sum of \$8.4 million was paid to 105 retirees from the 2022 season.
- \$11.4 million from 2022 retiree investments was earmarked for future payments, adhering to the PRA's structure.

- A sum of \$8.2 million was distributed to 304 retirees from the 2012-2021 seasons, in line with the PRA's periodic payment scheme.
- Following the 2017-2022 CBA revenue share, a total of \$54.8 million was contributed to the PRA, including \$5.5 million paid to 272 players with an inactive account.

PRA INVESTMENTS

The PRA investments grew in the 31 October 2023 financial year, noting the strategic management of the diverse investment options managed by Equity Trustees.

As of 31 October 2023, the total funds under investment were valued at \$191.5 million, an increase of \$40.6 million from the previous year's balance of \$150.9 million.

The estimated net one-year investment returns for the portfolios as at 31 October 2023 were:

- Conservative option: 1.6%
- Balanced option: 2.1%
- Growth option: 3.0%
- High Growth option: 2.7%

! Information on the PRA investment options available for players in 2023, based on agreed benchmarks, can be found in the Appendix – page 85.

IMPACT

INJURY AND HARDSHIP FUND NEGOTIATED OUTCOMES

The Injury and Hardship Fund has been enhanced through the CBA negotiations to better support the long-term health and financial stability of past players. Key enhancements include:

- A commitment of \$54.2 million over the life of the current CBA - an increase from the previous \$25 million over six years.

- Equitable access to fund benefits for both AFLW and AFL past player members, with an extension of the Football Ending Injury Benefit to AFLW past players.
- The introduction of a new hardship benefit designed to assist players impacted in their non-football employment capacities or those facing significant medical expenses.

- An expansion in the support for medical treatments related to football injuries, providing broader and more comprehensive coverage.
- The rollout of a Preventative Healthcare program aimed at mitigating health issues before they arise, promoting a proactive approach to player wellbeing.

INJURY AND HARDSHIP FUND SUPPORT PROVIDED

In 2023, the Injury and Hardship Fund demonstrated its significant impact on the welfare of former AFL players, supporting 279 distinct members across various assistance programs. This is a slight increase on 2022 when 258 members were supported through the Fund.

Key highlights include providing hardship assistance

to 21 members, lifetime health care to 178 individuals, and covering hospital excess for 172 members - reflecting the AFL's commitment to the long-term wellbeing of its athletes.

Notably, the fund catered to both recent and long-retired players, with a median age of 63 and an average of 36 years since their careers ended, underscoring the

comprehensive and enduring nature of this support system for players at different stages of their post-career lives. The average dollar amount per member receiving hardship support is increasing. The average payout per member seeking mental health hardship support almost halved on 2021, but more members required this support.

CASE TYPE	2023		
	DISTINCT MEMBERS	MEDIAN AGE	MEDIAN YRS SINCE CAREER
HARDSHIP	21	59	32
LIFETIME HEALTHCARE PROGRAM	178	62	34
HOSPITAL EXCESS	172	65	39
FOOTBALL ENDING INJURY PAYMENTS	6	31.5	2
DELISTED INJURED	2	24	1
OVERALL	279	63	36

Note: Distinct Members refers to the overall number of members supported. A member who is supported for multiple issues will count towards each statistic but only once in the distinct total.

Football Ending Injury and Delisted Injured payment figures above reflect the year when payments were made, which is generally not the same year as players' final season of AFL football. This is due to the time it takes to receive and assess applications and/or a member requesting that payments are made at a certain time.

IMPACT

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING NAVIGATOR SERVICE

In 2023, the Mental Health and Wellbeing Navigator Service played a pivotal role in supporting the mental health of AFLPA members, offering free, confidential and professional counselling support to both current and past AFL and AFLW players, as well as their significant others.

The service provided 1,297 consults to 155 current AFL players and significantly

higher engagement with AFLW players, delivering 1,833 consultations to 206 current players.

Past players also benefited, with 285 former AFL players receiving 3,003 consults, and 30 past AFLW players engaging in 187 consultations.

Overall, 662 members or their significant others were supported in 2023, compared

to 532 in 2022, representing a 24% increase year-on-year.

This extensive reach reinforces the critical importance of mental health support within the AFL and AFLW, reflecting the leagues' commitment to the wellbeing of its players and their families, catering to hundreds of individuals across both current and former player categories.

2023

	DISTINCT MEMBERS AND/OR SIGNIFICANT OTHERS	CONSULTS
CURRENT AFL PLAYERS	155	1,297
CURRENT AFLW PLAYERS	206	1,833
PAST AFL PLAYERS	285	3,003
PAST AFLW PLAYERS	30	187

Note: Distinct Members refers to the overall number of members supported. A member will only be counted once, even if both the member and their significant other accessed the service, or if the member was supported as both a current player then a past player in the same reporting year.

LEGAL SUPPORT

In 2023, the AFLPA's legal team assisted 88 individual members with various important legal matters. This support included:

- Providing advice on player rights and obligations under contracts and the Collective Bargaining Agreement.
- Enforcing the CBA and resolving payment issues.

- Advising on disciplinary issues, including in relation to AFL Rules and Regulations, the Code of Conduct, and the Illicit Drug Policy.
- Assisting with claims to the Injury & Hardship Fund.
- Support in dealing with agent-related issues.
- Referring cases to external lawyers in the AFLPA network where appropriate.

This comprehensive legal support highlights the AFLPA's commitment to advancing and protecting the interests of players, both individually and collectively, and providing members with the necessary resources and expertise to help them navigate their careers.

IMPACT

FINANCIAL SERVICES PROGRAM

In 2023, the AFLPA's Financial Services Program facilitated a range of sessions to support players' financial health as

detailed in the table below. This program highlights the AFLPA's commitment to providing both current and

former players with essential financial guidance and support.

	2023	
	GROUP SESSIONS	INDIVIDUAL CONSULTS
CURRENT AFL PLAYERS	18	62
CURRENT AFLW PLAYERS	18	15
PAST AFL PLAYERS	-	11
PAST AFLW PLAYERS	-	110

FOUNDATION STUDIES IN PLAYER DEVELOPMENT AND WELLBEING COURSE

In 2023, the Foundation Studies in Player Development and Wellbeing Course attracted 24 participants, including AFL industry staff, alongside current and former players.

This course provides an in-depth look at the AFL industry environment and offers practical strategies for working effectively with elite Australian Rules athletes. It covers the various career stages of AFL and AFLW athletes, focusing on the best practices to support their development off the field.

Aimed at those currently in, or aspiring to, roles associated with Player Development and Wellbeing, the program highlights the importance of tailored support for athletes' holistic growth.

RECOMMENDATION



Finalise and implement the restructured Injury and Hardship Fund's details, as agreed in CBA negotiations, to better serve past players.



HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING

The health, safety and wellbeing of AFL and AFLW players forms an integral part of their professional journey, extending beyond mere physical fitness to include mental health, safety on and off the field, and overall life balance. This aspect of the sporting profession supports not just the performance levels that athletes can achieve, but also their overall quality of life, highlighting the importance of the commitment to nurturing an environment where respect, support, and continuous improvement in health, safety, and wellbeing are paramount.



THE FIT MINDS PROJECT

The mental health and psychological wellbeing of AFL and AFLW players has been a key focus area of the AFLPA, with heightened efforts by the industry to better understand and raise awareness of mental health issues within these cohorts.

Although it has been estimated that the rates of mental ill-health in the AFL population are similar, or even greater than the general population, there has been no regular, league-wide monitoring of psychological wellbeing.

Following a period of unprecedented change in the sporting industry due to the 2020 impacts of COVID-19, the Fit Minds project was piloted by the AFLPA in 2021.

The project presented AFL and AFLW club psychologists with a new and systematic method to monitor their players' psychological wellbeing, generating insights at individual, club, and broader cohort levels. This project aimed to explore wellbeing, psychological distress, and

psychological performance indicators among AFL and AFLW players.

In 2023, the Fit Minds project continued to monitor important psychological variables in the AFL and AFLW population and understand the conditions that are associated with more favourable or adverse outcomes for players.

The AFLPA is pleased to announce that A/Prof Melissa Weinberg, the lead researcher of the Fit Minds project, has recently been appointed as the AFLPA's Head of Wellbeing and Mental Health. Dr Weinberg brings a wealth of experience and credentials to the Association as a psychologist and academic with a dedication to enhancing athletes' quality of life through evidence-based practice.



The FitMinds icon signifies insights and recommendations related to the FitMinds project



INSIGHT

OVERALL WELLBEING OF AFL AND AFLW COHORT ABOVE THAT OF GENERAL POPULATION



The average Personal Wellbeing Index (PWI) score for AFL and AFLW players was 79.04, notably higher than the Australian population's mean score of 75.2. Endorsed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the PWI serves as a reliable measure of subjective wellbeing and has been validated for diverse groups within Australia, including adults, adolescents, and Indigenous communities.

Despite this promising outlook, mental health was highlighted as the foremost societal issue affecting players by AFL athletes in 2017, and this concern was echoed by AFLW players when they were first surveyed on the topic in 2022.

The AFLPA Mental Health and Wellbeing Navigator Service and the availability of club psychologists are critical to the maintenance and sustenance of healthy wellbeing in AFL and AFLW players, and being able to manage instances of mental ill-health when they do occur.

Overall, fewer than 1 in 6 players reported scores that suggest their wellbeing may be compromised, with the vast majority (84.5%) experiencing normal wellbeing levels. In addition, the average levels of psychological distress sit well within the normal range.

These findings illustrate that the vast majority of the sample are psychologically healthy and well equipped to manage the pressures and demands of the high-pressure sporting environment.

INSIGHT

"RELATIONSHIPS" AND "FUTURE SECURITY" IDENTIFIED AS POTENTIAL AREAS OF RISK FOR THE WELLBEING OF AFL AND AFLW PLAYERS



The Personal Wellbeing Index (PWI) encompasses seven domains – health, relationships, standard of living, achievement in life, safety, community connectedness and future security.

The Fit Minds project identified that while AFL and AFLW players generally exhibit high levels of wellbeing, scoring well above the norm in most areas, the "Relationships" and "Future Security" domains yielded scores within the normal range.

The "Relationships" domain reflects the social sacrifices that players make in order to pursue their football careers. It is well established that relationships are critical to the athlete experience

(e.g., Davis & Jowett, 2014) and likely more pronounced in the current sample due to the younger age of respondents. Most were unmarried, and many left their home state to join an AFL or AFLW club, leaving behind their key social supports.

In 2023, relationship issues were the most common concern among AFL and AFLW players seeking support from the AFLPA Mental Health and Wellbeing Navigator service.

"Future Security" reflects the transient nature of professional football, noting that nearly one-third of retiring or delisted AFL players and almost half of AFLW players in 2023 had football careers lasting three seasons or less.

INSIGHT

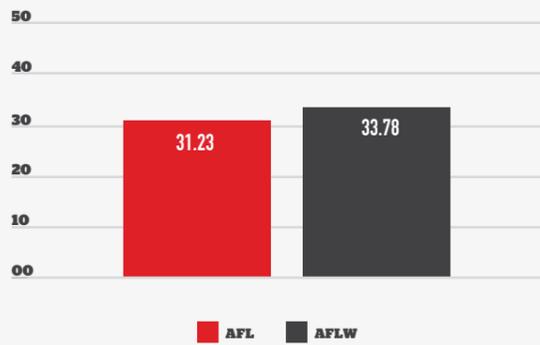
AFLW PLAYERS REPORT LESS FAVOURABLE SCORES ON WELLBEING AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES COMPARED TO AFL COUNTERPARTS

When results were broken down by competition, differences emerged between the AFL and AFLW groups.

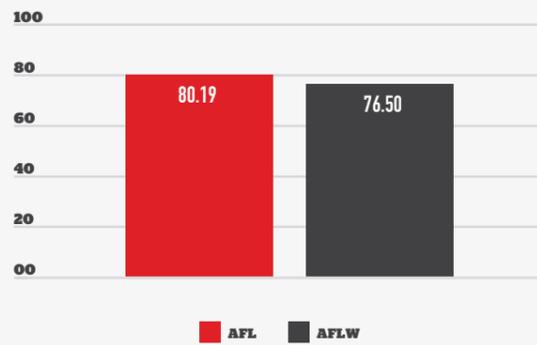
Despite higher levels of Psychological Safety, AFLW players experience lower overall wellbeing, higher psychological distress, and score lower on key Athletic Coping Skills.

These findings reveal a disparity in access to wellbeing resources and coping mechanisms, underscoring the critical need for focused efforts to improve AFLW players' wellbeing.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY



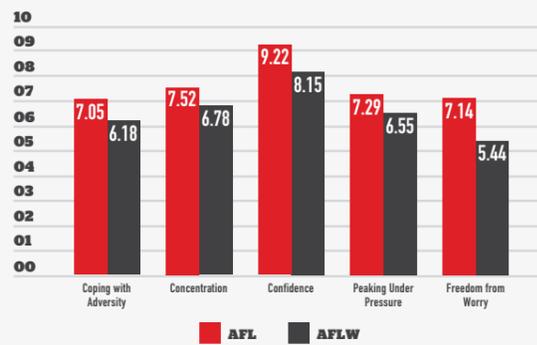
PERSONAL WELLBEING INDEX (PWI)



DISTRESS



ATHLETE COPING SKILLS



INSIGHT

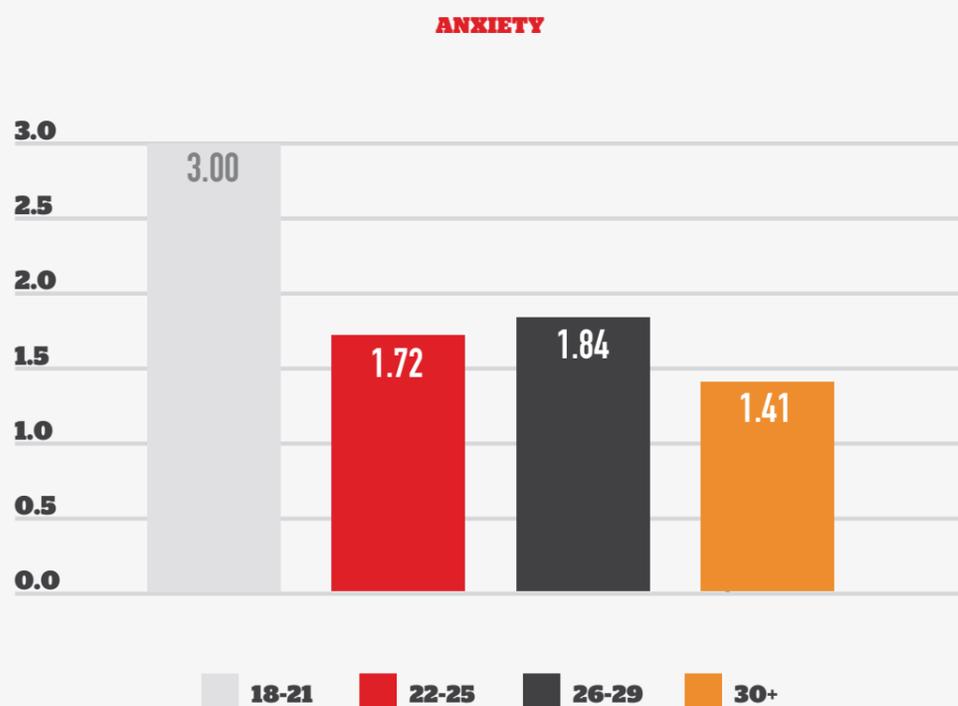
PLAYERS AGED 18-21 REPORT SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER ANXIETY SCORES THAN OLDER PLAYERS



Players aged 18-21 have consistently reported higher anxiety scores compared to their older teammates, a trend also observed in the 2021 Fit Minds Pilot Project. This indicates a heightened vulnerability during the initial entry into the AFL system and the early stages of players' careers.

In 2023, this age bracket comprised approximately 30% of AFL and AFLW players - a substantial proportion of the playing group.

This period coincides with a critical developmental stage for adolescents and young adults, where the emergence of mental health issues is more likely to occur. Therefore, the need for age-specific support and resources for the AFL and AFLW's youngest players is particularly important.



Scores below 4 are still considered in the 'normal' range for this scale.

INSIGHT

GAME PARTICIPATION CONCERNS LEAD TO UNDER-REPORTING OF SPORTS RELATED CONCUSSIONS

Previous editions of the Insights & Impact Report revealed an increasing trend of players not reporting potential Sports Related Concussions (SRC). To explore this, the AFLPA refined its survey methodology in 2023 to capture more accurate data on SRC reporting by focusing on those who had experienced diagnosed or potential SRC. This methodology adjustment, which tailored questions based on specific responses, aimed to yield more precise insights into the under-reporting issue.

In 2023, around 12% of the 179 AFL players who experienced a diagnosed or potential SRC in the past 12 months did not report their symptoms – equating to 21 players. For AFLW, there were 114 players who experienced a diagnosed or potential SRC in the past 12 months, and of those, 11 players (10%) did not report their symptoms.

The predominant reason cited by AFL players for not reporting was the fear of missing games due

to the mandatory 12-day recovery period post-concussion. The second most common reason was that they perceived their symptoms to be of low severity. This reasoning was most often given by older players with 9+ years of experience. However, AFLW players who did not report mostly cited that they didn't recognise the symptoms as potential SRC, or thought them to be minor.

Players from the entire AFL cohort were asked why they thought some players might be unwilling to report potential SRC. The most frequently suggested reasons included concerns over missing games due to potential contract incentives or triggers, or the risk of missing out on team selection.

Interestingly, concern over the long-term effects of SRC increases with player tenure in the league. This heightened awareness among veteran players may stem from more extensive exposure to SRC education or increased consideration of post-career health.

IMPACT

INTRODUCTION OF A NEW INJURY PAYMENT MODEL FOR AFL PLAYERS

Feedback from AFL players and their agents highlighted that the previous injury payments model—designed to recognise potential lost income for players on match-fee contracts who miss matches due to injury—was complex, occasionally imbalanced, and could be difficult to access.

Previously the model was based on whether the player last played at AFL or second tier level, serving as a test for whether a player was likely to miss games at AFL level after being injured.

The new model, while maintaining the overall annual estimated investment in this benefit

across all players (from the players' share of revenue), now weights injury match payments based on games played in the whole prior year. This is expected to be a more accurate test of whether a player would be likely to have played at AFL level if not for their injury, and is likely to allow more players to access a payment.

With the criteria for injury payment eligibility now broadened, it is anticipated that this adjustment may reduce instances of players under-reporting or minimising their injuries, including potential Sports Related Concussions (SRC).



CONCUSSION COULD CHANGE THE GAME FOREVER

BY PAUL MARSH, AFLPA CEO

Concussion has rapidly emerged as the preeminent issue in the game and one that is impacting the long-term health and wellbeing of past players. It also has serious implications for the current playing group as well as the potential to dramatically alter the foundations of Australian Football as a sport.

In our view there needs to be two areas of focus: making the game as safe as possible for current and future players, and supporting past players who are still suffering from the impacts of concussion sustained during their playing career. It's important the industry continues to invest time and resources in both as a priority.

Our understanding of the impact of concussion and head knocks is evolving, but there's much more we can do to adjust rules, improve medical

processes and procedures, increase quality research and diagnosis, and enhance player education. These are all important levers we can pull to mitigate risks for players who play our great game.

What we can't change is what's happened in the past so it's incumbent on us all to support past players who may be going through neurological issues relating to their service to the competition, clubs, and fans. The AFLPA has long acknowledged, advocated for, and supported past players and, through recent CBA negotiations, secured extra funding in part to help alleviate the struggles of our Alumni members.

INSIGHT

STRONG SUPPORT AMONG AFL PLAYERS FOR MEASURES TO MINIMISE POTENTIAL RISKS OF SPORTS RELATED CONCUSSIONS AND REPEATED HEAD IMPACTS

AFL players have expressed strong support for the AFL's efforts to mitigate head impacts and the associated risks through the regulation of dangerous tackles. When surveyed about their support for the AFL's strategies on a scale from 1 (strongly unsupportive) to 10 (strongly supportive), the weighted average response was 7.83/10, indicating strong approval.

This supportive stance is reinforced in discussions with player delegates and during club visits. Although opinions on specific incidents may vary, there is a consensus among players on the necessity of refining laws and Tribunal / MRO Guidelines to safeguard player health and safety. The AFLPA has advocated for these changes to the AFL, endorsing amendments to rules and interpretations to make the game safer.

However, fewer players possess a comprehensive understanding of what constitutes a dangerous tackle (6.16/10 on a scale of 1 - completely uncertain to 10 - completely certain), and there are concerns regarding the consistency of tackle assessments. This highlights the ongoing need for player education on defining and executing safe tackles.



INSIGHT

AFLW PLAYERS ARE LESS COMFORTABLE RAISING ISSUES THAN AFL PLAYERS

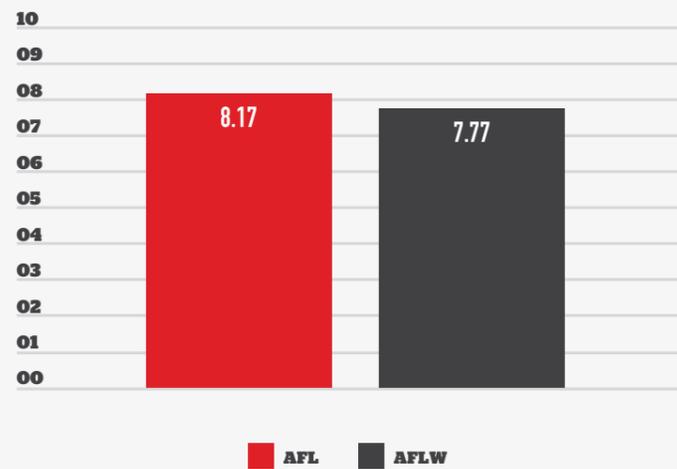
Players were asked to consider their level of comfort in raising concerns with industry stakeholders.

AFLW players generally feel more at ease bringing up concerns compared to their AFL counterparts, who have greater apprehension about their issue being overlooked or disregarded.

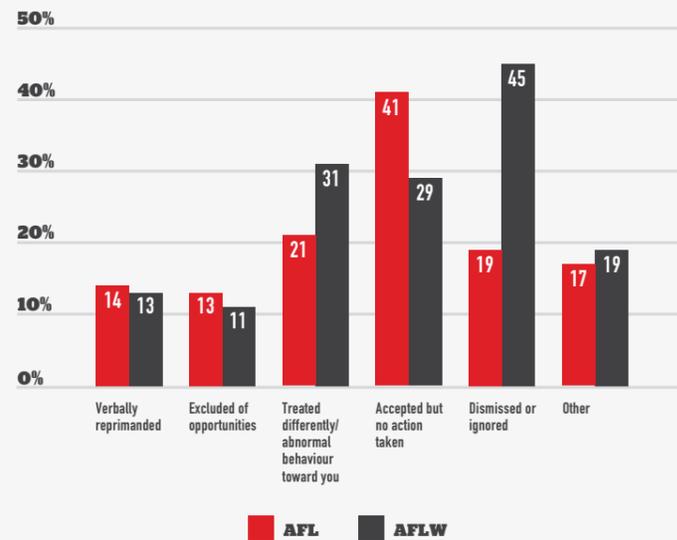
The response to raised concerns differed significantly between the two cohorts. While 45% of AFLW players who did report an issue felt that they were either dismissed or ignored, this figure stood at 19% for AFL players, suggesting a disparity in how their concerns are received and acted upon. AFLW players also perceived that they were treated differently after raising concerns (31% of those that voiced issues).

Despite an overall higher level of comfort in raising concerns, AFL players more commonly believed their issues were accepted but no subsequent action would be taken.

COMFORT IN RAISING ISSUES/CONCERNS TO STAKEHOLDERS



IF YOU RAISED AN ISSUE OR CONCERN IN THE PAST, DID ANY OF THE FOLLOWING THINGS OCCUR



Players could select not to answer, or provide multiple responses, so results may not add to 100%.

INSIGHT

INTEGRATING FAMILY PLANNING WITH AFLW CAREERS REQUIRES INDUSTRY SUPPORT

A representative sample of AFLW players under the age of 23 shows a strong commitment to their careers, with the majority expressing a desire for a tenure of 10 years or more in the AFLW, given the opportunity.

Additionally, a quarter of these players foresee the possibility of starting a family during their AFLW careers. Meanwhile, 40% of the group has yet to formulate firm plans or give considerable thought to this aspect of their future.

Given the personal nature of these decisions, providing players with comprehensive options and education is crucial to support informed choices.

Several AFLW players already balancing parenthood with their professional careers anecdotally serve as role models, inspiring younger players to consider motherhood as a viable part of their own futures. This peer role modelling demonstrates the feasibility of managing both pregnancy and parenthood

alongside a sporting career, offering younger AFLW players a tangible vision of what their futures could entail.

To maintain its status as a premier choice for women and non-binary athletes in Australia, the industry must persist in its efforts to facilitate parenthood alongside a professional sports career, ensuring a supportive and inclusive environment for all players.



IMPACT

AFLW MEDICAL STANDARDS

Clubs are now required to have a dedicated doctor and physiotherapist for AFLW program hours. Both must be present at all AFLW matches and field sessions, with one consistent set of medical standards for AFL and AFLW players set out in the CBA.

NEW PARENTAL POLICY

A significant outcome of the new CBA is the updated AFLW Pregnancy and Parental Management policy.

The new entitlements include 12-months paid parental leave for AFLW players, specific list management provisions to support the player's return to play, parental management provisions for a child up to three years old and a support person to travel with the player, as well as well as additional healthcare education and support.

Importantly, the policy includes protections for out-of-contract players, which provides flexibility as to timing and improved job security.

CODE OF CONDUCT

The new CBA mandates a joint review and agreement on a revised Code of Conduct by the AFL and AFLPA in 2024. This revision will focus on off-field disciplinary matters, a sanctioning framework, and protocols for handling potentially criminal conduct.

ILLICIT DRUGS POLICY

The new CBA commits the AFL and AFLPA to collaboratively review and agree on a revised Illicit Drugs Policy (IDP) in 2024.

Founded on medical principles of education, counselling, treatment, and ongoing support, the IDP aims to safeguard players' health and wellbeing. Since its inception in 2005, the IDP

has undergone ongoing revisions to ensure it remains a best practice policy. The AFLPA is committed to working with the AFL to evolve the IDP to maintain a balance between players' responsibilities to the game, addressing their medical and health issues, protecting their rights, and encouraging behavioural change.

To inform the IDP review, the AFLPA and AFL engaged independent consultancy firm, 360Edge, to provide their alcohol and other drug policy expertise to review the policy and provide recommendations to guide AFLPA and AFL discussions. This report will inform any changes to the policy as part of our review.

MONASH IVF PARTNERSHIP

The AFLPA, in collaboration with the Australian Athletes' Alliance, has formed a partnership with Monash IVF.

This partnership aims to provide players with tailored educational materials on fertility and women's health, as well as streamlined access to relevant services.

AFLW VENUES

Prior to the 2023 AFLW season, the AFLPA provided detailed feedback to the AFL regarding venues where players had identified a need for improvements. Some poorly rated venues were not used again for the 2023 season. In other instances, the AFL has openly communicated about the improvement efforts undertaken to address the concerns raised, detailing both short-term and medium-term solutions. The AFLPA has been involved in turf inspections and collaborated with the AFL to refine ground assessment criteria, enhancing standards for both AFL and AFLW venues.

IMPACT

INVOLVEMENT IN SPORTS RELATED CONCUSSION MATTERS

Senate Inquiry

The AFLPA contributed to the Senate Inquiry into concussions and repeated head trauma in contact sports, both through submissions and appearances. The Inquiry issued 13 recommendations, including urging professional sporting codes and player associations to devise a best practice model for ongoing support to players impacted by Sports Related Concussion (SRC). The AFLPA is actively working on implementing a number of these recommendations through what has been agreed in the CBA.

Coronial Inquest into Shane Tuck's death

The AFLPA participated in the Coronial Inquest following Shane Tuck's passing, assisting the Coroner's Court with evidence and submissions. The Coroner made 13 recommendations for

Australian football, including empowering concussion spotters to require players to undergo medical assessments based on real-time or video reviews. This enhanced role for concussion spotters is reflected in the 2024 AFL and AFLW Concussion Guidelines. Additionally, steps such as bolstering the AFL and AFLPA's joint efforts in player education and encouraging brain bank donations have been put into practice and will continue to be reviewed and improved over time. The AFLPA remains committed to monitoring and ensuring the AFL's implementation to these recommendations.

Industry initiatives

The AFLPA has continued to actively participate in the various industry working groups and initiatives related to SRC including: AFL Concussion Steering Group, Legal Risk and Insurance and Concussion and Innovation Working Groups, and collaborating with the industry to deliver AFL SRC Guidelines and SRC Education as required.

RECOMMENDATIONS

 AFLPA to continue to tailor wellbeing services to the specific needs of members, with renewed focus on programs that are relevant to players at different stages in their career journey, and considerate of their life circumstances.

 AFLPA to conduct further exploration to better understand the unique experiences of AFLW players and identify factors influencing their wellbeing.

 AFLPA to continue to advocate for and ensure the AFL's commitment to reducing head injuries from dangerous tackles.

 The AFL to continue to seek to educate players and clubs about what is and isn't acceptable tackling.



HUMAN RIGHTS

All players have the right to a physically, psychologically, and culturally safe and respectful workplace. The AFLPA believes the industry needs to firmly embed principles of core human rights and ensure that the human rights of the player are central to the decisions made about them, and which impact them. It's about more than just sport; it's about supporting players' rights and wellbeing, making human rights fundamental in creating a positive and equitable environment for all.

INSIGHT

URGENT NEED FOR SYSTEMIC PROTECTION OF PLAYER DATA ACROSS THE INDUSTRY

Players have a right to expect full compliance with privacy legislation when it comes to their data.

Currently, there are inconsistencies in how player personal information is handled across the industry - from collection to usage, storage, access, sharing, and disposal - indicating potential gaps in compliance.

A major study by the Australian Academy of Science (2022), led by experts on data in sport, Professors Julia Powles, Jacqueline Alderson and Kathryn Henne, along with nine other experts, highlighted widespread personal data collection practices in Australian sports, including:

- Semi-automated or manually coded player summary and game statistics.
- Multi-view video footage of athletes during games and in training.

- Continuous movement and training data, such as GPS and technique across games and training, strength measurements related to return from injury.
- Heart-rate metrics.
- Self-reported daily wellbeing scores.
- Nutrition and body composition information.
- Sleep monitoring data.

While the intent of capturing this data is likely presented under a lens of improving performance, it is crucial to ensure that all player data is collected reasonably, stored securely, used solely for its intended purposes, and players are fully informed and have consented to how their data is used.

SPORTS AND BUSINESS MUST ENSURE HUMAN RIGHTS ARE CONSIDERED AND PROTECTED

BY KATE JENKINS (SEX DISCRIMINATION COMMISSIONER, AUSTRALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION) AND EDWARD SANTOW FAAL (UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY, FORMER HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSIONER)

IN 'GETTING AHEAD OF THE GAME: ATHLETE DATA IN PROFESSIONAL SPORT' REPORT.

Just because we can collect personal information about professional athletes, doesn't mean we should. Sports and business must ensure human rights are considered and protected where athlete data is gathered, used, and shared, including by building in protections that promote transparency, fairness, and accountability. While technology enables data collection about the bodies, minds, and

performance of elite athletes like never before, [there are] risks of harm to athletes and damage to the reputation of sports if basic human rights are not protected.

- Excerpt from 'Getting ahead of the game: Athlete data in professional sport' report.

INSIGHT

PERSISTENT RACIAL VILIFICATION OF INDIGENOUS AND MULTICULTURAL PLAYERS - PARTICULARLY ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Indigenous and multicultural AFL and AFLW players continue to face racial vilification, particularly through social media channels. An unacceptable 26% of players have reported experiencing racism via these platforms.

The AFLPA, clubs and the AFL have taken a range of steps in recent years to make it clear that abuse of players is unacceptable in our game, including public denunciations of racism, banning fans from games, and revoking club memberships.

Satisfaction among players regarding the response to racist incidents is notably higher for those that occur in public forums and on social media - with 47% of players impacted through those channels being "entirely" satisfied with the response, compared to only 22% of players being "entirely" satisfied by the response to other sources of racism.

WHEN YOU SEE IT, YOU JUST HAVE THIS SINKING FEELING IN YOUR GUTS
BY CHAD WINGARD, HAWTHORN FC AFL PLAYER (Via News Corp, April 19, 2023)

It changes your whole day, your whole week. You are just absolutely gutted.

For no reason at all, you just cop an abusive message online - and it's not about footy or anything to do with my profession, it's about my race and the person that I was born, which is the most sickening thing.

You are supposed to perform, that's your job, and fans are passionate about their team winning.

But there is a line between performance and humanity.



CBA & THE AFLPA'S PATH TO EQUITY



Through negotiated outcomes via collective bargaining, the AFLPA implements change that creates profound impact for the lives of their members.

With CBAs for both the AFL and AFLW playing cohorts expiring at the end of their respective seasons in 2022, negotiations, which flowed over throughout 2023, proved to be the industry's defining moment in progressing workplace conditions and security for the players.

The AFLPA had identified that a wholly transformative CBA was required to position the industry on a path to equity for its athletes.

To effectively negotiate for a combined CBA to serve our AFL and AFLW members, the AFLPA unified the two playing cohorts through shared priorities, while simultaneously strengthening the organisation's governance and structure to truly advocate and be representative of the collective.

In 2022, the AFLPA changed its constitution to provide for equal representation from AFL and AFLW players on the AFLPA Board as well as introduce further independent director expertise.

At the subsequent Annual General Meeting (AGM), Annalyse Lister was promoted to joint vice-president, while Kerryn Peterson, Catherine Phillips and Isabel Huntington joined the Board.

The CBA negotiation that followed between AFLW players and the AFL for Season 7 of AFLW, resulted in members voting for a CBA that delivered significant improvements in wages, including a 94 per cent increase in player payments, as well as better working conditions.

This was just the beginning, and the next step was bringing together both playing groups into one agreement so they could benefit from each other's achievements and further advance their collective working terms and conditions. A crucial component of this was delivering on the AFLW players' Vision for the Game, developed with the AFLPA in 2021, with the players clear on their vision to make AFLW a professional job by 2026.

With equality and equal opportunity as the ultimate goal for players, the AFLPA proposed a joint CBA as part of negotiations during 2023 and enlisted support from gender equity expert, Yolanda Beattie, to determine a fair path forward.

Beattie's research revealed that other sports, particularly those in Australia and New Zealand, were making faster progress towards gender equity.

Along with pay disparity and appropriate financial modelling, the AFLPA identified the equalisation of other working conditions and benefits between AFL and AFLW players as significant priorities.

The AFLPA then appointed former Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commissioner, Kristen Hilton, to the AFLPA Board, and also as Chair of the AFLPA Human Rights Steering Committee, which enhanced the AFLPA's expertise in gender equality, human rights, ethical leadership, diversity and inclusion, and organisational change.

AFL and AFLW players identified 11 key priorities for the AFLPA and AFL to deliver in reaching an agreement on the CBA. Negotiations inevitably included several junctures where players had to hold firm to their positions despite the uncertainty and lack of security provided through preparing and playing without an established CBA.

Their persistence was justified with an agreement reached between the AFLPA and the AFL, ratified by the AFLPA Board and presented to players, with 98 per cent of AFLW and AFL player voters approving the deal. A historic agreement was achieved.

The new agreement enshrined the principles of gender and pay equity for AFL and AFLW players, entrenching the AFL as the leading and most progressive sport in Australia, as well as encapsulating all players as part of the league's revenue share model, an agreed industry commitment to respecting, protecting, and promoting human rights, and improvements to various workplace and contractual conditions for players.

Importantly, the new agreement showcased the strength and unity of AFLW and AFL players and how their comradery, shared interests, and belief in each other's product can achieve great things for the collective and transform the game for the better.





IMPACT

AFLPA STEERING COMMITTEES

The AFLPA upholds the principle that all players deserve a safe workplace, one that supports their physical, psychological, and cultural wellbeing.

Acknowledging the need for further industry progress in this area, the AFLPA has developed a Human Rights Framework for its operations and established a Human Rights Steering Committee.

This committee, formed in 2023, brings together experts in health and safety, race, and gender issues and marks the expansion of the Indigenous Advisory Board.

Human Rights Steering Committee members include:

- Kristen Hilton, Chair
- Jason Mifsud
- Nyadol Nyuon
- Natasha de Silva
- Rana Hussain
- Todd Fernando
- Dr Andrew Potter
- Paul Marsh
- Brett Murphy
- Gabby Seymour
- Darcy Vescio
- Aliir Aliir

The expanded Indigenous Advisory Board saw the appointment of its first independent chair in 2023, comprising the following members:

- Jason Mifsud, Chair
- Ngiare Brown
- Aleisha Newman
- Ally Anderson
- Chad Wingard
- Gemma Houghton
- Jarman Impey
- Natalie Plane
- Zac Williams
- Paul Marsh
- Brett Murphy
- Anthony Wilson

MEET THE CHAIRS



KRISTEN HILTON

Chair, Human Rights Committee;
Independent Director, AFLPA Board

In March 2023, the AFLPA welcomed Kristen Hilton to its Board as an independent director and the Chair of the Human Rights Steering Committee.

Her distinguished career spans leadership roles across various sectors, where she has championed gender equality, diversity, inclusion, and ethical leadership. Hilton has led several major independent reviews, including investigations into sexual harassment and discrimination within Victoria Police, and inquiries into workplace equality in Victoria's Fire Services and Ambulance Victoria. Recently, she initiated a review into the culture of Victoria's custodial system, showcasing her dedication to organisational change and human rights protection.



JASON MIFSUD

Chair, Indigenous Advisory Board

Jason Mifsud was appointed Chair of the Indigenous Advisory Board in June 2023, following the reconstitution of the Board to enhance its governance and purpose. A member of the Kirrae, Peek, and Tjab Whurrong clans of the Gunitjmarra nation, Mifsud's extensive experience spans sport, government, and business sectors. This includes his tenure as a player with St Kilda, coaching roles at St Kilda and the Western Bulldogs, and significant executive responsibilities at the AFL. His expertise in governance and deep understanding of Indigenous culture and challenges significantly contribute to the AFLPA's commitment to fostering an inclusive and respectful environment within Australian football.

IMPACT



EQUALITY, INCLUSION AND SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Agreed in the CBA, the AFLPA and AFL are set to launch a joint Equality, Inclusion and Safety Advisory Committee in 2024, featuring members from the AFLPA, AFL, clubs, and both current and former AFL and AFLW players. While the specific terms of reference for the Committee are still under development, it will:

- Focus on equality, inclusion and safety issues relating to current and former players.
- Provide AFLPA, AFL and clubs with advice and guidance on equality, inclusion and safety principles.
- Make recommendations to AFLPA, AFL and clubs as to ways they can improve equality, inclusion and safety.

AFL PLAYERS CARE

AFL Players Care, the official charity and social leadership initiative of AFL and AFLW players, strives to positively impact the community through fundraising and by increasing awareness of charitable initiatives.

The program also brings into sharp focus the challenges within society that players are passionate about, allowing sport to drive change

beyond the football industry in the areas of equality, inclusivity, and racism.

During 2023, players donated \$334,800 to 16 Australian charities through the AFL Players Care program.

The AFLPA is the driving force behind AFL Players Care, supporting players in their philanthropic efforts and coordinating the program's activities and volunteer work.

LADDER

Founded by three AFL players in 2007, Ladder is the official charity partner of all players.

In partnership with the AFL industry and players, Ladder breaks down barriers for at risk youth by helping young people in need across Australia through tailored, holistic development and mentoring programs.

The AFLPA's relationship with Ladder continues to thrive with the Association donating \$217,800 each year through the AFL Players Care program, in addition to providing connection opportunities, governance and general support.

Players also assist Ladder directly through volunteering their time to Ladder's pillars of mentoring, program delivery and leadership.

RECOMMENDATION



Conduct an industry-wide data governance review by the AFLPA, AFL, and clubs, with the aim of developing and implementing recommendations that safeguard player data.





AGENTS

The AFLPA is the sole body responsible for the accreditation, development and regulation of AFL and AFLW player agents. The AFLPA Agent Accreditation Board (AAB) meets on a quarterly basis and is responsible for governing the conduct of player agents, establishing and administering the accreditation system and establishing a system for improving the quality, competence and professionalism of all player agents.

Agents play an integral role in the careers of AFL and AFLW players. Many agents provide essential support across personal, financial and non-football career development, in addition to the negotiation of player contracts. With the AFLW's journey towards professionalism, the role of agents has become increasingly important for AFLW players.

INSIGHT

RISING PROFESSIONALISM IN AFLW SPURS GROWTH IN PLAYER AGENT REPRESENTATION

As the AFLW progresses towards professionalism, there has been a notable rise in the number of players seeking agent representation, alongside an increase in accredited agents specialising in AFLW.

Currently, 76% of AFLW players have an agent, up from 55% two years ago. In real terms, due to the expansion teams leading to more AFLW players across the league, this represents an increase of 90% of distinct AFLW players engaging an agent.

Among the 106 AFLPA Accredited Agents, 42 specialise in both AFLW and AFL, with an additional 16 focusing exclusively on AFLW. This specialisation is crucial due to the unique working conditions and list rules of the AFLW. Moreover, at least two agencies now specifically manage female, non-binary, and gender-diverse athletes.

The growth in agents specialising in AFLW player representation has coincided with an increase in female agents. In the 2023-24 period, there are 12 female agents, marking the highest number of female agents in a single accreditation year.

Anecdotal evidence suggests a growing interest among newer agents in entering the AFLW space, given the less saturated market compared to the men's game and the chance to represent players already listed with clubs. This growth in demand for AFLW player representation is an opportunity for the AFLPA to provide further support and education to agents to ensure the needs of female and non-binary players are met.



AGENT EVALUATION

Each year, the AFLPA surveys players, clubs and the AFL on the performance of agents. Agents are also asked to reflect on their own performance however these scores do not contribute to the overall rating.

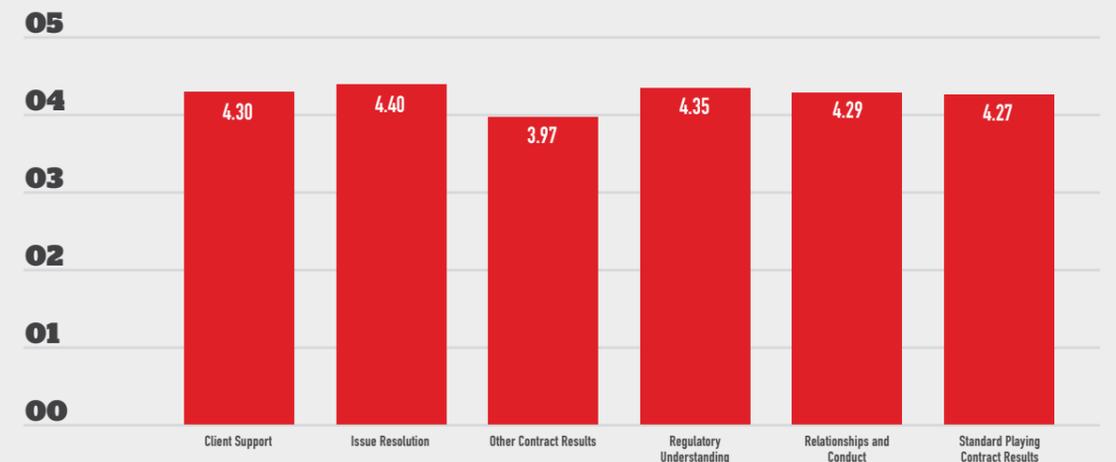
Questions relate to six functions:

- The quality of client support.
- Agents' ability to resolve issues.
- Standard Playing Contract results.
- Other contract results.

- Agent understanding of the industry regulatory environment.
- Agent relationships and conduct.

In 2023, the Overall Agent Score was 4.27/5 which represents the average score against the functions listed. While this was similar to the 2022 score of 4.24, players' ratings of their agents were slightly down on last year which was offset by clubs' assessments being higher.

AGENT FUNCTION RATINGS (OUT OF 5)



Historical data, including scores by each stakeholder, can be found in the Appendix page 94–95.

IMPACT

AGENT AUDIT PROCESS REVIEW

Each year a small number of agents are randomly selected to undertake an audit to ensure their adherence to the Agent Regulations.

The 2022 audit process was reviewed as part of continuous improvement and evolution, which led to an external consultant being engaged to conduct the 2023 audit, assisted administratively by the AFLPA. This year, four agents were audited, with a streamlined process for both the selected agents and the AFLPA. There are plans for further timing improvements in 2024.

EDUCATION, CONFERENCES AND NETWORKING

- In 2023, five State Agent Forums were reintroduced, offering additional face-to-face opportunities for non-Victorian agents.
- The annual Agent Conference was held in Melbourne in August 2023 and featured 11 guest presenters addressing the agent group.
- Four online education sessions focusing on time sensitive updates were held throughout 2023 as well as regular CPD sessions.
- The Conference and Forums saw more than 80% attendance, indicating a high level of agent engagement.

ACCREDITATION AND REGULATION

- Thirty-one new applicants participated in the online Agent Accreditation Course over three days, including sessions with the AFLPA and AFL industry guest speakers.
- Twenty-seven candidates took the four-hour Agent Accreditation Exam, with 16 passing and gaining accreditation for the first time.
- There were 106 accredited agents in 2023, including 12 female agents, which is the highest number of female agents in a single accreditation year.
- Of the current agent group, 37% have been accredited for less than three years, 27% between three and nine years, and 36% for over 10 years.

RECOMMENDATION

▶ AFLPA to conduct at least two AFLW-focussed education sessions and one female agent networking event in 2024, followed by ongoing AFLW education and support for female agent development.



APPENDIX

CLUB ENVIRONMENT

METHODOLOGY

To ascertain aggregated scores for Workplace Culture, each player is asked to rate the following questions (1-Strongly Disagree to 10-Strongly Agree):

1. My club commitments allow adequate time for study and/or additional work placements.
2. My club commitments allow adequate time for leisure, family/ other important relationships.
3. My club commitments allow me to have a 'mental break' from footy between matches.
4. When changes to my football-related schedule occur, my club ensures I have enough time to plan my off-field schedule around those changes.
5. The role of Player Development staff is highly valued at my club.
6. Off-field development is taken seriously at my club.
7. My club expects me to engage in off-field development.
8. I feel my club cares for me as a person, as well as a player.

To explore players' ability to utilise their time away from football for personal development (as per the agreements of the CBA), AFL players are asked:

- Do you feel supported by your club to use the day and a half off provided for personal development each week?
- Are you expected to report back to the club during your annual leave period (ie GPS, tracking with apps, results of time trials etc)?
- Are you expected to come into the club on your weekly day off?

AFLW players are asked:

- Are you expected to come into the club on scheduled days off?
- In addition to club organised football sessions, are you expected to complete additional sessions or preparation in your own time away from the club?

On the back of views expressed by numerous AFLW players that clubs weren't properly integrating AFLW football programs, players were asked to select the most representative response from the following options:

- Our AFLW program is not integrated within the club.
- Our AFLW program is starting to become integrated within the club but we have a long way to go.
- Our AFLW program is somewhat integrated within the club but some staff still treat it as inferior to the male program.
- Our AFLW program is completely integrated within the club.

To explore player views on resource availability, AFLW players were asked to what extent the following resources are sufficiently available to AFLW players at their club:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaching staff • Football administrative staff • Physio • Strength, conditioning and nutrition • Doctor • Player development • Equipment and facilities access. | <p>The level of perceived access was rated as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly sufficient • Sufficient • Somewhat sufficient • Not sufficient at all. |
|---|---|

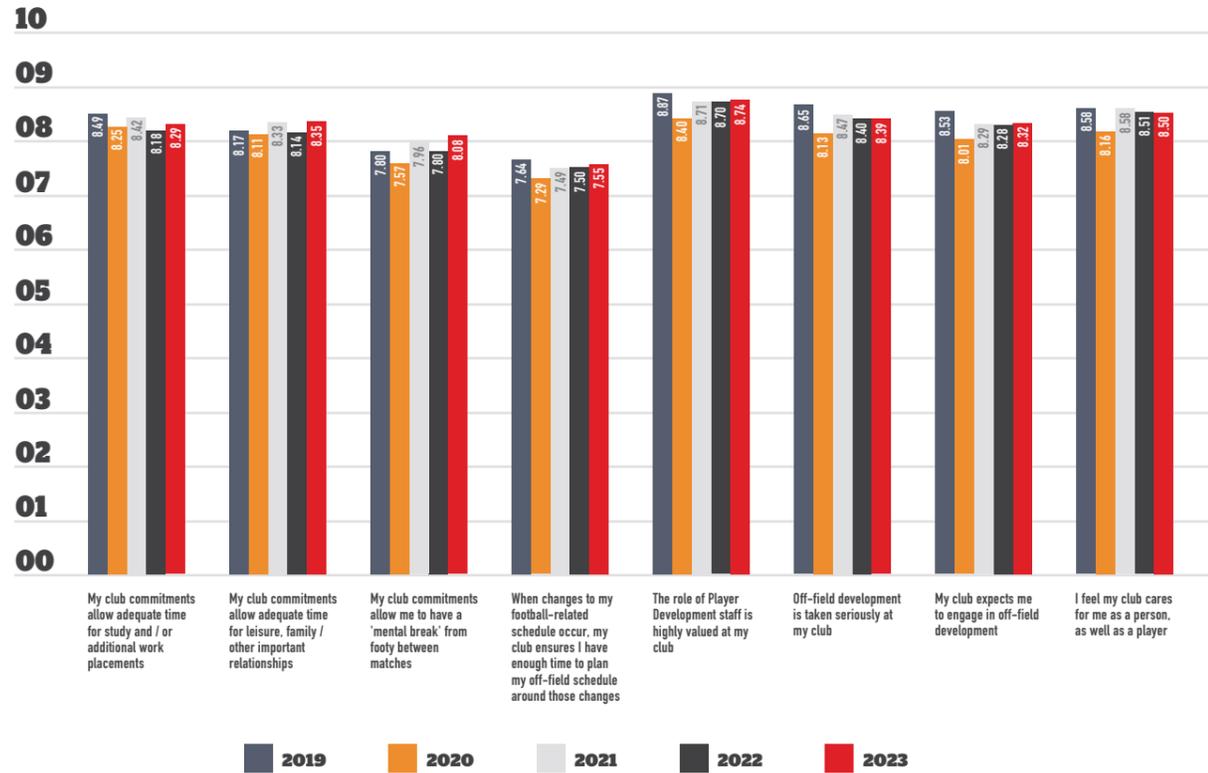
To explore AFLW player views on the level of respect shown towards the AFLW program, players were asked to consider their experience of the levels of respect from the following:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The club overall • The club's CEO • The club's AFL program Senior Coach • The club's GM Football • The club's other AFL program football staff • The AFL • The AFLPA. | <p>The level of perceived respect was rated as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extremely high respect • High respect • More respect than not • More disrespect than not • Low respect • Extremely low respect. |
|---|--|

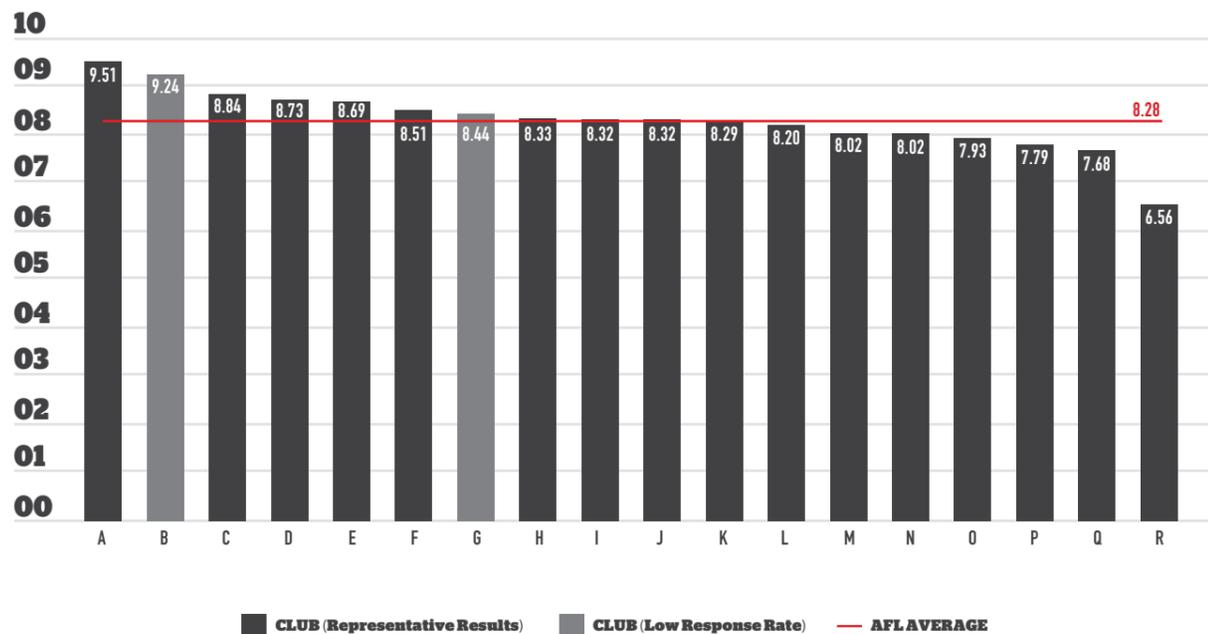
Club-by-club results are shown on the following pages and have been de-identified. Please note that the key for AFL clubs is independent of the key for AFLW clubs - ie. Club A in the AFL results section will likely not be Club A in the AFLW results section.

AFL PLAYER PERCEPTIONS

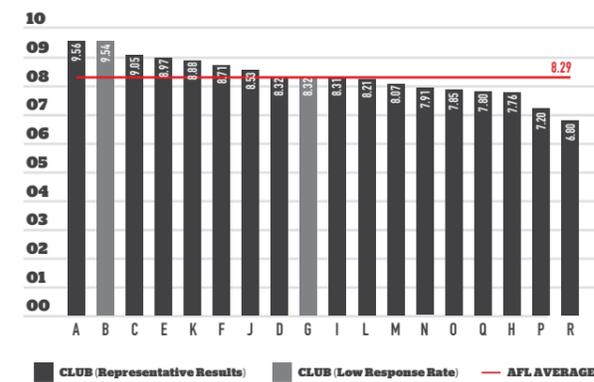
PERCEPTIONS OF WORKPLACE CULTURE 2019-2023 (AFL PLAYERS)



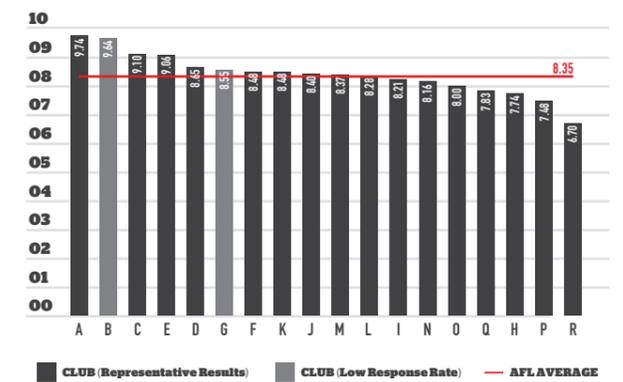
WORKPLACE CULTURE - OVERALL SCORES BY CLUB 2023 (AFL PLAYERS)



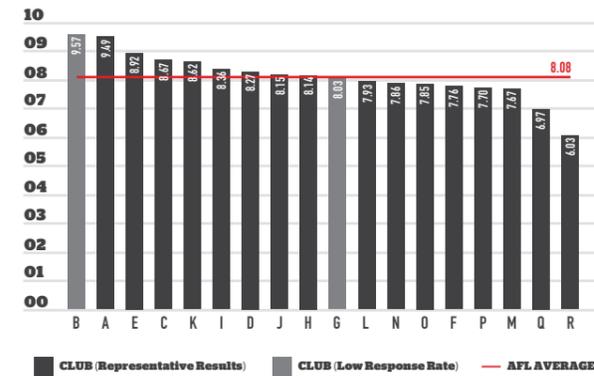
MY CLUB COMMITMENTS ALLOW ADEQUATE TIME FOR STUDY AND / OR ADDITIONAL WORK PLACEMENTS (AFL PLAYERS)



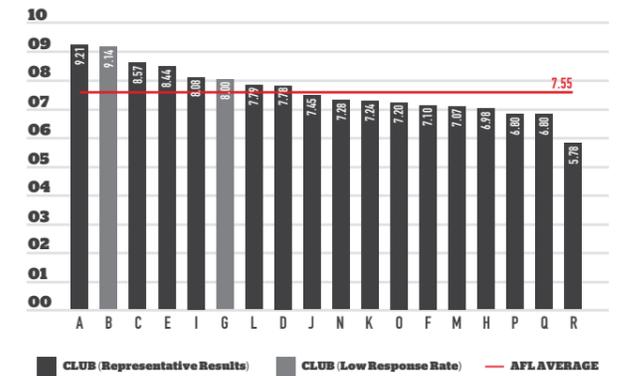
MY CLUB COMMITMENTS ALLOW ADEQUATE TIME FOR LEISURE, FAMILY / OTHER IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIPS (AFL PLAYERS)



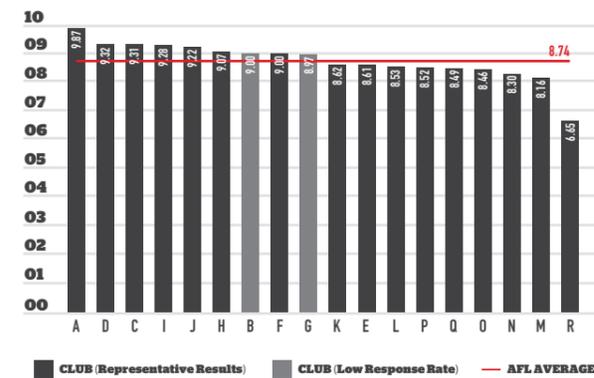
MY CLUB COMMITMENTS ALLOW ME TO HAVE A "MENTAL BREAK" FROM FOOTY BETWEEN MATCHES (AFL PLAYERS)



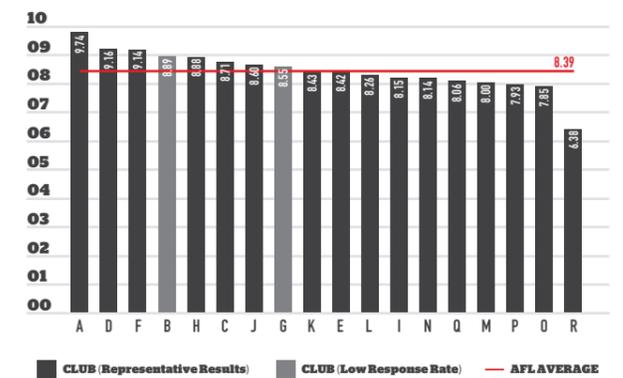
WHEN CHANGES TO MY FOOTBALL-RELATED SCHEDULE OCCUR, MY CLUB ENSURES I HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO PLAN MY OFF-FIELD SCHEDULE AROUND THOSE CHANGES (AFL PLAYERS)



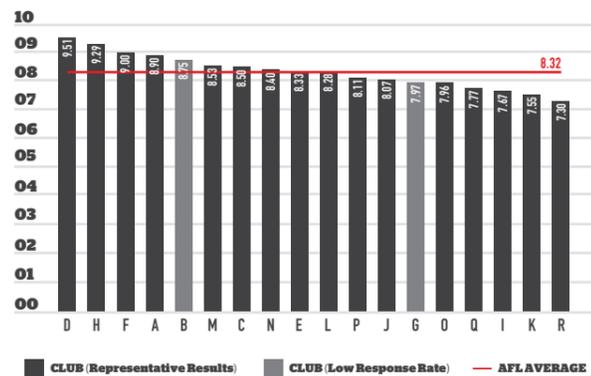
THE ROLE OF PLAYER DEVELOPMENT STAFF IS HIGHLY VALUED AT MY CLUB (AFL PLAYERS)



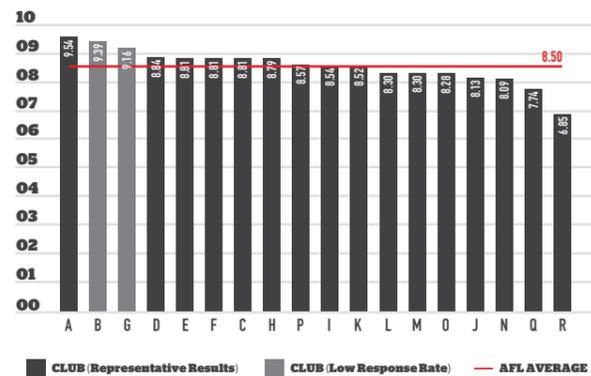
OFF-FIELD DEVELOPMENT IS TAKEN SERIOUSLY AT MY CLUB (AFL PLAYERS)



MY CLUB EXPECTS ME TO ENGAGE IN OFF-FIELD DEVELOPMENT (AFL PLAYERS)

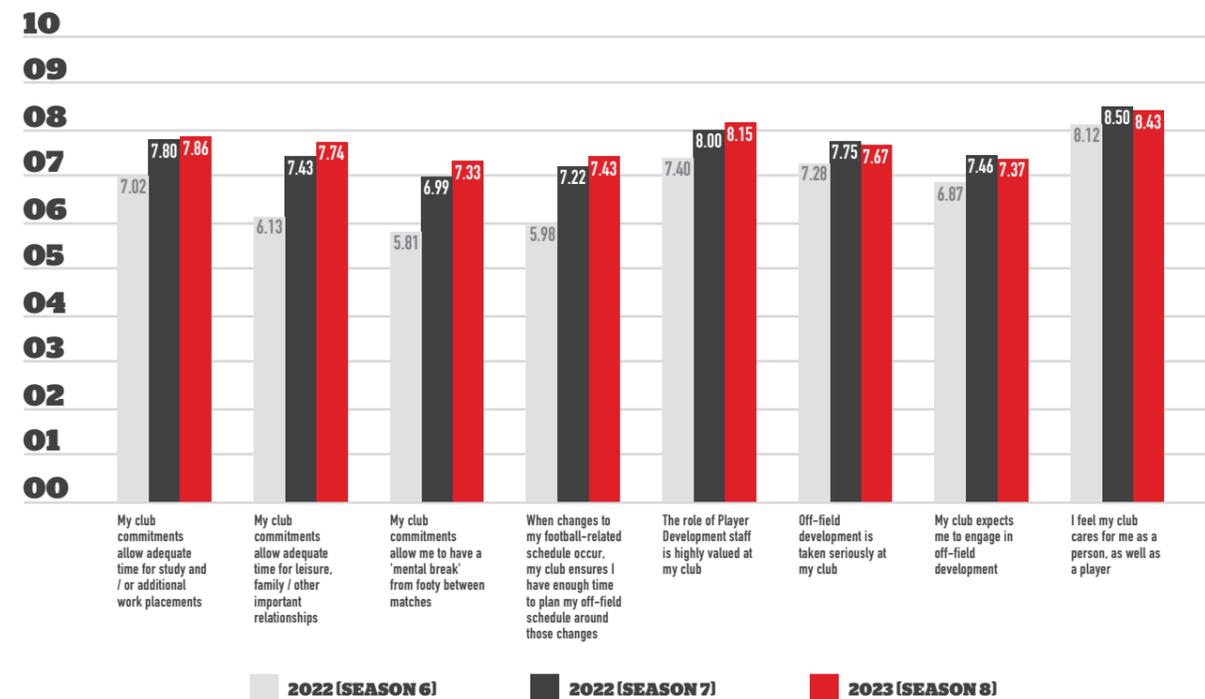


I FEEL MY CLUB CARES FOR ME AS A PERSON, AS WELL AS A PLAYER (AFL PLAYERS)

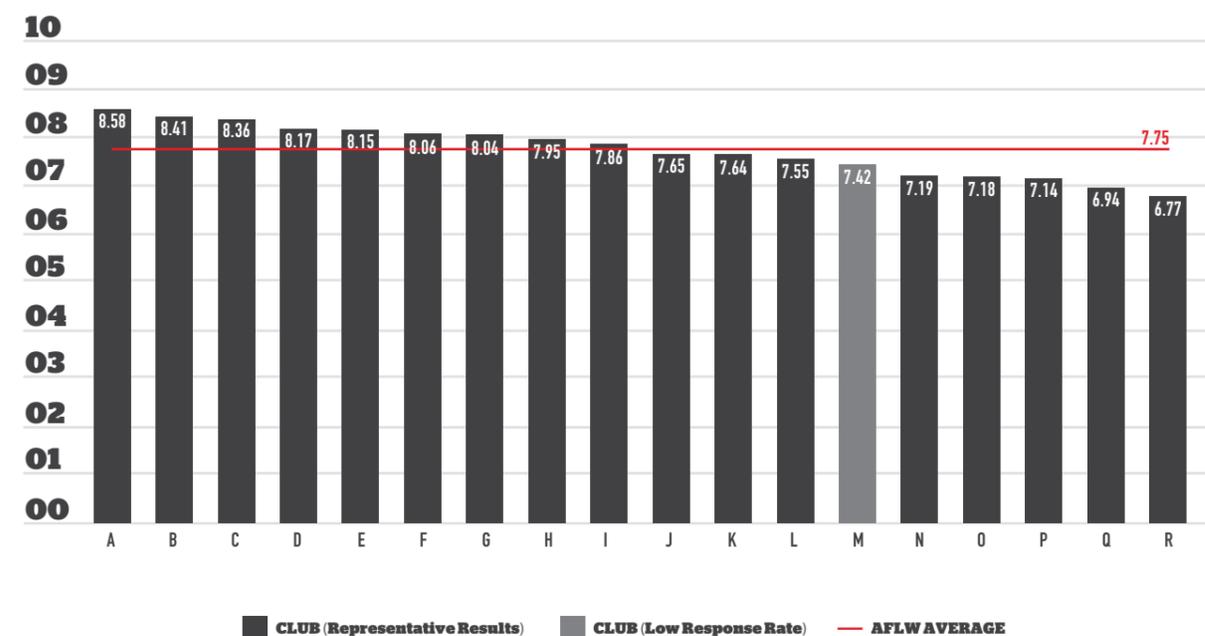


AFLW PLAYER PERCEPTIONS

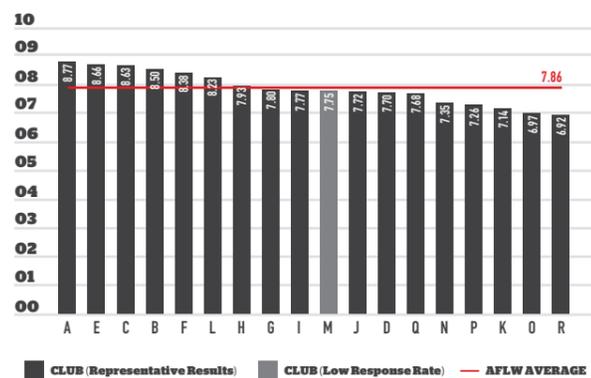
PERCEPTIONS OF WORKPLACE CULTURE 2022-2023 (AFLW PLAYERS)



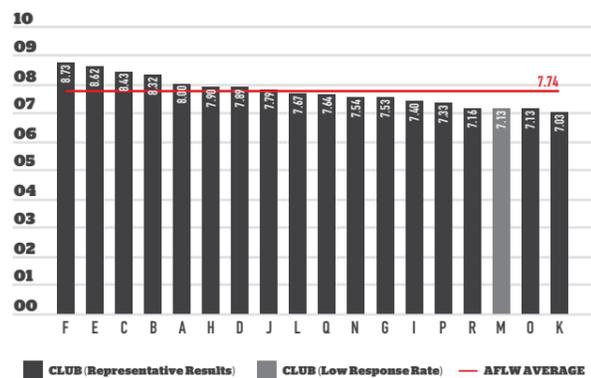
WORKPLACE CULTURE – OVERALL SCORES BY CLUB 2023 (AFLW PLAYERS)



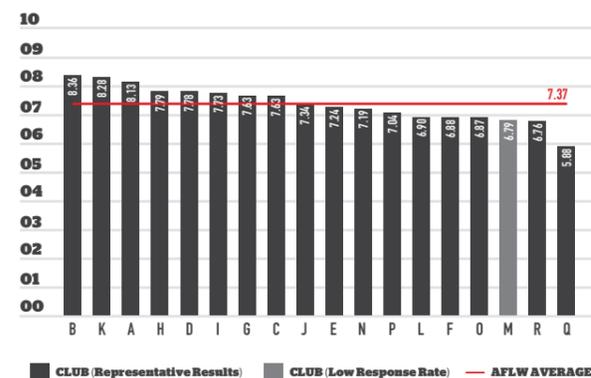
MY CLUB COMMITMENTS ALLOW ADEQUATE TIME FOR STUDY AND/OR WORK (AFLW PLAYERS)



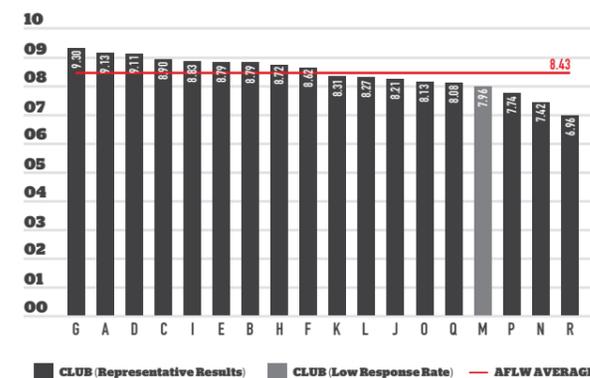
MY CLUB COMMITMENTS ALLOW ADEQUATE TIME FOR LEISURE, FAMILY / OTHER IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIPS (AFLW PLAYERS)



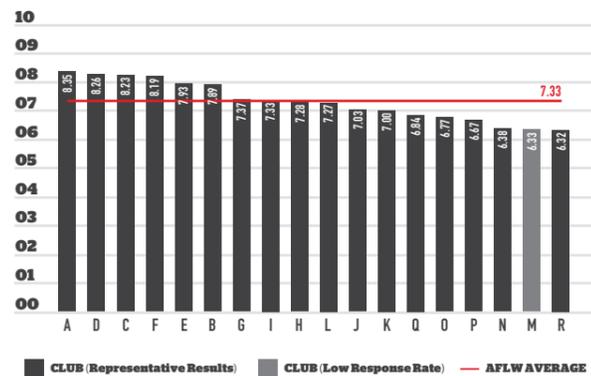
MY CLUB EXPECTS ME TO ENGAGE IN OFF-FIELD DEVELOPMENT (AFLW PLAYERS)



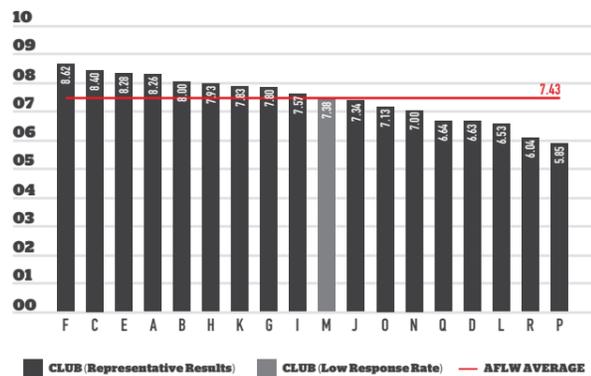
I FEEL MY CLUB CARES FOR ME AS A PERSON, AS WELL AS A PLAYER (AFLW PLAYERS)



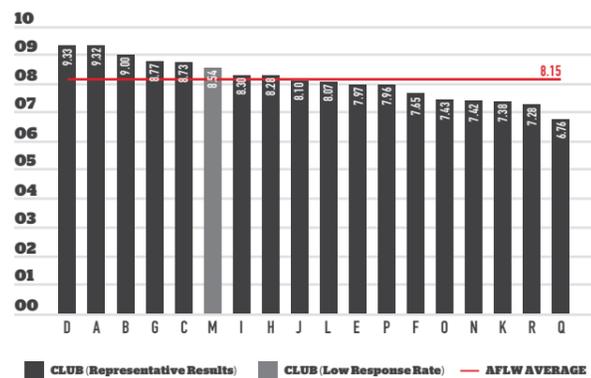
MY CLUB COMMITMENTS ALLOW ME TO HAVE A "MENTAL BREAK" FROM FOOTY BETWEEN MATCHES (AFLW PLAYERS)



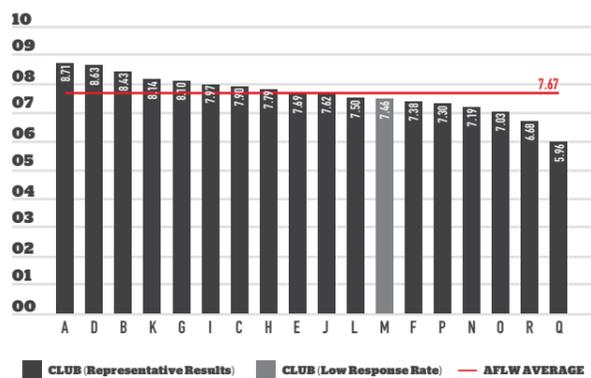
WHEN CHANGES TO MY FOOTBALL-RELATED SCHEDULE OCCUR, MY CLUB ENSURES I HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO PLAN MY OFF-FIELD SCHEDULE AROUND THOSE CHANGES (AFLW PLAYERS)



THE ROLE OF PLAYER DEVELOPMENT STAFF IS HIGHLY VALUED AT MY CLUB (AFLW PLAYERS)

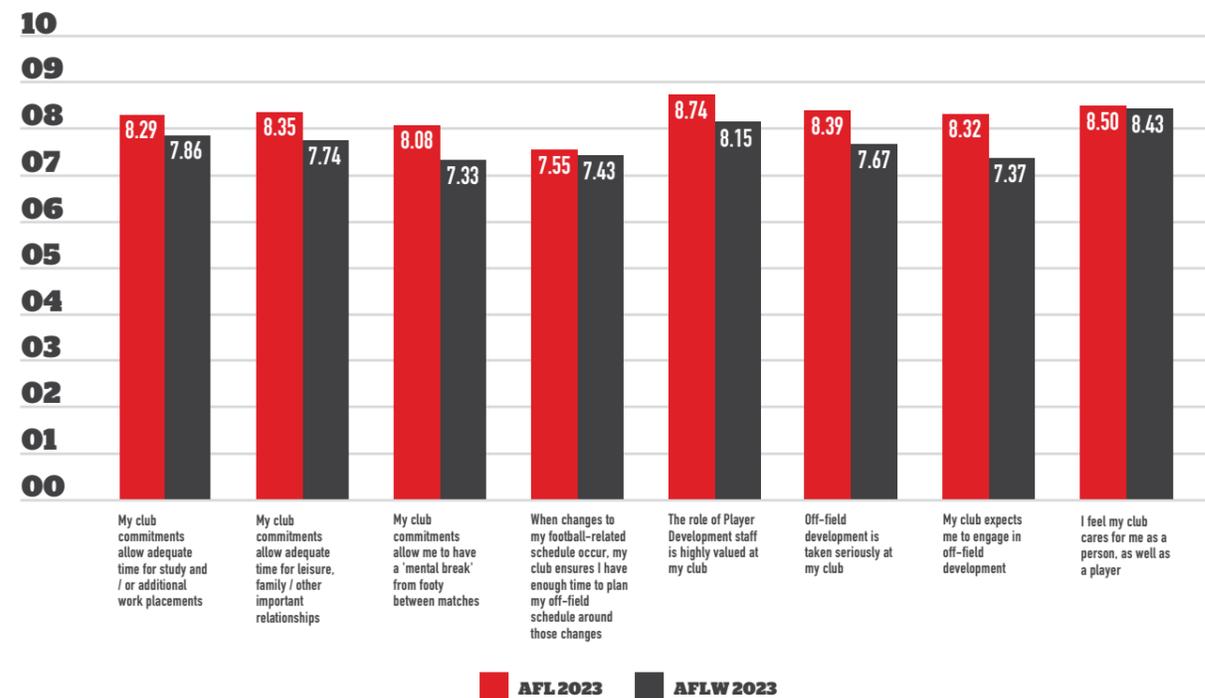


OFF-FIELD DEVELOPMENT IS TAKEN SERIOUSLY AT MY CLUB (AFLW PLAYERS)



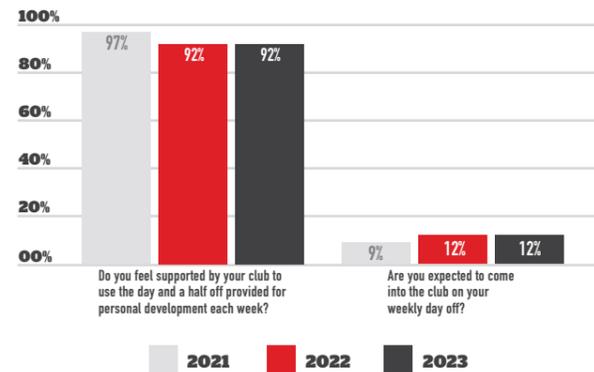
COMPARISON OF AFL AND AFLW PLAYER PERCEPTIONS 2023

SCORES WERE BETWEEN 1-10

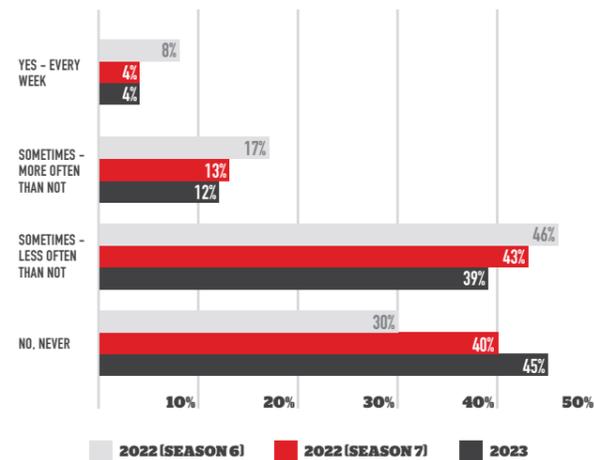


PLAYER ABILITY TO USE TIME OFF

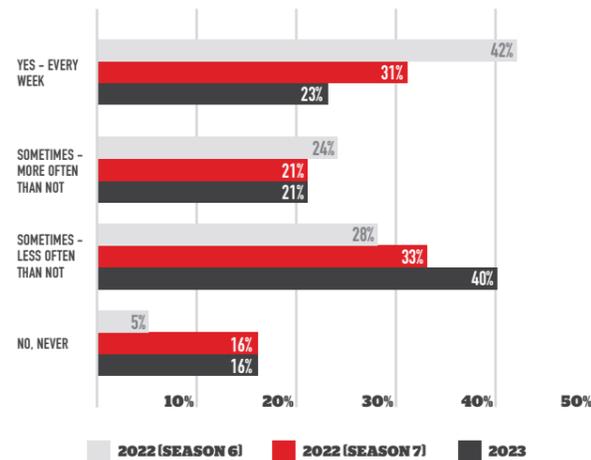
ABILITY TO USE TIME OFF (AFL PLAYERS)



ARE YOU EXPECTED TO COME INTO THE CLUB ON SCHEDULED DAYS OFF? (AFL PLAYERS)

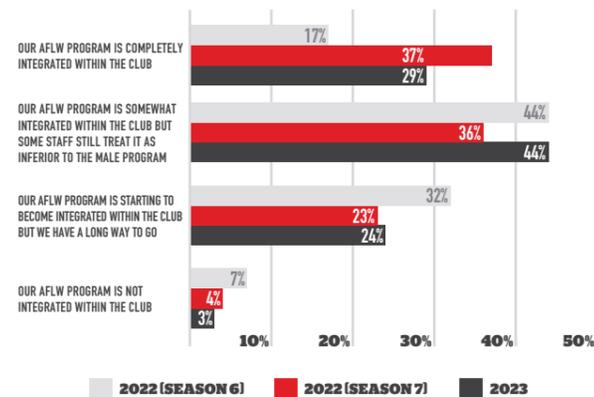


IN ADDITION TO CLUB ORGANISED FOOTBALL SESSIONS, ARE YOU EXPECTED TO COMPLETE ADDITIONAL SESSIONS OR PREPARATION IN YOUR OWN TIME AWAY FROM THE CLUB? (AFL PLAYERS)



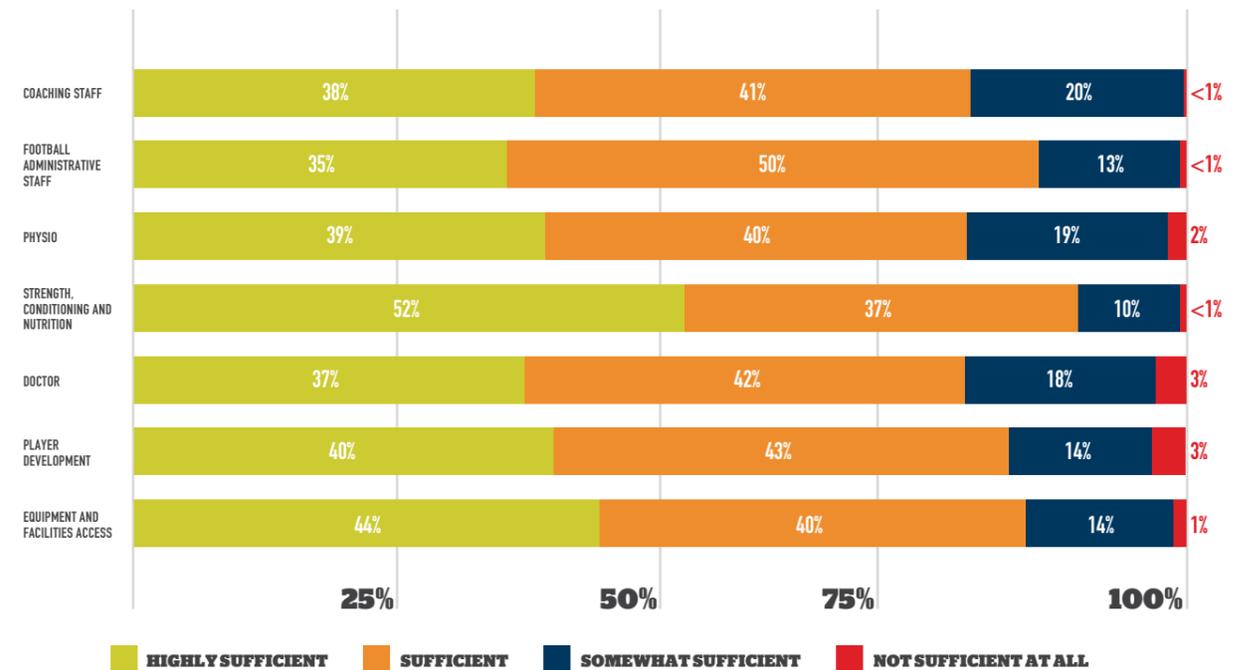
TREATMENT OF THE AFLW PROGRAM

AFLW PLAYER VIEWS ON THE INTEGRATION OF THE AFLW PROGRAM WITHIN THE CLUB

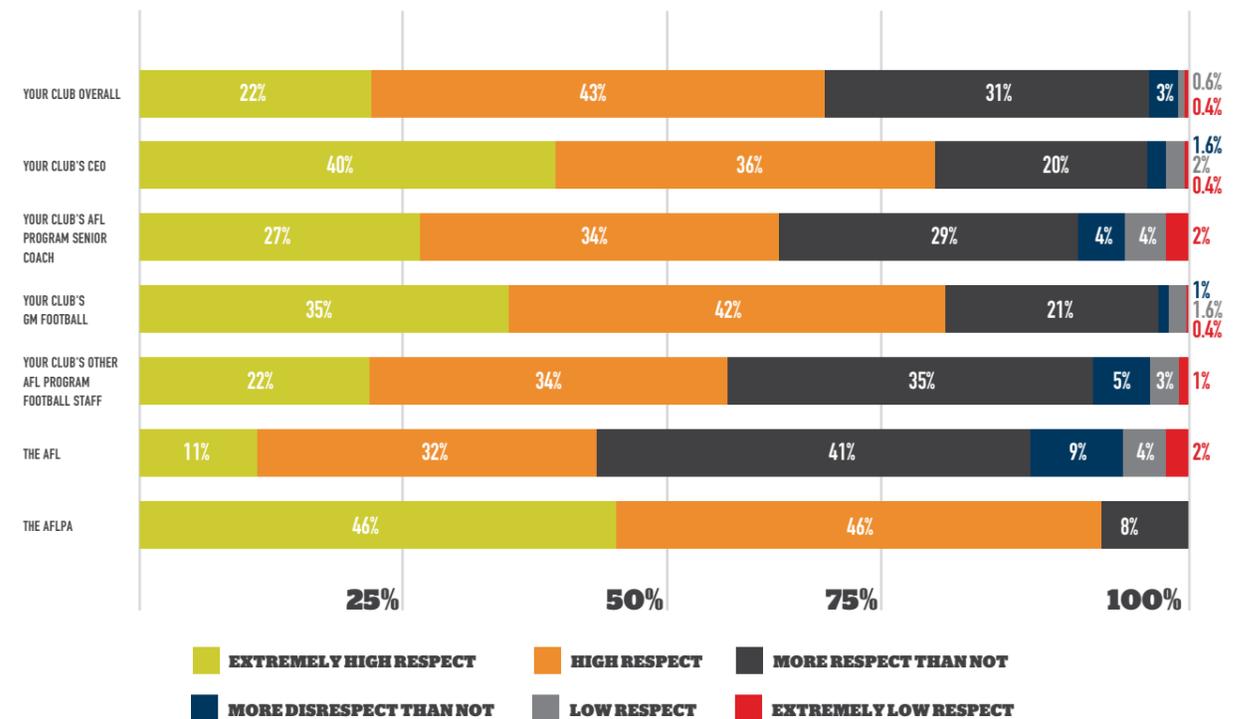


TREATMENT OF THE AFLW PROGRAM

AFLW PLAYER VIEWS ON RESOURCE AVAILABILITY



AFLW PLAYER VIEWS ON RESPECT SHOWN



PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

METHODOLOGY

To explore player insights on club support, players are asked:

How supported do you feel to pursue your off-field interests by the following club staff?

1. Player Development Manager
2. Senior Coach
3. Assistant Coaches
4. Football Manager

The level of perceived support is defined as:

- Not supported
- Supported in theory but not in action
- Supported in theory and in action
- Not sure – it never comes up

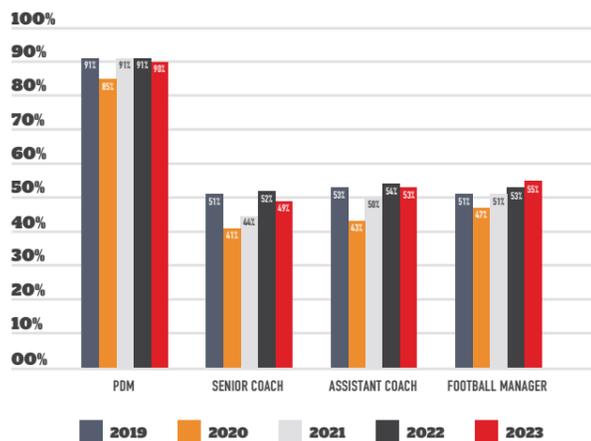
Players were asked to answer 'yes' or 'no' to the following question:

Q: Do you currently have an individualised written action plan regarding your off-field development?

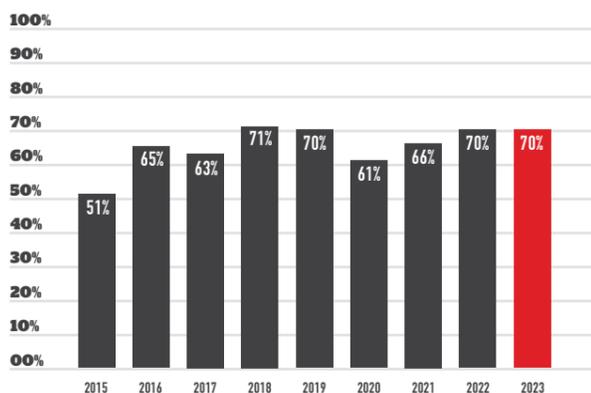
AFL PLAYERS

HOW SUPPORTED DO YOU FEEL TO PURSUE YOUR OFF FIELD INTERESTS BY THE FOLLOWING CLUB STAFF? (AFL PLAYERS)

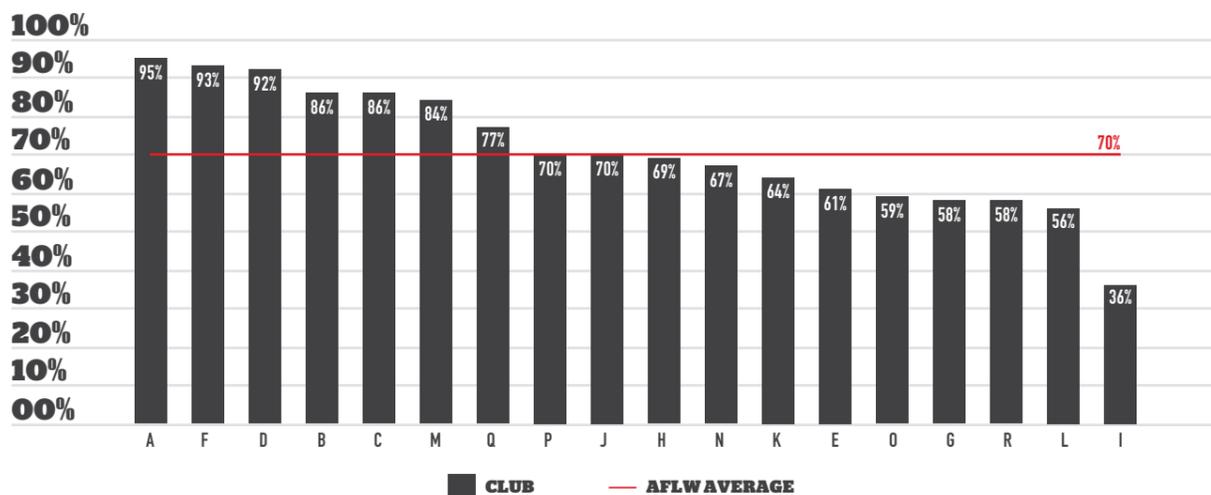
% OF 'SUPPORTED IN THEORY AND IN ACTION' RESPONSES



PLAYERS WITH A WRITTEN ACTION PLAN 2015-2023



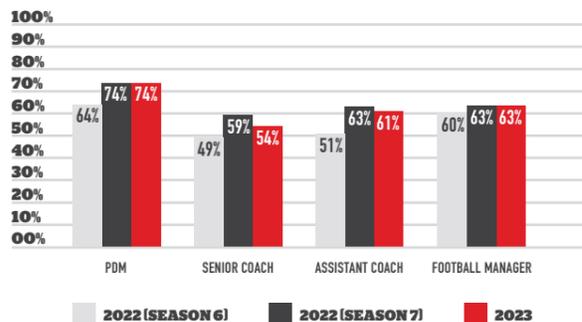
PLAYERS WITH A WRITTEN ACTION PLAN 2023 – CLUB COMPARISON



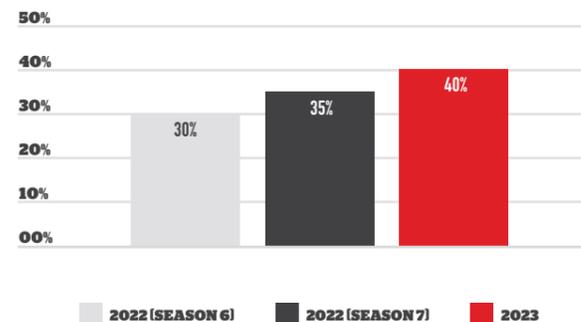
AFLW PLAYERS

HOW SUPPORTED DO YOU FEEL TO PURSUE YOUR OFF-FIELD INTEREST BY THE FOLLOWING CLUB STAFF? (AFLW PLAYERS)

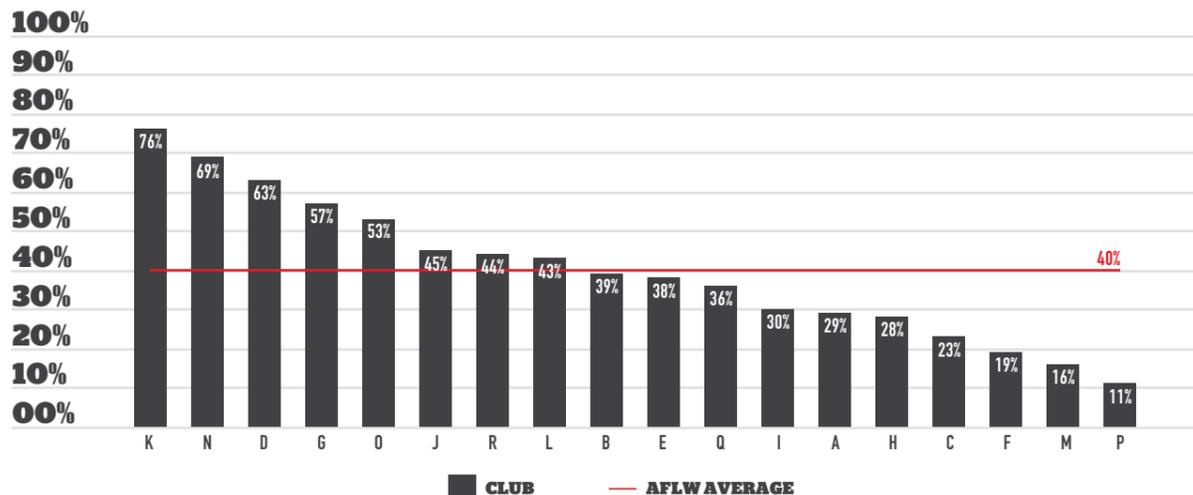
% OF 'SUPPORTED IN THEORY AND IN ACTION' RESPONSES



PLAYERS WITH A WRITTEN ACTION PLAN (AFLW PLAYERS)

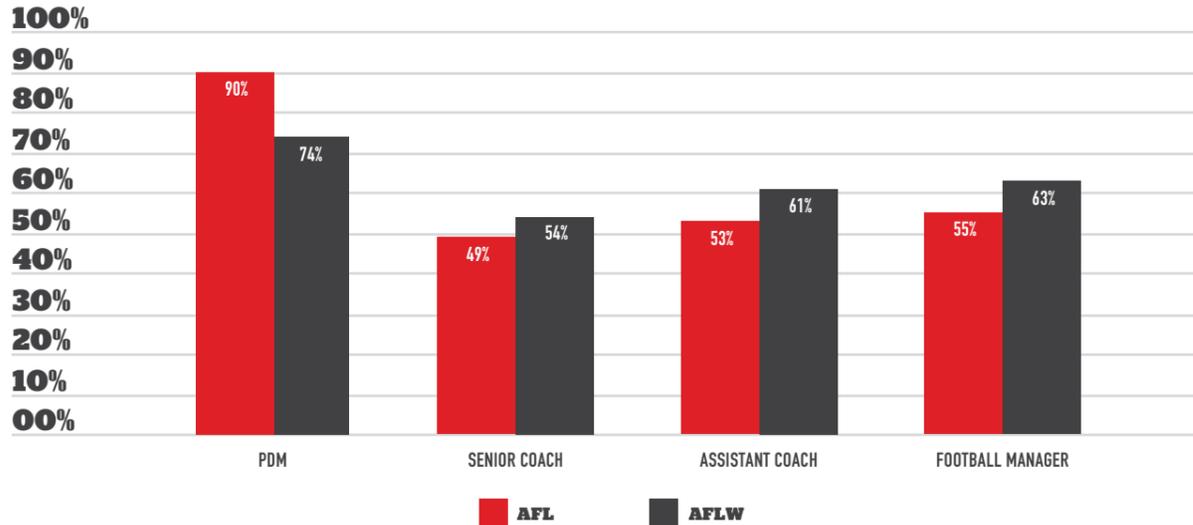


PLAYERS WITH A WRITTEN ACTION PLAN 2023 – CLUB COMPARISON



COMPARISON OF SUPPORT BY CLUB STAFF (AFL VS AFLW)

% OF 'SUPPORTED IN THEORY AND IN ACTION' RESPONSES



PLAYER INDUCTION PROGRAM

OUT OF 5	AFL	AFLW
RELEVANCE	4.63	4.21
BENEFIT	4.58	4.21
KNOWLEDGE	4.52	4.29
COMPREHENSION	4.59	4.50
ENGAGEMENT	4.48	4.36
PRESENTATION	4.60	4.29

EDUCATION AND TRAINING GRANT APPLICATIONS

	AFL CURRENT PLAYERS		AFLW CURRENT PLAYERS		AFL ALUMNI		AFLW ALUMNI		TOTAL	
	SUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS	FUNDS GRANTED	AFLW APPLICATIONS	FUNDS GRANTED	SUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS	FUNDS GRANTED	SUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS	FUNDS GRANTED	SUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS	FUNDS GRANTED
MASTERS	13	\$42,599	15	\$49,168	2	\$8,580	3	\$12,870	33	\$113,217
BACHELOR	165	\$435,852	88	\$259,317	49	\$136,231	8	\$26,230	310	\$857,630
GRADUATE CERTIFICATE	5	\$11,957	4	\$11,550	2	\$1,801	-	-	11	\$25,308
ADVANCED DIPLOMA	5	\$11,540	1	\$2,860	1	\$2,860	-	-	7	\$17,260
GRADUATE DIPLOMA	4	\$10,155	1	\$3,575	-	-	-	-	5	\$13,730
DIPLOMA	19	\$50,500	3	\$8,520	7	\$17,135	2	\$4,660	31	\$80,815
PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION	9	\$10,818	6	\$3,673	9	\$8,071	4	\$2,426	28	\$24,988
PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATE	-	-	3	\$2,280	3	\$2,695	-	-	6	\$4,975
SPECIALIST CERTIFICATE	1	\$2,860	1	\$300	-	-	-	-	2	\$3,160
CERTIFICATE	21	\$19,330	8	\$4,794	13	\$11,000	3	\$1,473	45	\$36,597
SHORT COURSE	20	\$14,389	20	\$8,838	17	\$9,254	1	\$458	58	\$32,939
SINGLE PAPER	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	\$50	1	\$50
TOTAL	262	\$610,000	150	\$354,875	103	\$197,627	22	\$48,167	537	\$1,210,669

Note: Figures current as of publication date – some applications are still under review. Members can submit multiple applications.

REFERENCES

Rist, B. et al (2024). *End on a positive note: an exploration of flourishing, identity, and career confidence in professional Australian footballers transitioning out of football.*

A digital version of this discussion paper can be accessed at <https://doi.org/10.1080/24733938.2023.2300448>

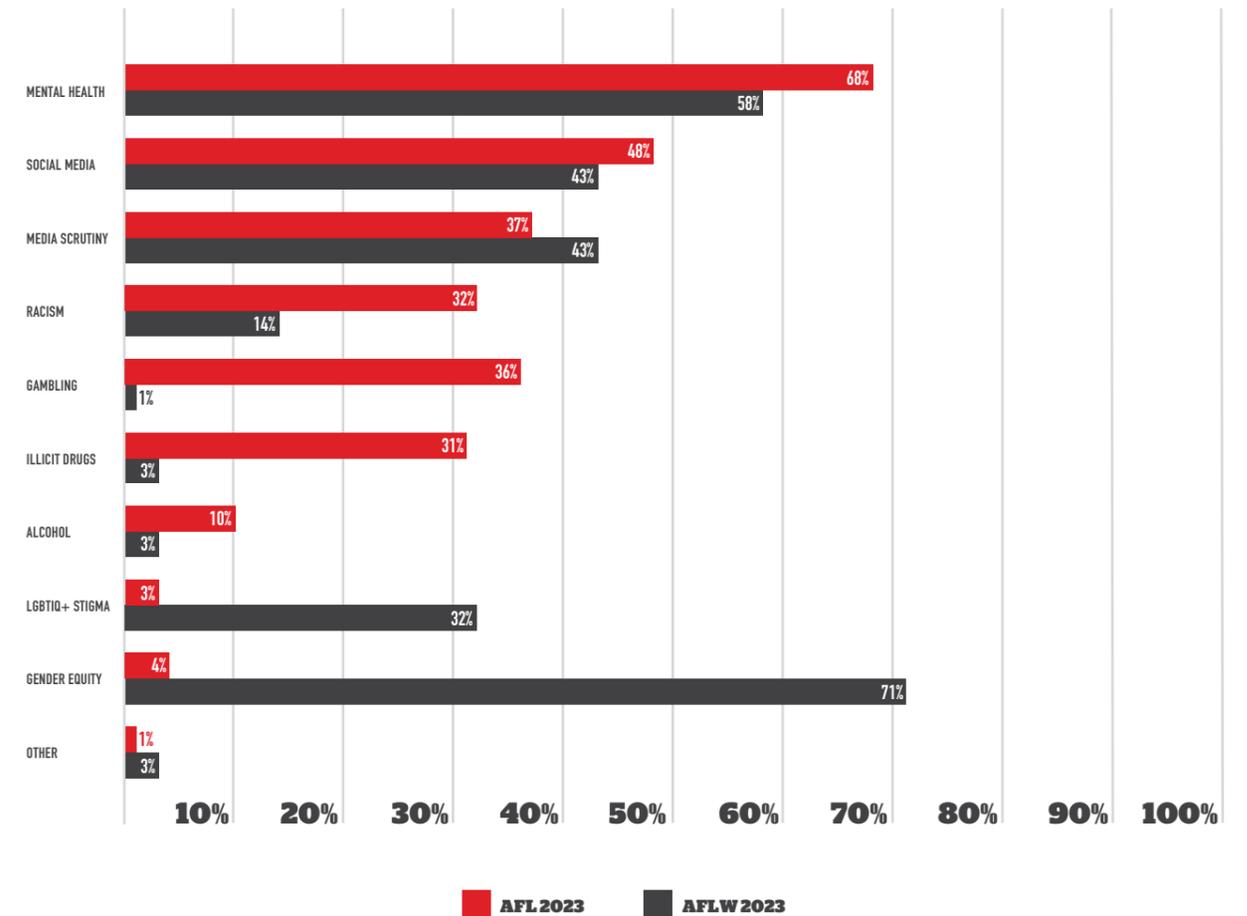
AFLPA PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

SOCIETAL ISSUES

Players were asked “What are the MOST significant societal issues facing AFL footballers in 2023?” and were able to select up to three from the following list:

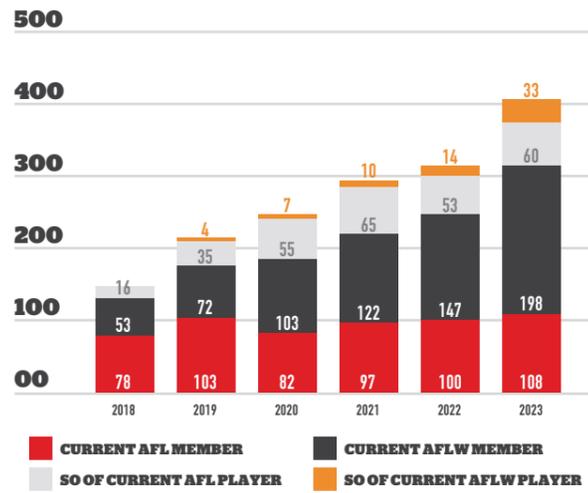
- Mental health
- Social media
- Gambling
- Illicit drugs
- Alcohol
- Racism
- LGBTIQ+ Stigma
- Gender Equity
- Media Scrutiny
- Other

SOCIETAL ISSUES - COMPARISON OF AFL AND AFLW PLAYER CONCERNS

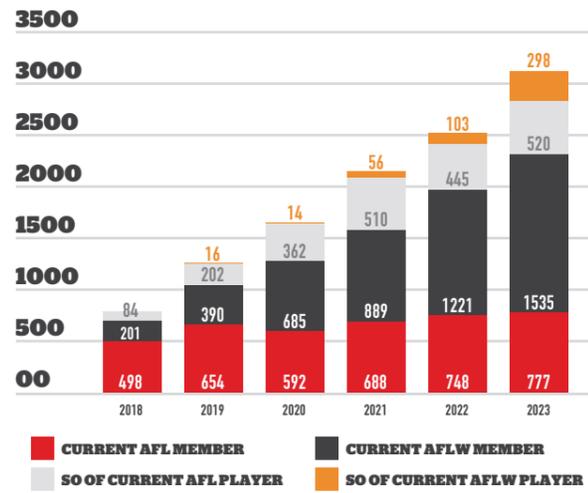


WELLBEING SERVICE | CURRENT PLAYER ENGAGEMENT

MEMBERS ENGAGED

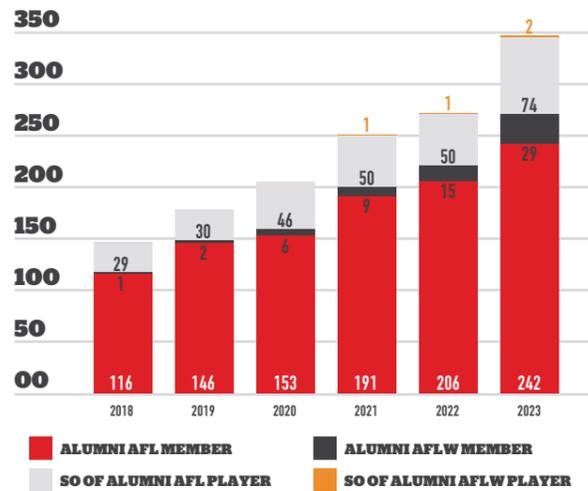


NUMBER OF CONSULTS

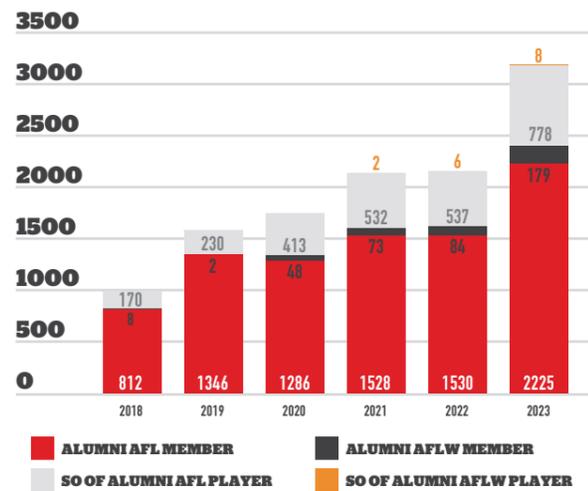


WELLBEING SERVICE | ALUMNI PLAYER ENGAGEMENT

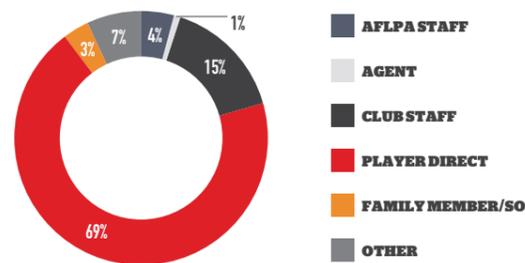
MEMBERS ENGAGED



NUMBER OF CONSULTS



WELLBEING SERVICE | REFERRAL SOURCE



INJURY AND HARDSHIP FUND SUPPORT

Case Type	2018			2019			2020		
	Distinct Members	Median Age	Median Yrs Since Career	Distinct Members	Median Age	Median Yrs Since Career	Distinct Members	Median Age	Median Yrs Since Career
HARDSHIP	41	49	20	50	46.5	25	52	52.5	23
LIFETIME HEALTHCARE PROGRAM	163	56	29	207	55	28	200	56	29
HOSPITAL EXCESS	81	64	38	118	62	35	102	61.5	35
FOOTBALL ENDING INJURY PAYMENTS	3	27	1	6	31.5	1	11	29	1
DELISTED INJURED	6	23.5	1	8	25	1	8	26.5	1
OVERALL	231	57	30	299	55	8	285	55.5	27

Case Type	2021			2022			2023		
	Distinct Members	Median Age	Median Yrs Since Career	Distinct Members	Median Age	Median Yrs Since Career	Distinct Members	Median Age	Median Yrs Since Career
HARDSHIP	40	45.5	19.5	29	58	29	21	9	32
LIFETIME HEALTHCARE PROGRAM	179	58	32	164	59	31	178	62	34
HOSPITAL EXCESS	146	62.5	37	155	63	37	172	65	39
FOOTBALL ENDING INJURY PAYMENTS	8	27.5	1.5	4	28	1.5	6	31.5	2
DELISTED INJURED	2	27	1	1	21	1	2	24	1
OVERALL	271	58	32	258	60	32	279	63	36

Note: Football Ending Injury and Delisted Injured payment figures above reflect the year when payments were made, which is generally not the same year as players' final season of AFL football. This is due to the time it takes to receive and assess applications and/or a member requesting that payments are made at a certain time.

FINANCIAL CAPABILITY | PRA INVESTMENT OPTIONS

Asset Class	AFLPA PRA INVESTMENT OPTIONS			
	CONSERVATIVE % SPLIT	BALANCED % SPLIT	GROWTH % SPLIT	HIGH GROWTH % SPLIT
AUSTRALIAN EQUITIES	10	20	30	40
INTERNATIONAL EQUITIES	10	20	30	40
PROPERTY	10	10	10	10
GROWTH ALTERNATIVES	0	0	0	0
TOTAL GROWTH ASSETS	30	50	70	90
FIXED INCOME	30	25	15	6
DEFENSIVE ALTERNATIVES	30	20	12.5	4
CASH	10	5	2.5	0
TOTAL DEFENSIVE ASSETS	70	50	30	10
TOTAL ASSETS	100	100	100	100

HEALTH AND SAFETY

CONCUSSION

Please note that there was a change to the methodology for concussion survey questions in 2023 to provide more accurate and targeted results, so that only players who had

experienced a diagnosed or potential concussion were answering questions about reporting their symptoms. The new methodology channeled respondents through specific

questions depending on how they answered each question. This change needs to be considered when comparing results to prior years.

Q1. In the past 12 months, have you experienced a diagnosed concussion OR symptoms of a potential concussion while playing or training?
 If **NO** > Go to **Q8**.
 If **YES** > Go to **Q2**.

Q2. How many occurrences were there when you experienced a diagnosed or potential concussion?
 • 1
 • 2
 • 3
 • 4 or more

Q3. Did you report these symptoms?
 If **YES** > Go to **Q4a**. IF **NO** > Go to **Q4b**.

<p>Q4a. Were you formally diagnosed with a concussion by a doctor? • Yes • No</p>	<p>Q4b. What were the reasons that you did not report these symptoms? Go to Q6.</p>
--	--

Q5. How forthcoming were you with medical staff about the severity of your symptoms?
 • Completely truthful about severity
 • Somewhat downplayed the severity
 • Completely downplayed the severity

Q6. Did you continue to play or train after experiencing these symptoms?
 If **YES** > IF **NO** > Go to **Q8**.

Q7. How many occurrences were there when you continued to play or train after experiencing a diagnosed concussion or symptoms of a concussion?
 • Yes – after every occurrence
 • Yes – after more than once occurrence
 • No – never
 Go to **Q8**.

ALL PLAYERS >

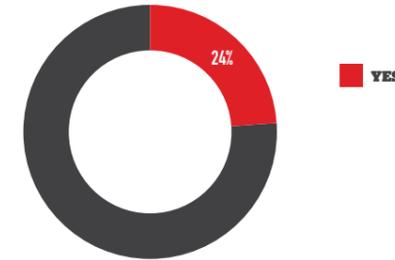
Q8. Concussion is a very serious injury yet we are seeing an increase in the number of players advising they aren't reporting concussions. Why do you think this might be?

Players were asked to answer 'yes' or 'no' to the following questions:
Q9. Are you concerned about the potential long-term effects of concussion?

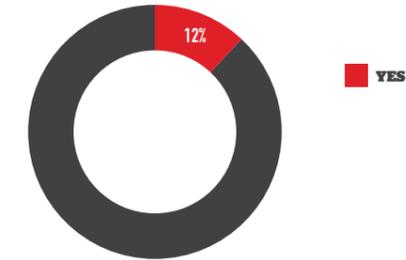
Q10. Do you believe that your club prioritises your health and safety over performance when managing a head knock?

AFL PLAYER CONCUSSION

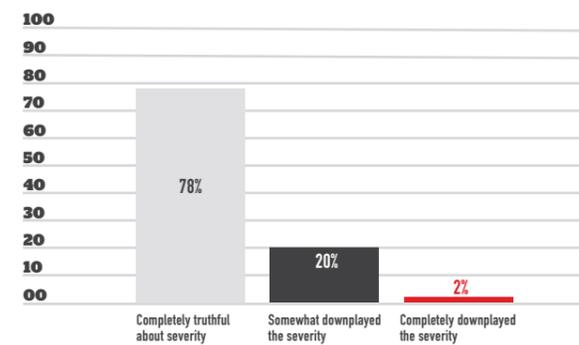
IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS, HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED A DIAGNOSED CONCUSSION OR SYMPTOMS OF A POTENTIAL CONCUSSION WHILE PLAYING OR TRAINING? (2023)



PERCENTAGE OF PLAYERS WHO HAD EXPERIENCED A DIAGNOSED OR POTENTIAL CONCUSSION THAT DID NOT REPORT THEIR SYMPTOMS (2023)



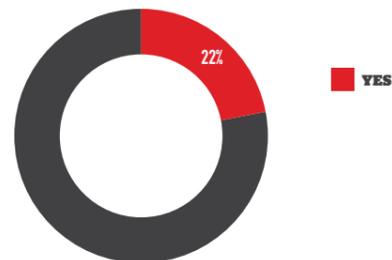
PERCENTAGE OF PLAYERS WHO HAD EXPERIENCED A DIAGNOSED OR POTENTIAL CONCUSSION WHO WERE FORTHCOMING WITH THE SEVERITY OF THEIR SYMPTOMS (2023)



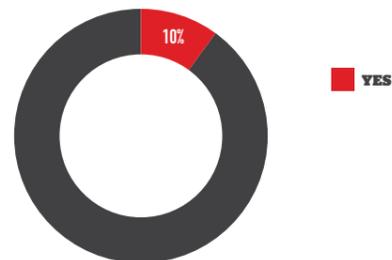
	AFL PLAYERS	
"YES" RESPONSES	2022	2023
ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT THE POTENTIAL LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF CONCUSSION?	70%	71%
DO YOU BELIEVE THAT YOUR CLUB PRIORITISES YOUR HEALTH AND SAFETY OVER PERFORMANCE WHEN MANAGING A HEAD KNOCK?	92%	96%

AFLW PLAYER CONCUSSION

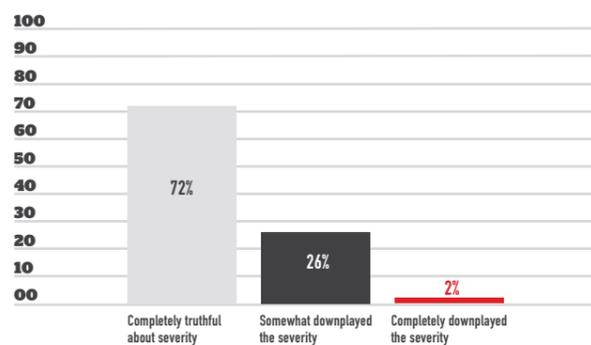
IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS, HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED A DIAGNOSED CONCUSSION OR SYMPTOMS OF A POTENTIAL CONCUSSION WHILE PLAYING OR TRAINING? (2023)



PERCENTAGE OF PLAYERS WHO HAD EXPERIENCED A DIAGNOSED OR POTENTIAL CONCUSSION THAT DID NOT REPORT THEIR SYMPTOMS (2023)



PERCENTAGE OF PLAYERS WHO HAD EXPERIENCED A DIAGNOSED OR POTENTIAL CONCUSSION WHO WERE FORTHCOMING WITH THE SEVERITY OF THEIR SYMPTOMS (2023)



	AFLW PLAYERS	
	2022 - SEASON 7	2023 - SEASON 8
"YES" RESPONSES		
ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT THE POTENTIAL LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF CONCUSSION?	69%	79%
DO YOU BELIEVE THAT YOUR CLUB PRIORITISES YOUR HEALTH AND SAFETY OVER PERFORMANCE WHEN MANAGING A HEAD KNOCK?	94%	98%

THE FIT MINDS PROJECT

AFL and AFLW Club Psychologists were invited to participate in the Fit Minds project via email, then enrolled into an online platform that hosted the assessments. Club Psychologists were able to access profiles for players at their respective clubs who had participated in the 2021 pilot, or create profiles for new players.

Club Psychologists then distributed a link to their players via individual emails, inviting them to participate in the study and informing them that they were not obligated to do so, and that not doing so would have no bearing on their employment, or team selection. Players were then able to access the individual link and complete the surveys via the online platform. Their

completion and submission of the questionnaires indicated their consent. Individual feedback reports were subsequently generated for each player, and each psychologist received a club-level report.

! A full copy of the Fit Minds Project report can be requested via bbeaton@aflplayers.com.au

SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING (PERSONAL WELLBEING INDEX-A)

Players were asked to rate on a scale of 0 (No Satisfaction at all) -10 (Completely Satisfied):

- Thinking about your own life and personal circumstances, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole?
- How satisfied are you with your standard of living?
- How satisfied are you with your health?
- How satisfied are you with what you are achieving in life?
- How satisfied are you with your personal relationships?
- How satisfied are you with how safe you feel?
- How satisfied are you with feeling part of your community?
- How satisfied are you with your future security?

TEAM PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY (TPS)

Players were asked to rate on a 7-point Likert scale from "very inaccurate" to "very accurate"

- If you make a mistake in this team, it is often held against you.
- Members of this team are able to bring up problems and tough issues.
- People on this team sometimes reject others for being different.
- It is safe to take a risk in this team.
- It is difficult to ask other members of this team for help.
- No one on this team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.
- Working with members of this team, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilised.

DEPRESSION ANXIETY STRESS SCALES (DASS-21)

Players were asked to read each statement and select the statement that indicates how much each item has applied to them over the past week. The rating scale is as follows:

0 - Did not apply to me at all

1 - Applied to me to some degree, or some of the time

2 - Applied to me to a considerable degree, or a good part of time

3 - Applied to me very much, or most of the time

- I found it hard to wind down.
- I was aware of dryness in my mouth.
- I couldn't seem to experience any positive feeling at all.
- I experienced breathing difficulty.
- I found it difficult to work up the initiative to do things.
- I tended to over-react to situations.
- I experienced trembling.
- I felt that I was using a lot of nervous energy.
- I was worried about situations in which I might panic and make a fool of myself.
- I felt I had nothing to look forward to.
- I found myself getting agitated.
- I found it difficult to relax.
- I felt down-hearted and blue.
- I was intolerant of anything that kept me from getting on with what I was doing.
- I felt I was close to panic.
- I was unable to become enthusiastic about anything.
- I felt I wasn't worth much as a person.
- I felt that I was rather touchy.
- I was aware of the action of my heart in the absence of physical exertion.
- I felt scared without any good reason.
- I felt that life was meaningless.

ATHLETIC COPING SKILLS INVENTORY (ACSI)

Players were asked to rate on a 4-point Likert scale with higher scores indicating higher levels of psychological skill.

- On a daily or weekly basis, I set very specific goals for myself that guide what I do.
- I get the most out of my talent and skill.
- When a coach or manager tells me how to correct a mistake I've made, I tend to take it personally and feel upset.
- When I'm playing sports, I can focus my attention and block out distractions.
- I remain positive and enthusiastic during competition, no matter how badly things are going.
- I tend to play better under pressure because I think more clearly.
- I worry quite a bit about what others think of my performance.
- I tend to do lots of planning about how to reach my goals.
- I feel confident that I will play well.
- When a coach or manager criticises me, I become upset rather than feel helped.
- It is easy for me to keep distracting thoughts from interfering with something I am watching or listening to.
- I put a lot of pressure on myself by worrying about how I will perform.
- I set my own performance goals for each practice.
- I don't have to be pushed to practice or play hard; I give 100%.
- If a coach criticises or yells at me, I correct the mistake without getting upset about it.
- I handle unexpected situations in my sport very well.
- When things are going badly, I tell myself to keep calm, and this works for me.
- The more pressure there is during a game, the more I enjoy it.
- While competing, I worry about making mistakes or failing to come through.
- I have my own game plan worked out in my head long before the game begins.
- When I feel myself getting tense, I can quickly relax my body and calm myself.
- To me, pressure situations are challenges that I welcome.
- I think about and imagine what will happen if I fail or screw up.
- I maintain emotional control regardless of how things are going for me.
- It is easy for me to direct my attention and focus on a single object or person.
- When I fail to reach my goals, it makes me try even harder.
- I improve my skills by listening carefully to advice and instruction from coaches and managers.
- I make fewer mistakes when the pressure is on because I concentrate better.

HUMAN RIGHTS

REFERENCES:

Australian Academy of Science (2022). Getting Ahead of the Game: Athlete Data in Professional Sport.

A digital version of this discussion paper can be downloaded from: www.science.org.au/datainsport

RACISM TOWARDS PLAYERS

AFL and AFLW players that identified as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or a person of colour were asked specifically about their experiences with racism:

Q: Have you experienced racism whilst listed ...

...as a player in the AFL?
(Tick as many as apply)

- No
- Yes – in the last 12 months
- Yes – in the past 2-5 years
- Yes – longer than 5 years

...as a player in the AFLW?
(Tick as many as apply)

- No
- Yes – in the last 12 months
- Yes – in the past 1-4 years
- Yes – longer than 4 years

Q: Have you experienced racism directed from:
(Tick as many as apply)

- Team mates
- Club staff
- Players or staff from other clubs
- The AFL
- The AFLPA
- Media
- Spectators at games
- Social media
- Publicly
- When playing at a community level
- None of the above

Q: Was the incident(s) dealt with appropriately or to your satisfaction?

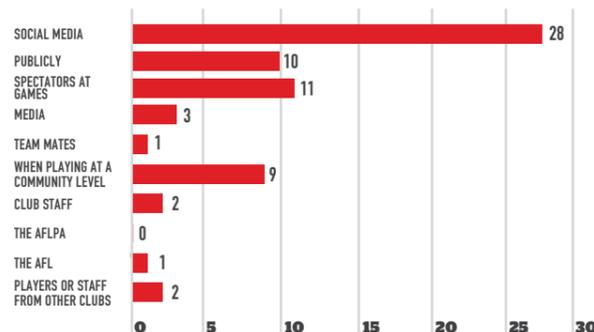
- Yes, entirely
- Somewhat or partially
- No, not at all

OCCURENCES OF RACISM

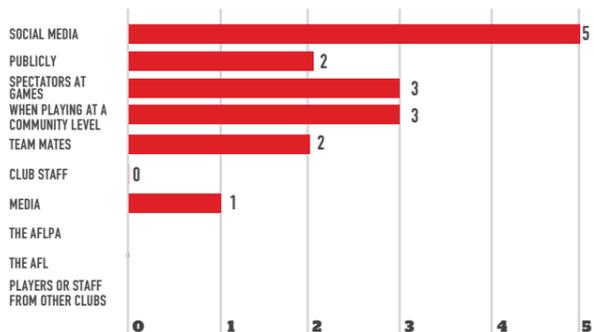
	84 AFL PLAYERS
NEVER	49
YES, IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS	17
YES, IN THE PAST 2-5 YEARS	18
YES, LONGER THAN 5 YEARS	6

	43 AFLW PLAYERS
NEVER	33
YES, IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS	1
YES, IN THE PAST 1-4 YEARS	6
YES, LONGER THAN 4 YEARS	3

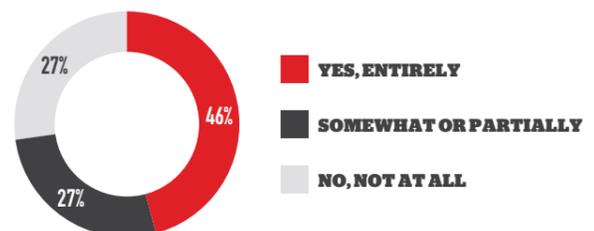
SOURCE OF OCCURENCES OF RACISM (AFL PLAYERS)



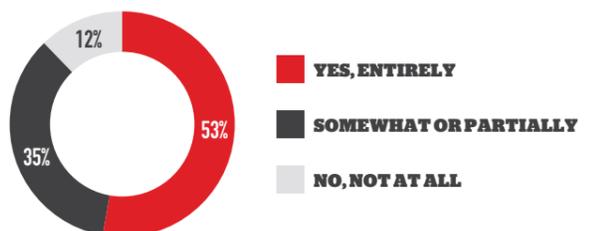
SOURCE OF OCCURENCES OF RACISM (AFLW PLAYERS)



LEVEL OF SATISFACTION REGARDING RESPONSE TO RACIST INCIDENT (AFL PLAYERS)



LEVEL OF SATISFACTION REGARDING RESPONSE TO RACIST INCIDENT (AFLW PLAYERS)



PLAYER VOICE

All players were asked in respect to being able to speak freely in the media to rate the following question (1-Strongly Disagree to 10-Strongly Agree):

- I feel that my club allows me to express my own views through the media

Q: If you have any issues or concerns that need raising, how comfortable do you feel raising these with the following groups/people (10-Extremely Comfortable-1 Extremely Uncomfortable):

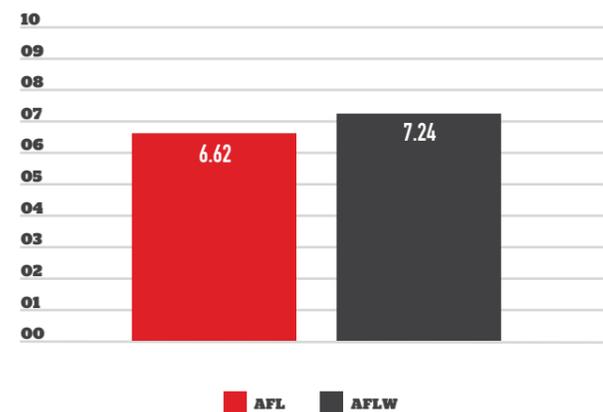
- Football club
- AFLPA
- The AFL
- Teammates
- Agents

Q: If you have raised an issue or concern in the past, did any of the following things occur (tick as many as apply):

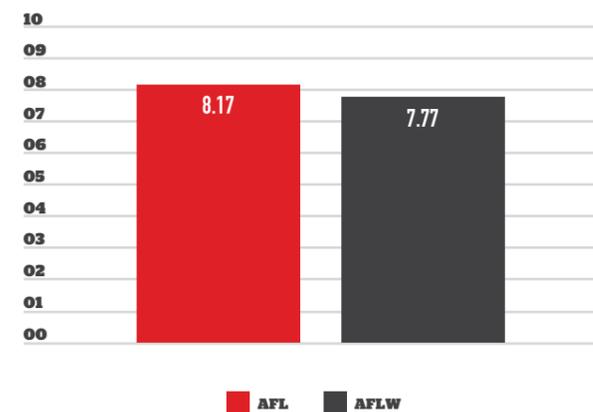
- Verbally reprimanded
- Excluded of opportunities
- Treated differently/abnormal behaviour toward you
- Dismissed or ignored
- Accepted but no action taken
- Other (please specify)

PLAYER COMFORT IN EXPRESSING THEIR OWN VIEWS PUBLICLY

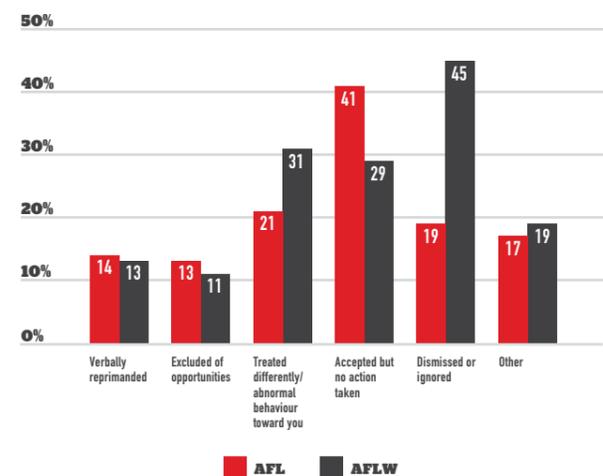
I FEEL THAT MY CLUB ALLOWS ME TO EXPRESS MY OWN VIEWS THROUGH THE MEDIA



COMFORT IN RAISING ISSUES/CONCERNS TO STAKEHOLDERS



CONSEQUENCES OF RAISING AN ISSUE OR CONCERN



AGENTS

METHODOLOGY

Stakeholders were asked to rate on a scale of 1-5 (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree):

RELATIONSHIPS AND CONDUCT

PLAYERS

- I have a strong professional relationship with my agent.
- My agent always acts in my best interests.

CLUBS

- I have a strong professional relationship with this agent.
- This agent acts in a professional manner at all times.

AGENTS

- I have strong professional relationships with my clients.
- I have strong professional relationships with the key personnel at my client's club/s.
- I have strong professional relationships with the key personnel at the AFL.
- I have strong professional relationships with the key personnel at the AFLPA.

UNDERSTANDING OF REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

PLAYERS

- My agent has a strong understanding of the AFL regulatory environment (e.g. CBA, SPC, ASAs, Independent Agreements, TPP, AFL Rules etc) relevant to me.

CLUBS

- This agent has a strong understanding of the AFL regulatory environment (e.g. CBA, SPC, ASAs, Independent Agreements, TPP, AFL Rules etc).

AGENTS

- I have a strong understanding of the AFL regulatory environment (e.g. CBA, SPC, ASAs, Independent Agreements, TPP, AFL Rules etc) relevant to my clients.
- I have a strong understanding of the Agent Regulations.

ACHIEVING STRONG SPC RESULTS FOR CLIENTS

PLAYERS

- My agent delivers strong results for me when negotiating my playing contract on my behalf.

CLUBS

- This agent achieves the best possible contractual outcome for their players.

AGENTS

- I deliver strong results for my clients when negotiating their playing contract.

ACHIEVING STRONG RESULTS ON OTHER CONTRACTS

PLAYERS

- My agent delivers strong results for me when negotiating any other arrangement on my behalf.

AGENTS

- I deliver strong results for my clients when negotiating any other arrangement/s on their behalf.
- I deliver an appropriate level of service for the fee that I charge to my clients.
- I always act in the best interests of my clients and achieve positive results for them across the areas they need.

CLIENT SUPPORT

PLAYERS

- My agent is approachable and responsive when I contact them.
- I am satisfied with how often my agent contacts me.

CLUBS

- This agent provides his/her clients with an appropriate level of service.
- This agent supports their players during the transition in and/or transition out phase.
- This agent is approachable and responsive when I contact them.

AGENTS

- I am approachable, and responsive when my clients, the clubs, the AFL or the AFLPA contact me.
- I sufficiently support my players during the transition in and/or transition out of the game.

ISSUE RESOLUTION

PLAYERS

- I have confidence in my agent resolving issues on my behalf.

CLUBS

- This agent involves the club at appropriate times on issues relating to their players.
- I am willing to work with this agent on issues relating to their player.

AGENTS

- I feel confident resolving issues on behalf of my clients, and involving the relevant person at the club, AFL or AFLPA when necessary.
- I feel confident knowing how to get support for my clients in relation to any wellbeing issue they may be experiencing.

OVERALL AGENT SCORE

STAKEHOLDER	2020	2021	2022	2023
PLAYERS	4.19	4.31	4.32	4.20
CLUBS	4.20	4.26	4.18	4.27
AFL	N/A	N/A	N/A	4.48
OVERALL AGENT SCORE	4.20	4.29	4.24	4.27
AGENTS	4.53	4.57	4.22	4.54

AGENT FUNCTION RATINGS

	AFLHQ	CLUB	PLAYER	OVERALL	AGENT
CLIENT SUPPORT	4.47	4.28	4.16	4.30	4.59
ISSUE RESOLUTION	4.56	4.34	4.29	4.52	4.52
OTHER CONTRACT RESULTS	-	-	3.97	3.97	4.66
REGULATORY UNDERSTANDING	4.48	4.23	4.33	4.35	4.50
RELATIONSHIPS AND CONDUCT	4.36	4.25	4.25	4.29	4.29
SPC RESULTS	4.53	4.26	4.22	4.34	4.67
TOTAL	4.48	4.27	4.20	4.27	4.54

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