



**2021  
ANNUAL  
REPORT**



**2021  
ANNUAL  
REPORT**





# CONTENTS

## AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL LEAGUE 125TH ANNUAL REPORT 2021

4	2021 Highlights
20	Chairman's Report
30	CEO's Report
40	Football Operations
48	AFL Women's
56	Broadcasting
62	Game Development
88	Customer And Commercial
106	Strategy, Technology & Data
112	People & Culture
116	Inclusion & Social Policy
122	Corporate Affairs, Government & Communications
128	Awards, Results & Farewells
150	Financial Report

Western Australia's Optus Stadium was packed to the rafters as the AFL Grand Final was played outside Victoria for the second consecutive year.

**Cover:** Melbourne ended 57 years of heartbreak to power to the AFL premiership, while the Brisbane Lions were ecstatic after claiming their first AFLW flag.

**Back Cover:** Two greats of the modern game were farewelled when Hawthorn's Alastair Clarkson and Shaun Burgoyne bowed out after round 23.

▷ **1,113,441**  
all-time record 2021  
club membership.

▷ **TEN CLUBS**

broke their all-time membership record -  
Brisbane Lions, Carlton, Geelong Cats,  
Gold Coast Suns, Melbourne, North Melbourne,  
Port Adelaide, Richmond, St Kilda  
and West Coast Eagles.

▷ On the back of three  
premierships in the previous  
four seasons, it was no  
surprise Richmond was one of  
10 clubs to break their all-time  
membership record in 2021.



▷ **25,782**  
all-time record 2021  
AFLW club membership.

▷ **5.4M**  
record AFLW 2021  
season viewership.



▷ This young Gold Coast  
Suns fan was one of many  
supporters who enjoyed  
a record-breaking AFLW  
season in 2021.

▷ **61,118**

Attendance at the first Grand Final played at Optus Stadium, as a twilight game.

▷ More than 61,000 fans enjoyed the 2021 Grand Final, with the half-time entertainment show one of the highlights of the historic occasion.



▶ **22,934**

Attendance at the  
AFLW Grand Final played  
at Adelaide Oval.

▶ The 2021 AFLW Grand Final attracted 22,934 fans to Adelaide Oval, who watched the Brisbane Lions claim their first premiership with an 18-point win over the Adelaide Crows.



▶ **4.16M**

Television audience for the 2021 Toyota AFL Grand Final.

▶ **1.66M**

Record Melbourne viewing audience for a Grand Final.

▶ A record Melbourne audience of 1.66 million viewers tuned into the 2021 Grand Final.



▶ **230**

leagues around Australia

▶ **2862** clubs

VICTORIA	76 leagues, 1242 clubs
WESTERN AUSTRALIA	57 leagues, 546 clubs
SOUTH AUSTRALIA	32 leagues, 367 clubs
NEW SOUTH WALES/ACT	26 leagues, 267 clubs
QUEENSLAND	10 leagues, 130 clubs
NORTHERN TERRITORY	15 leagues, 210 clubs
TASMANIA	14 leagues, 100 clubs

▶ It was a tough day in the office for the victorious Apollo Bay Hawks, one of Victoria's 1242 clubs.







# MAJOR AFL AWARDS



## BROWNLOW MEDAL

OLLIE WINES  
Port Adelaide



## NORM SMITH MEDAL

CHRISTIAN PETRACCA  
Melbourne



## COLEMAN MEDAL

HARRY MCKAY  
Carlton



## NAB AFL RISING STAR

LUKE JACKSON  
Melbourne

Ollie Wines polled 36 votes in 16 games to become the first Port Adelaide player to win the Brownlow Medal.



# ▶ MAJOR AFLW AWARDS



## **NAB AFLW BEST & FAIREST**

**BRIANNA DAVEY**  
Collingwood  
**KIARA BOWERS**  
Fremantle



## **NAB AFLW GRAND FINAL BEST ON GROUND**

**KATE LUTKINS**  
Brisbane Lions



## **NAB AFLW LEADING GOALKICKER**

**DARCY VESCIO**  
Carlton



## **NAB AFLW RISING STAR**

**TYLA HANKS**  
Melbourne

◀ A first in the AFLW with Collingwood's Brianna Davey (left) and Fremantle's Kiara Bowers sharing the Best & Fairest.

# CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

▶ **RICHARD GOYDER**  
CHAIRMAN



**A**fter nearly two years devastated by the impact of COVID-19 nationally, Australian Football will assist in our recovery.

The AFL Commission is pleased to report that both the AFL and AFLW seasons were able to be completed in 2021, along with many hundreds of state and community leagues around the country, albeit - again - there were many unable to take the field for a full season for a second consecutive year.

Elite sport helped so many Australians confront the challenges of 2020 and 2021 and provided some joy and connection for people. Now Australian Football is ready to play a key leadership role as we reopen and rebuild our communities.

All grassroots sport is vital - teaching life lessons and creating a sense of belonging - and our game has committed significant funding for the 2022 year ahead in providing renewed opportunity for girls, boys, women and men to resume playing, coaching, umpiring and supporting our game.

We thank the many tens of thousands who have collectively worked so hard through these difficult past two years - players, coaches, clubs, administrators, umpires, volunteers and, most importantly, fans and members. Their commitment to the game was important and the AFL will be there as families, local suburban and regional clubs and Auskick clinics seek to recover from the impact COVID-19 has had on our game.

A new all-time membership mark was established in 2021 and that is why it is now the turn of the game to invest back into community football. We will be working hand-in-hand with all governments in every

state and territory, and I want to thank all governments and their health authorities who have supported our game through the past two years.

In 2021, we saw historic firsts. Melbourne broke a 57-year premiership drought to defeat the Western Bulldogs, while the Brisbane Lions are now the third club to claim an AFLW premiership.

Our AFLW competition is already a shining jewel and all 18 clubs will soon field their own team after the Commission approved the decision in 2021 to award licences to Essendon, Hawthorn, Port Adelaide and the Sydney Swans. The success of our women's game is due in large part to the hard work of so many pioneering football women over many years.

We will continue to build the competition and the AFLW economy to ensure it continues to grow and provide opportunities for women on and off the field.

The continued support of the game's broadcast partners and commercial partners enables us to plan for our future and support and encourage the next generation who will love our game. Their support again this year - and their agility in helping us to deliver the game as we navigated the COVID-19 environment - was outstanding.

Much work is still to be done as we adapt to our new world, but our message remains clear that there is a place in our game for everyone who wishes to be part of it. Our game is better for your presence and the diversity and richness of experience that every individual can bring to Australian Football and we will continue to work on ensuring we have an environment that is welcoming and safe for all Australians.



▶ This was community football at its finest as a group of young fans sat in front of the scoreboard at the Oatlands District Football Association semi-final between Triabunna and Campania in central Tasmania.

## Optus Stadium and Adelaide Oval Grand Final venues

Our two Grand Finals were magnificent occasions respectively at Adelaide Oval (AFLW) and Optus Stadium (AFL).

The Adelaide Crows earned the right to host against the Brisbane Lions and an outstanding crowd of more than 22,000 saw the Lions claim their first AFLW title, upsetting the home team.

A further serious COVID-19 outbreak in Melbourne through the 2021 winter again required the AFL Grand Final to be moved out of Victoria and Optus Stadium was chosen as the venue for its ability to be able to host a capacity crowd of 61,118 and its world-leading facilities as a top-class venue.

In addition to a packed stadium, a viewing audience of 4.16m tuned in for the game. WA Premier Mark McGowan and his government team fully backed a compelling state-wide build-up to the game, with fans across the state embracing a first premiership decider in the west.

Melbourne was too strong for the Western Bulldogs, ending a 57-year drought, and the Commission also wishes to acknowledge the support of not only WA, but all states throughout 2021 as we worked to complete our two seasons.

## A VIEWING AUDIENCE OF 4.16M TUNED IN FOR THE GAME

▽ Melbourne broke a 57-year premiership drought in 2021.

▷ AFL CEO Gillon McLachlan with AFLW stars of the future.

## Broadcast and major corporate partners

A key strength of football is our long-term partnerships with great companies that share our values and work towards long-term common goals.

Australian Football, at all levels from the elite to community sporting clubs across the nation, is privileged to be able to rely on wider support that ensures we can keep the game accessible for all fans and members.

At AFL level, I wish to acknowledge both our broadcast partners and our many corporate partners, as well as the many companies who support clubs and leagues at all levels of the game.

Kerry Stokes AC announced his retirement as Executive Chair from Seven Group Holdings in November 2021 after a peerless business career in this country, and the Seven Network continues to provide world-class coverage via free-to-air of our AFLW and AFL competitions.

Foxtel and Fox Sports and Kayo bring every game of our two competitions to supporters via subscription coverage, while digital partner Telstra serves our members and fans so well, alongside our many radio broadcasters.

AFL Media stands as Australia's most popular sports digital media network, reporting on every aspect of our game at elite and community level and continued to drive innovation and viewership of both the men's and women's game.

Our major partner Toyota supports the Toyota AFL Premiership Season, the Toyota AFL Finals Series and the Toyota AFL Grand Final, while NAB is our primary partner of the AFLW competition and our pathway programs.



## NAB AFLW competition expansion

All 18 clubs will field a NAB AFL Women's team from the 2022-23 season onwards after the AFL Commission determined the final four AFL clubs - Essendon, Hawthorn, Port Adelaide and the Sydney Swans - would be granted a licence to enter the competition in season seven.

The four clubs provided submissions on their readiness to enter the national competition, including detailing their resourcing, team build strategy, corporate support and investment into their AFLW program, fan base growth and facilities.

Since the launch of the AFLW, the number of women and girls playing football has grown to more than 600,000 nationally, and the AFL has worked with governments at all levels of the game to develop facilities for women to support that growth. It was paramount for the AFL to engage all 18 AFL clubs and their supporter bases.

## Club membership

The ability to attend games was again heavily impacted for many fans in 2021, but our game was privileged to establish a record level of club membership.

In another season affected by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, including games with heavily reduced capacities and at times no crowds at all, the 1,113,441 members surpassed the record set in 2019 and saw 12 per cent growth on the 2020 results.

Ten of the 18 AFL clubs broke their all-time records - Brisbane Lions, Carlton, Geelong Cats, Gold Coast Suns, Melbourne, North Melbourne, Port Adelaide, Richmond, St Kilda and West Coast Eagles - while AFLW membership increased again after its fifth season, with an all-time record 25,782 members signing up.

## Thank you to our players and clubs

The Toyota AFL Premiership Season fixture was regularly altered and revised through 2021, often on extremely short notice of just days and even hours, in response to changing community environments and border restrictions across the country.

Significant changes were also required in the early part of the year to our AFLW competition.

The AFL appreciates and acknowledges the continued support of its partners and the flexibility of clubs, AFL and AFLW players, coaches and administrators in successfully delivering the 2021 seasons for the game's fans and members.

Our clubs and players performed superbly and again worked through state lockdowns, quarantine bubbles, heavily regulated travel schedules, short-notice alterations, games in neutral state venues, strict living protocols and some 45,000 tests as part of regular testing requirements through many parts of the season to be able to decide the respective premiership.

## OUR GAME WAS PRIVILEGED TO ESTABLISH A RECORD LEVEL OF CLUB MEMBERSHIP



## Merv McIntosh and Jack Oatey elevated to Legend status



▽ Merv McIntosh's stellar career was recognised when he was elevated to Legend status.

On the 25-year anniversary of the establishment of the Australian Football Hall of Fame, three-time Sandover Medal winner Merv McIntosh and 10-time SANFL premiership coach Jack Oatey AM were elevated to Legend status.

McIntosh and Oatey, the 30th and 31st Legends of the Game, were joined by four new inductees into the Hall of Fame - Chris Judd, Nathan Burke, Rob Wiley and Debbie Lee, who was the first woman to join the Hall of Fame.

To ensure that historical greats of the game were recognised for their contributions to Australian Football, the selectors specifically examined the records of deceased members only for consideration of Legend status in 2021.

A standout ruckman, McIntosh played 217 games for Perth in a war-interrupted career between 1939-55, winning a premiership in his final year. A three-time Simpson medallist and three-time Sandover medallist, McIntosh also claimed Perth's best and fairest award seven times during his 11 years at the club.



Oatey was a four-time best and fairest winner as a player and then coached more than 500 wins across his career for Norwood, West Adelaide and Sturt, winning 10 premierships as a coach. The SANFL Grand Final best-on-ground medal - the Jack Oatey Medal - was inaugurated in his honour in 1981, while he was still an active coach.

### Merv McIntosh

- ▶ 217 games for Perth 1939-41 and 1946-55
- ▶ 24 games for WA
- ▶ Premiership 1955
- ▶ Seven-time best and fairest winner 1946, 1947, 1948, 1949, 1950, 1952, 1954
- ▶ Three-time Sandover Medal winner 1948, 1953, 1954
- ▶ Three-time Simpson Medal winner 1952, 1953, 1955
- ▶ Carnival All-Australian 1953
- ▶ Tassie Medal 1953

### Jack Oatey AM

- ▶ 162 games for Norwood, 1940-41 and 1945-52, 218 goals
- ▶ 19 games for Norwood-North (wartime league), 1942-44, 15 goals
- ▶ Five games for South Melbourne 1944, four goals
- ▶ Seven games for SA, captain in 1949 and 1950, coach in 1949, 1950 and 1959
- ▶ Five-time premiership player 1941 (player), 1943 (player), 1946 (player-coach), 1948 (player-coach), 1950 (player-coach)
- ▶ Four-time best and fairest winner 1940, 1941, 1942, 1945
- ▶ Captain 1945-52
- ▶ Coached Norwood 1945-56, 229 games for 148 wins, 80 losses, one draw and three premierships 1946, 1948, 1950
- ▶ Coached West Adelaide 1957-60, 87 games for 59 wins, 28 losses
- ▶ Coached Sturt 1962-82, 470 games for 314 wins, 152 losses, four draws and seven premierships 1966-1970, 1974, 1976
- ▶ 12-time premiership player overall with 10 premierships in total as coach - 1946, 1948, 1950, 1966, 1967, 1968, 1969, 1970, 1974, 1976
- ▶ Captain/coach/first rover Norwood Team of the Century
- ▶ Coach Sturt Team of the Century
- ▶ SANFL Hall of Fame
- ▶ SANFL Grand Final best-on-ground medal named in his honour, the Jack Oatey Medal

▷ Jack Oatey built a phenomenal record as a player and coach in the SANFL.



## Co-operation of Federal and State governments and health authorities

The AFL is greatly appreciative of the ongoing assistance and co-operation received across the year from governments at all levels across the country.

It was another very challenging environment in 2021 for the game to be able to complete the AFLW and AFL seasons and to award premierships in both competitions. We could not have done that without the support of governments and their chief health officers and their health departments.

At the start of the pandemic, our guiding principles for the AFL Commission and Executive were to ensure the health and wellbeing of our players and officials and the wider community and to adhere to all requirements of both health authorities across the nation, and the directives of the Federal and State governments. We have maintained those principles throughout.

We also say thank you to the health emergency and essential workers who kept our community safe and made it possible for us to play football. We owe a debt of gratitude to all.

## Key financial highlights

Revenue increased by \$63.3m, due to increased broadcast and commercial revenues from a return to a 23-round season for the men's competition.

Operating expenditure decreased by \$22.5m. This is due to a \$44.5m reduction in football operations expenditure, which reflects the difference in total expenditure incurred by the AFL in completing the 2021 men's season compared with the 2020 season. This is partly offset by a \$21.6m increase in Game Development expenditure with most states able to run community football with minimal interruption in 2021.

Distributions increased \$117.0m through increases in club and AFL Players Association distributions; these were reduced in 2020 to offset lower revenue and increased costs of running the men's season and returned toward pre-COVID levels in 2021 to help clubs manage lost football revenues due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

After all revenue, operating expenditure and distributions, the AFL recorded an underlying operating loss of \$43.0m, compared with an underlying operating loss of \$22.7m in 2020.

▽ The elimination final between the Western Bulldogs and Essendon was one of two finals played in Launceston.

## Tasmanian Government AFL licence submission

The AFL Commission tasked former Geelong Cats president and AFL Commissioner Colin Carter to review the business case for a 19th licence in Tasmania. Carter's review of the submission provided by the Tasmanian Taskforce, led by Brett Godfrey, found among its leading recommendations:

- ▶ The case for Tasmania is strong, however, the best form of that team is less clear-cut.
- ▶ Reaching a decision on a team to represent Tasmania should not be impacted by COVID, but the decision around timing should, at a time when AFL industry finances are under stress.
- ▶ Any outcome is dependent on locking in Government funding guarantees and provision of appropriate stadia and related facilities in Tasmania.
- ▶ Tasmania is deserving of a team to represent the state on historic and fairness grounds and most economic arguments can be overcome as long as Government funding is secured.

The AFL and the Tasmanian Government have agreed that a position for a Tasmanian licence will be put to AFL club presidents in 2022 in line with the finalisation of the funding model for the AFL industry.



## First WA-based Grand Final draws enormous interest

Melbourne's runaway victory in front of a capacity crowd of 61,118 at Optus Stadium was watched by 4.16m people - the largest audience since the 2016 Grand Final and the largest-ever audience for a Grand Final that did not feature the Sydney Swans.

The Demons were especially popular at home in Melbourne with the 1.66m viewers there recording the largest Grand Final audience in Victoria, while 483,000 viewers in Perth was the largest Grand Final audience in Perth since 2013, eclipsing even West Coast's premiership victory of 2018.

## Indigenous Advisory Council

Commissioner Helen Milroy and Paul Briggs now co-chair the League's National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council, working to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander outcomes across all areas of the game. The council is a valuable assistance to the work of the Commission, driving a greater alignment across the industry with the AFL and its state bodies, the players, clubs and community leagues to strengthen the competition-wide approach to the implementation of the AFL's Enhanced Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander Strategy.

▽ The Brisbane Lions scored an upset win over the Adelaide Crows to claim their first AFLW title.

## Congratulations to AFLW premiers Brisbane Lions

After two previous losses on Grand Final day, the Brisbane Lions became the third AFLW club to clinch a premiership, upsetting favourites the Adelaide Crows at Adelaide Oval.

After COVID-19 prevented the conclusion to the 2020 season, the Lions were again a leading contender in 2021, as they have been since day one of the AFLW and under coach Craig Starcevich saved their best performance for Grand Final day.

Congratulations to president Andrew Wellington and the Lions' board, and the club staff and players led by chief executive Greg Swann.

Congratulations also to the Adelaide Crows, who were seeking their third premiership and who remain one of our leading women's sides. Congratulations to chairman John Olsen and chief executive Tim Silvers and all players, coaches and staff at the club for their incredible consistency.

**THE LIONS WERE AGAIN A LEADING CONTENDER IN 2021, AS THEY HAVE BEEN SINCE DAY ONE**



## Congratulations to AFL premier Melbourne

Melbourne ended the longest current premierships drought in the competition with its dominant performance against the Western Bulldogs at Optus Stadium.

Nearly 57 years to the day since their last flag, the Demons trailed by three goals midway through the third term before an explosive scoring burst saw them run away to victory, led by Norm Smith medallist Christian Petracca. Congratulations to president Kate Roffey and the Demons' board, and the club staff and players led by chief executive Gary Pert.

Congratulations are also extended to the Western Bulldogs for reaching the Grand Final, after facing an extraordinary travel load through the finals series due to ongoing COVID quarantine requirements. The Bulldogs were only overrun in the final term as Melbourne surged to a historic victory in our first Grand Final played in Western Australia.

## Passing of former AFL Commissioner Albert Mantello

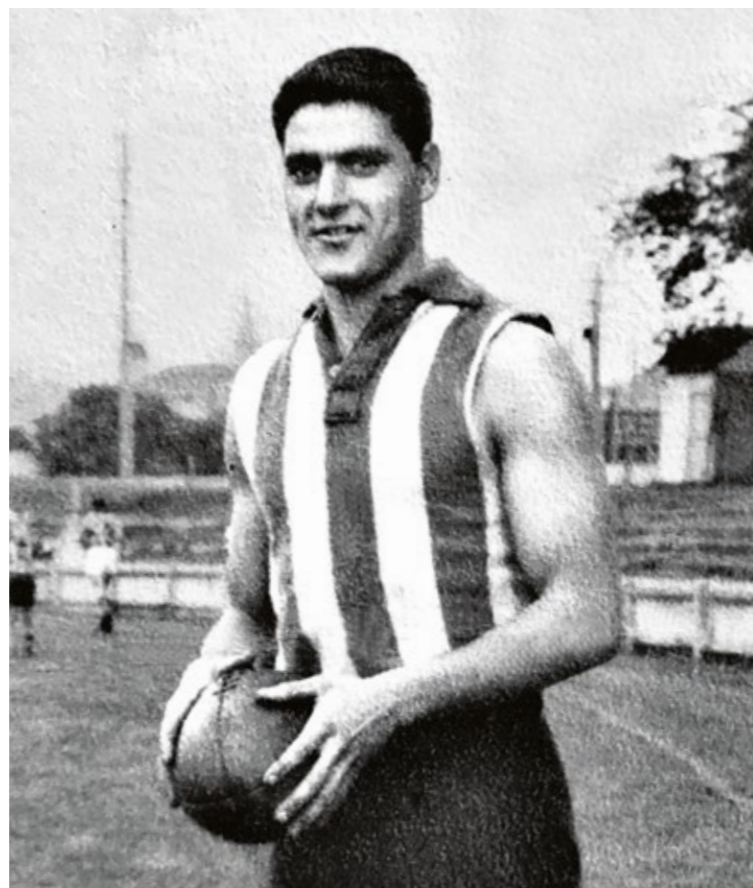
Former AFL Commissioner Albert Mantello passed away in 2021, having given more than 40 years of service to the game as a player and administrator.

After a 107-game career for North Melbourne in which he captained the club, he then served in senior club board roles, being instrumental in bringing legendary coach Ron Barassi to Arden St and delivering the Kangaroos their first two premierships in 1975 and 1977.

In the early days of the formation of the Commission, Mantello was then pivotal in the development of the national competition, serving as a Commissioner for five years from 1988-92.

### MANTELLO WAS THEN PIVOTAL IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL COMPETITION

▷ Melbourne coach Simon Goodwin and president Kate Roffey celebrate after the Demons' drought-breaking premiership, but on a sad note, the AFL world mourned the passing of former Commissioner and North Melbourne stalwart Albert Mantello.



## Club presidents/chairs and my fellow Commissioners

For a second consecutive year, the game at every level benefited from the enormous support and goodwill from our members, fans, partners, and participants around the country.

All but two rounds of the AFLW season were disrupted by COVID-19 implications, while just 60 of 198 AFL home and away games were not impacted by some form by crowd restrictions.

Nearly one in five AFL matches (37 games in all) were played without crowds present.

Yet supporters retain their powerful connection to their clubs and a membership record was established in 2021, support that is gratefully received by all within the game.

Viewership numbers were again very strong while participation at grassroots levels was reassuringly strong, when so many communities were able to return to ovals this year after missing a year of on-field competition at the height of the pandemic in 2020.

On behalf of the AFL Commission, I wish to thank each board member, staff member, player, coach and volunteer from across our clubs for their contribution in 2021.

Our club presidents and chairs have devoted much more time than usual over the past two years to protecting the health of our game, confronting the many issues we have faced, on top of the heavy commitments already made in these important honorary roles.

While often a thankless task, our game would not have been able to come through this period so strongly without the leadership from clubs and I congratulate all for their dedication and commitment in the service of their clubs.

I also wish to sincerely thank the three leaders of our clubs who finished their tenures - Glen Bartlett (eight years with Melbourne), Mark LoGuidice (eight years with Carlton) and Eddie McGuire (an extraordinary 23-year commitment to Collingwood).

Each devoted many countless hundreds of hours of time volunteered to their roles, while supporting the growth of the game nationally and strongly pressing their positions to the AFL Commission.

△ Jason Ball (left) and Kim Williams both retired as Commissioners in 2021.

I wish the respective new club presidents and chairs in Jeff Browne (Collingwood), Kate Roffey (Melbourne) and Luke Sayers (Carlton) enjoyment and success in their roles.

Kate is the third female club president in our game's history and, with Melbourne's stellar performance on Grand Final day, women have now been at the helm of four of the past five premierships sides - a wonderful step forward for our game.

Jason Ball and Kim Williams both retired as Commissioners, having given outstanding service to the game in this key role. Kim was a guiding force in our key broadcast rights discussions, alongside his passion for junior development across the country, while Jason's exceptional CV at the highest level of the game, and his strong business background, were incredibly valuable to our Commission.

I wish to personally thank my fellow commissioners - Paul Bassat, Robin Bishop, Professor Helen Milroy, Andrew Newbold, Gab Trainor and Simone Wilkie - who again provided considerable support, advice, and time as we continued to navigate another challenging year at every level of the game.

The AFL executive and staff, led by our Chief Executive Gillon McLachlan, delivered two compelling seasons and overcame countless obstacles along the way by working collaboratively with clubs, partners, and governments, while always keeping our fans fully informed.

In conclusion, thank you again to everyone who loves our game, and is part of our game. The game is yours and its strength comes from your passion and investment in your team.

Richard Goyder, AO  
Chairman

# CEO'S REPORT

**GILLON McLACHLAN**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



Australian Football determined it must take a leadership stance on vaccination after nearly two years of sustained impact on our game from the onset of the COVID-19 crisis.

While our AFL and AFLW seasons were both completed in 2021 despite various challenges and hurdles, there was again impact at community and grassroots level, particularly in New South Wales and Victoria where many leagues were significantly interrupted or unable to finish seasons they had begun.

Players, coaches, umpires and administrators were consulted, working with senior medical and legal professionals, before our code became the first in this country to introduce a formal vaccination policy.

The combined approach by all the key stakeholders in our game endorsed the view of the AFL Commission that the AFL has a responsibility to provide all our people with a safe and healthy workplace and minimise the health and safety risks of COVID-19 to the wider community in which we operate.

In the lead-up to this key step, the AFL position had been to strongly encourage our football community to be vaccinated with an approved COVID-19 vaccination and allow all of us to resume our lives.

Our policy now requires players and club staff to be vaccinated to enter club and AFL facilities, while our frontline people - such as event staff, match-day officials and game development officers - will be fully vaccinated before working with the public and in the community.

For members and fans who attend our AFL games, and those who play at community level, our game will continue to rely on government and health advice and provide resources and support where we can.

This step is crucial for us after everyone involved in football has worked so hard, at every level, through these past two years to protect the game and ensure its survival.

In 2021, we started to see our game rebound and we have continued the collaboration to solve problems as they have arisen.

At community and grassroots level, participation numbers have returned to pre-COVID levels, while membership levels have hit new records.

Viewership of our game has been strong, and the standard of football, across the whole of the AFLW season and particularly through the AFL finals, has been exceptional.

We have begun to focus on thriving again and we look forward to better days ahead, and the continued growth and success of our game.

This group of Auskickers were all smiles after they presented premiership medals to the victorious Melbourne side.







## 2021 Toyota AFL Grand Final at Optus Stadium, Perth

The AFL Commission ratified an Executive recommendation on August 25 for the Grand Final to be played at Optus Stadium, after Victoria was again unable to host the game at the MCG due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The AFL had been in discussion with the respective state governments of Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia, with the five key criteria for the decision on hosting rights - safety, integrity, fans, financial and legacy.

Optus Stadium in Perth ultimately was chosen as the preferred contingency venue based on the combination of the five key criteria and the ability to accommodate the greatest number of supporters.

A capacity crowd of 61,118 made for an unforgettable atmosphere, with viewer numbers the largest in Victoria for any Grand Final in the competition's history.

## Community football and Auskick recovery plan

After two years of significant impact at community level, particularly in New South Wales and Victoria, a step-change investment will occur to rebuild the strength of community football and Auskick.

In late 2021, the Commission approved funding support for the 2022 year that will be spread across a range of key areas, including further investment in schools, junior participation, digital engagement, improved facilities for female players, financial assistance for clubs and leagues, prize freezes for participants and new approaches for attracting diverse communities to the game.

Our aspiration is to then further increase investment in community football from 2023 onwards and strengthen the national base of our game.

◁ A recovery plan for community football and Auskick is in place which will bring more joy to thousands of youngsters who play Australian Football.

## AFL club membership

AFL fans have powerful links to their clubs, and this ongoing support across generations is the greatest privilege for our game. Our clubs work incredibly hard to service their supporters and the game established an all-time record membership of 1,113,441, despite the ongoing COVID-19 impacts.

Full detail is in our Commercial Operations report, with 10 of the 18 clubs breaking their previous record and overall growth for the competition was 12 per cent against the 2020 tally of 992,854 members.

AFLW membership increased to 25,782, the highest total yet for five seasons of the competition.

## Broadcast and major corporate partners

The 2021 season delivered outstanding viewership numbers, while attendances were exceptionally pleasing when considering only 60 of 198 games in the men's season were played with no impact to capacity and 37 games (nearly one in five) were played with no crowd at all.

The support for our game remains incredibly strong and I wish to personally thank our broadcast partners - the Seven Network, Foxtel and Fox Footy and Telstra - for their ongoing support of our game.

Naming rights partners Toyota and NAB both demonstrated strong support of their AFL and AFLW partnerships, while all our AFL partners continue to actively support and build their relationship with our game.

A number of key agreements were finalised through 2021, which are detailed in the Commercial Operations section within this report.

▽ Fox Footy was one of several broadcast partners to deliver outstanding viewership numbers in 2021.





## AFLW expansion - women's football

As detailed in the Chairman's report, the AFLW competition will feature all 18 clubs for season seven from late 2022 onwards, with the addition of Essendon, Hawthorn, Port Adelaide and the Sydney Swans.

In the early part of 2022, planning work will be completed on the list expansion rules for the four new clubs with the focus in three key areas:

- ▶ Allowing the new clubs to be competitive;
- ▶ Supporting competitive balance across the competition where possible;
- ▶ Protecting the wellbeing of players.

We will grow to 540 AFLW players across all 18 clubs, become the largest employer of female athletes in the country, and present further opportunities for women and girls involved in women's football pathways, from NAB AFL Auskick to the elite competition.

## Showcase games in new locations

The ongoing impacts in 2021 of COVID-19, particularly in Victoria, did allow for clubs and the competition to showcase high-profile games in new locations for new audiences.

Two highlights in a challenging year were the Queen's Birthday encounter at the SCG between Collingwood and Melbourne and Dreamtime in the West, with Essendon meeting Richmond at Optus Stadium.

The Queen's Birthday game was the last coached for Collingwood by Nathan Buckley and continues to be linked with Freeze MND, the campaign led by Neale Daniher to find a cure for Motor Neurone Disease.

Dreamtime in the West was declared a sell-out in less than 17 hours, while some 6000 fans joined Hall of Fame member Michael Long, WA Premier Mark McGowan and 1993 Brownlow medallist Gavin Wanganeen in the pre-game 'Long Walk' march to the ground over Matagarup Bridge.

△ Hawthorn farewelled premiership coach Alastair Clarkson and premiership hero Shaun Burgoyne at the end of the 2021 season.

## Financial result highlights

The AFL's revenue increased by \$63.3m to \$738.1m, due to increased broadcast revenue and improved commercial returns. This revenue assisted in covering the following costs:

- ▶ \$301.0m to AFL clubs;
- ▶ \$29.5m on the administration of the 2021 men's and women's seasons, including travel costs to relocate clubs impacted by state border restrictions;
- ▶ \$53.0m to Game Development, an increase of \$21.6m after the COVID-19 pandemic restricted participation at community level in many states in 2020;
- ▶ \$60.2m to the AFLPA;
- ▶ \$18.5m in running the AFLW competition;
- ▶ \$23.0m to infrastructure comprising of elite and community facilities and contributions for stadia redevelopments; and
- ▶ \$1.0m to corporate and social responsibility initiatives.

## Farewell to two greats - Shaun Burgoyne and Eddie Betts

The 2021 season brought down the curtain on the player careers of two of our modern greats in Shaun Burgoyne and Eddie Betts.

Burgoyne, a four-time premiership player, became just the fifth member of the AFL's 400-club late in the 2021 season, while Betts, one of the game's great small forwards, finished on exactly 350 games, with both bowing out after round 23.

A full list of the AFL's retiring 200-club members from the 2021 season is contained in the Farewells section of this report.

## Tasmania Taskforce

As detailed in the Chairman's report, the AFL Commission received the findings of the Colin Carter report.

The AFL has since continued to work with the Tasmanian Government, under Premier Gutwein, and the Tasmania Taskforce, led by Brett Godfrey, to examine key areas of his report and potential next steps for both the Government and the AFL before any decision would be made by the AFL clubs.

## Alastair Clarkson

Alastair Clarkson concluded his brilliant tenure at Hawthorn at the end of the 2021 season, having led the Hawks in 390 games since 2005 and taking them to premierships in 2008 and 2013, 2014 and 2015.

From the start of the national competition in 1987, Clarkson sits alongside Leigh Matthews as one of only two coaches to have overseen four premierships in this era.

'Clarko' has been both passionate for the wider health of the game as well as an innovator who has led on-field trends in his time as a senior coach and we hope his skills will again be at the forefront of our game in coming years after his current sabbatical.

## Grand Final ticket pricing

Entry-level ticket prices for the 2021 Toyota AFL Grand Final were frozen for the third year in a row, after previous price freezes in 2019 and 2020, for the first decider played in Western Australia.

With the game relocated from the MCG, 24,000 tickets were made available initially to the members of the two clubs (12,000 each), while a further 10,000 tickets were set aside for sale to the general public.

▽ It was another tough year for some state leagues with fans of the Bulldogs' VFL side watching just a handful of games.

## Thank you to AFL clubs, the AFLPA and State Leagues

The continued strong leadership of club CEOs, and their support for our wider game beyond the AFL competition itself, was vital for Australian Football in being able to overcome the many challenges of the year.

Frequent short-notice fixture changes and the requirements for differing state border rules meant that fairness and equity in the premiership race were often hard or impossible to achieve at periods of the season, but clubs embraced the overall good and the requirement to keep our season on track.

Equally, the AFLPA and our players embraced the many challenges put before our game and continued to deliver outstanding performances on the field.

My thanks to Paul Marsh and his team at the AFLPA, while our game and our clubs are extremely well led by their boards and executive teams, along with our senior state leagues.

I wish to give my personal thanks to all club presidents/chairs and chief executives for their leadership and work in 2021, in being able to complete the season despite many challenges and many hurdles. Our fans and the wider football community needed our game again this year and your efforts were outstanding.

In 2021, Carlton's Cain Liddle resigned as Chief Executive after leading the Blues back to financial health during his tenure and his role was filled by Brian Cook, who has embraced a new challenge after premiership success with both West Coast and the Geelong Cats.

Steve Hocking, former General Manager of AFL Football Operations and a 199-game player with the Cats, assumed the role as Geelong Chief Executive at the conclusion to the 2021 season.

Thank you to all club and state leaders for their work through this past year.

## ENTRY-LEVEL TICKET PRICES FOR THE 2021 TOYOTA AFL GRAND FINAL WERE FROZEN FOR THE THIRD YEAR IN A ROW



## Return to Play/COVID operations workgroups

It required considerable focus through the 2021 year for the maintenance of the competition and the work of all staff at both clubs and the AFL was outstanding. Throughout the year, there were regular weekly or fortnightly meetings with club chief executives and football managers, along with regular close contact with all key stakeholders and updates provided to the full playing group.

Regular changes to borders, lockdowns and stadium capacity restrictions continue to impact Return To Crowd efforts, requiring the ability to adapt to frequently changing dynamics to provide safe environments for our fans, while maximising attendance, fan experience and match-day returns for the clubs.

## Accelerated program for female coaches

The AFL will work to accelerate the number of female coaches, particularly in the senior ranks of AFLW, by directly investing into their development and putting them in a position to develop the relevant skills and experience in elite coaching environments.

Our new Acceleration Program is designed to motivate our clubs to provide these opportunities over the next two to three years and develop a deeper cohort of qualified female coaches that can compete for coaching roles in both AFLW and AFL men's programs.

▽ Coach Simon Goodwin and captain Max Gawn raise the premiership cup, Melbourne's first since 1964.

## Congratulations to AFL premier Melbourne

Melbourne ended the longest current premierships drought in AFL history with its barnstorming finish to claim the 2021 flag, while the AFLW premierships cup was lifted by the Brisbane Lions, the third club to have claimed a flag.

Melbourne spent the majority of the season in the top two but only secured the minor premierships with a kick after the siren in the final round to defeat the Geelong Cats at GMHBA Stadium.

After wins over the Lions and the Cats to earn their Grand Final spot, the Demons trailed by three goals midway through the third term before exploding with 12 unanswered goals on their way to a 74-point victory.

Congratulations to president Kate Roffey and the board, chief executive Gary Pert and the staff and the coach and players led by Simon Goodwin and Max Gawn. The Demons have rebuilt from the bottom of the ladder over a decade and completed a brilliant premierships victory.

The Western Bulldogs had to shoulder a heavy travel load in the lead-up to the AFL Grand Final but won three successive finals and led the Demons well into the second half, before being overrun.

The club is exceptionally well led by Kylie Watson-Wheeler, the board and chief executive Ameet Bains, while the playing group under coach Luke Beveridge and captain Marcus Bontempelli was outstanding all season.



## Congratulations to AFLW premiers the Brisbane Lions

The visiting Brisbane Lions were too strong for the hot favourite Adelaide Crows at Adelaide Oval and broke through for their first premierships after two previous Grand Final disappointments.

Defender Kate Lutkins was named best-on-ground while Lions forwards Courtney Hodder and Jess Wuetschner each kicked two goals.

Congratulations to chair Andrew Wellington and the board, chief executive Greg Swann and the Lions players and staff who have been a strong team since day one of the AFLW, led by Craig Starcevich and retiring captain Emma Zielke.

The Adelaide Crows have been the dominant team of the early years of the AFLW competition but suffered from the loss of captain Chelsea Randall for the Grand Final and were unable to hold off the surging Lions.

John Olsen and Tim Silvers have led the club to be a power in the women's game, while coach Matthew Clarke and Randall lead a playing group that has created a surge of interest in the women's game across South Australia.

## Assistance from Federal and State Governments and health authorities

The AFL remains greatly appreciative to all government and health authorities, both Federal and State, for the assistance provided in enabling our seasons to be completed, with many further hurdles that needed to be overcome in 2021.

Across the two AFLW/AFL seasons, only four rounds were played without interruptions from lockdowns or border restrictions. Protocols for our clubs, players, officials and umpires to observe in training and on match-day were regularly updated in close consultation with key authorities to ensure the safest possible environment for everyone involved in our game.

## Australian Football Hall of Fame

The Australian Football Hall of Fame welcomed its first female member in 2021 with Debbie Lee inducted alongside St Kilda champion Nathan Burke, dual Brownlow medallist Chris Judd and eight-time Perth best and fairest Robert Wiley.

Lee is acknowledged as the dominant figure in the history of the women's game, before the formation of the AFLW, and her playing, coaching and administrative career across three decades has been central to the growth of football for women and girls.

As detailed in the Chairman's report, Merv McIntosh and Jack Oatey, respective greats of two of our proud state leagues in WA and SA, were both elevated to Legend status in 2021.



△ Cathy Svarc holds the premierships cup aloft.

**LEE IS ACKNOWLEDGED AS THE DOMINANT FIGURE IN THE HISTORY OF THE WOMEN'S GAME**

## Bushfire Relief grant to Western Districts Sports Club, Kangaroo Island

A further \$1.149m was granted to Kangaroo Island's Western Districts Sports Club in 2021 to support the rebuild of its community facility following the devastating 2019/2020 bushfires.

The funding will go towards the rebuild of a new pavilion that will service key football requirements and support the wider community needs in the western region of Kangaroo Island.

The initial 2020 AFL industry fundraising activities raised \$8m, with the vast majority of monies distributed at the time, before this further major grant in 2021 to help rebuild a key football community in bushfire-affected areas.

## DANIHER HAS BEEN THE TIRELESS LEADER OF THE CAMPAIGN TO FIND A CURE FOR MOTOR NEURONE DISEASE

▽ Neale Daniher was recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours after being elevated to AO.

## Football contributors recognised with national honours

Some 36 members of the Australian Football community across the country were recognised for their contributions to our game in the 2021 Queen's Birthday Honours, including the elevation of Neale Daniher to AO. Daniher has been the tireless leader of the campaign to find a cure for Motor Neurone Disease and was deservedly honoured, along with many others who give their time at community level to our game.

Australian Football owes an ongoing debt of thanks to thousands of volunteers nationally and recognition by our community in the honours' list was just reward for those in football.

AO - Neale Daniher, Dr Ian Freckleton, Peter Ivany.

AM - Joe Carrozzi, Tony Cochrane, Ian Cox,

Dr Allan Curtis, Robert Gregory, Tim Keeler, Charlie King, The Honourable David Porter, Gary Simonds, Professor Peter Yu.

OAM - Dr Peter Baquie, Colin Chirgwin, Jan Cooper, Kevin Curran, Peter De Rauch, William Doherty, Mark Durdin, Phil Emery, Robert Finn, Richard Gloede, Bec Goddard, Allan Guthrie, Associate Professor Sarah Kelly, Rosie King, Michael Long, Kevin Mitchell, Lance Netherway, David Owen, Erin Phillips, David Shaw, Patrick Smith, Rox Snare, Lawrie Woodman.



## AFL Commission and Senior Executive staff

Thank you to the members of the AFL Commission, led by chairman Richard Goyder, for their unflinching support through another enormous year of challenge for the game. I am privileged to be able to call on such wise counsel and support in the role.

The AFL farewellled Steve Hocking in 2021, who resigned as EGM Football Operations to take the role as chief executive at the Geelong Cats, after leading key change in his portfolio. He will be a great acquisition for his former club in this senior leadership role.

Andrew Dillon, AFL General Counsel and former EGM Game Development, was appointed to the role of EGM Football Operations, with his vast experience across the industry over the past two decades, while Rob Auld was appointed to the role of EGM Game Development, from November 2021.

△ Guests and officials at the Grand Final included (from left) WA Premier Mark McGowan, Melbourne president Kate Roffey, AFL CEO Gillon McLachlan, Seven West Media chairman Kerry Stokes, Western Bulldogs president Kylie Watson-Wheeler and AFL Commission chairman Richard Goyder.

I wish to thank all of my senior executive team - Travis Auld, Rob Auld, Andrew Dillon, Sarah Fair, Tanya Hosch, Walter Lee, Kylie Rogers and Brian Walsh - for their stellar work in delivering both the AFLW and AFL seasons in the face of many difficulties and continuing to drive success for the game on and off the field.

More broadly, I want to give my thanks also to the wider management and staff across the AFL for their efforts and achievements throughout 2021.

Gillon McLachlan  
Chief Executive Officer

# FOOTBALL OPERATIONS

▶ **ANDREW DILLON**  
GENERAL MANAGER FOOTBALL OPERATIONS



The AFL Football Operations Department implemented three rule adjustments for the 2021 Toyota AFL Premiership Season. Overall, it was felt the changes had a positive impact on the game, with a close and unpredictable competition across the entire season.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact the AFL industry for a second season and, with more than 120 fixture changes over the course of 2021, the Football Operations Department played a key role in ensuring AFL and AFLW matches were completed.

Strict protocols were put in place through the season to protect players, officials, staff and the wider public, with everyone involved in the game subject to regular testing throughout the season. All participants were also held accountable if they were to breach the protocols in place.

In September 2021, Andrew Dillon was appointed to the role of Executive General Manager of Football, succeeding Steve Hocking, who departed the organisation in July to take up the role as Chief Executive Officer of the Geelong Football Club. Structural changes in the Football Department saw the appointment of Brad Scott to the role of General Manager Football and Laura Kane as General Manager Competition Management.

The Toyota AFL Premiership Season returned to a 23-round season, while the NAB AFL Women's Competition increased to a nine-round home and away season with three weeks of finals.

Quarter lengths for the AFL competition returned to 20 minutes (plus time-on) in 2021 after being reduced to 16 minutes (plus time-on) in 2020. The 2021 season also saw an adjustment to the player standing the mark and the location of the mark at a kick-in was increased from 10 metres to 15 metres.

A medical substitute was introduced for the 2021 Toyota AFL Premiership Season. The medical substitute was placed as an additional player on the interchange bench but could only be activated once a player was determined by the club doctor to be medically unfit to continue to play.

▶ Carlton co-captain Patrick Cripps fires up his players in what was another tough year for the Blues.



## Competition Committee

Established in 2018, the AFL Competition Committee serves as a guide around decision-making for the AFL Commission and AFL Executive on key aspects of the future direction of the competition.

Its primary purpose is to make sure the many different streams of work across the entire AFL industry are working in concert to ensure the overall progress of the game, both on-field and commercially, covering areas such as Laws of the Game, player movement, competition structure, second-tier leagues and innovation.

The Competition Committee for 2021 comprised: Andrew Dillon (chair), Stephen Coniglio, Patrick Dangerfield, Chris Davies, Chris Fagan, Simon Garlick, Andrew Ireland, Rob Kerr, Nicole Livingstone, Josh Mahoney, Brett Murphy, Brett Ratten, Justin Reeves, Alan Richardson, Kylie Rogers, Brett Rosebury, Brad Scott, Craig Vozzo, Kylie Watson-Wheeler, Jacob Weitering and Simone Wilkie.

### THE AFL COMPETITION COMMITTEE SERVES AS A GUIDE AROUND DECISION-MAKING ... ON KEY ASPECTS OF THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF THE COMPETITION

▽ Players standing the mark were not permitted to move in any direction before "play on" was called.

## Game adjustments for 2021

The following game adjustments were made for the 2021 Toyota AFL Premiership Season:

### 1. A maximum of 75 total player interchanges per match

Rotations decreased from 90 per match in 2020 to 75 per match in 2021.

### 2. Player standing the mark

The defending player was not permitted to move off the mark in any direction prior to "play on" being called, and the defensive team was not able to substitute a player on the mark. A 50-metre penalty would apply for breaches.

### 3. Location of the mark at kick-ins

The mark was set at 15 metres from the centre of the kick-off line towards the centre of the ground at kick-ins, having previously been set at 10 metres.

The Commission also accepted the following adjustment to be implemented in the 2021 VFL and East Coast second-tier competition:

- ▶ Two players to be stationed inside 50 metres at each boundary throw-in stoppage
- ▶ A minimum of two players from each team were required to be inside 50 metres at all boundary throw-ins. Any team that failed to comply within 12 seconds would concede a free kick.



## AFL Review Centre

The AFL Review Centre (ARC) located within Marvel Stadium continued as the central location for the score review system, match review, concussion-spotting and umpire review process for the 2021 Toyota AFL Premiership Season.

The scope of the ARC, powered by RMIT University, continued to expand to also serve as the central hub for the operations and broadcast of the 2021 NAB AFL Women's Draft, the 2021 AFL Trade Period and the 2021 NAB AFL Draft.

## AAMI Community Series

The 2021 AAMI Community Series saw clubs scheduled to play one match in their home state as part of the pre-season between March 4-8.

AAMI partnered with the AFL, with a focus on regional and suburban venues as all 18 teams played in state-based matches leading into the 2021 Toyota AFL Premiership Season.

Clubs were initially scheduled to play two matches as part of pre-season, however, the decision to revise the fixture to one match per club was made as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic to minimise risk by avoiding travel for the men's programs before the home and away season.

Games were played at Arden St Oval (Vic), Flinders University Stadium (SA), Giants Stadium (NSW), GMHBA Stadium (Vic), Marvel Stadium (Vic), Metricon Stadium (Qld) and Optus Stadium (WA) and were all televised live on Fox Footy, Kayo and through the official AFL Live app, thanks to Telstra.

▽ The 2021 Grand Final umpires' line-up: standing (left to right) - Michael Marantelli (boundary), Chris Gordon (boundary), Michael Barlow (boundary); seated (left to right) - Steven Axon (goal), Brett Rosebury (field), Jacob Mollison (field), Matt Stevic (field), Stephen Williams (goal).

## Hall of Fame

The 2021 Australian Football Hall of Fame was held as a televised event with two Legend elevations and four players - including the first woman - inducted into the Australian Football Hall of Fame to recognise their outstanding contribution to our game.

Three-time Sandover Medal winner Merv McIntosh and 10-time SANFL premiership coach Jack Oatey AM were both named as an official Legend of the Game, as detailed in the Chairman's report.

McIntosh and Oatey, the 30th and 31st Legends of the Game, were joined by four new inductees into the Hall of Fame in Debbie Lee (women's football pioneer, 302 VWFL games), Chris Judd (preiership captain, two-time Brownlow medallist, Norm Smith medallist and six-time All-Australian), Nathan Burke (four-time All-Australian and club captain) and Robert Wiley (eight-time club best and fairest, three premierships and two-time All-Australian).

### McINTOSH AND OATEY, THE 30TH AND 31ST LEGENDS OF THE GAME, WERE JOINED BY FOUR NEW INDUCTEES





## AFLW

The NAB AFL Women's Competition saw 14 teams compete in 2021, with the remaining four AFL clubs - Essendon, Hawthorn, Port Adelaide, Sydney Swans - granted a licence to join in season seven of the competition.

A single ladder was in place for 2021 with the regulation of match-ups seeing the competition divided into bands of the top four, middle six, and bottom four based on 2020 ladder positions to ensure maximum competition integrity.

The season was disrupted as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which saw multiple fixture changes throughout the season. The 2021 Grand Final was played between the Brisbane Lions and Adelaide Crows, with the Lions winning their first AFLW premiership in front of 22,934 fans at Adelaide Oval.

The W Awards were held at five satellite venues across the country announcing the winners of the AFLW Mark of the Year, Coates Hire Goal of the Year, Toyota AFL Women's All-Australian Team, BHP AFLW Community Coach of the Year, NAB AFL Women's Rising Star Award, AFL Women's Leading Goalkicker Award and the AFL Women's Best and Fairest Award.

The 2021 AFL Women's Best and Fairest saw joint winners for the first time, with Collingwood co-captain Brianna Davey and Fremantle midfielder Kiara Bowers taking out the award.

## AFLW Injury Survey

The 2021 AFLW Injury Report showed the lowest observed level of anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) injuries since the inception of the NAB AFLW Competition in 2017.

Concussion incidence (whether a match was missed or not) grew slightly from previous years (8.27 in 2021 increased from 4.76 in 2020), due to the changes to the Concussion Management Guidelines for the 2021 AFLW season, which saw players sidelined for at least 12 days following concussion.

## Goal and Mark of the Year

Fremantle's Caleb Serong was named as the winner of the rebel Goal of the Year, while Richmond's Shai Bolton was named as the winner of the Four'N Twenty Mark of the Year Award.

◀ Brett Rosebury officiated in his ninth AFL Grand Final and passed his 450-game milestone in 2021.

## Umpiring

The AFL Umpiring Department played a key role in ensuring the progression of the season in 2021, managing multiple logistical challenges and obstacles to complete the season.

The commitment to complete the season saw several umpires moving states and spending extended amounts of time on the road.

Before the start of the season, AFL umpires were central to the education and implementation of the rule adjustments for the 2021 season, conducting more than 500 club visits during the pre-season.

Dan Richardson was appointed to the position of Head of Umpiring, succeeding Grant Williams who took on a senior role within the AFL Talent team.

In May, it was announced that Hayden Kennedy would resign from his position as AFL Umpires Head Coach after eight years in the role. Making his AFL/VFL umpiring debut in 1988, Hayden umpired a then-record 495 games, including five Grand Finals. He served as an Assistant Coach before his promotion to the Head Coach role in 2014. Michael Jennings was promoted to the AFL Umpires Head Coach role after serving as an Assistant Coach during the past eight seasons.

Field umpire Dean Margetts announced his retirement after 377 games following the round 22 match between Fremantle and the West Coast Eagles. An AFL Life Member, Dean presented the 2021 Grand Final umpires with their medals after the Grand Final at Optus Stadium.

### 2021 Toyota AFL Grand Final Umpires

**Field:** Brett Rosebury, Matt Stevic, Jacob Mollison.  
**Emergency -** Simon Meredith.

**Boundary:** Michael Barlow, Michael Marantelli, Christopher Gordon, Matthew Konetschka.

**Emergency -** Ben Macdonald.

**Goal:** Steven Axon, Stephen Williams.  
**Emergency -** Sam Walsh.

### 2021 milestones

**450 AFL matches**  
Brett Rosebury (field)

**400 AFL matches**  
Simon Meredith (field)

**350 AFL matches**  
Adam Coote (boundary)  
Ray Chamberlain (field)  
Chris Donlon (field)  
Chris Gordon (boundary)

### Boundary umpiring games record

Mark Thomson, 405th game in round four.  
Ended the season on 418 games.

### All-Australian umpires

Matt Stevic (field)  
Michael Marantelli (boundary)  
Steven Axon (goal)

## Match Review

The Match Review model of a single decision-maker continued in 2021, with Match Review Officer Michael Christian assessing reportable incidents from all AFL and AFLW matches.

The AFL Commission approved recommendations relating to the AFL and AFLW Match Review and Tribunal to ensure the systems, guidelines and interpretations continue to evolve with the trends of the game:

- ▶ The definition of 'high' contact expanded to cover if there is a careless or intentional dangerous tackle which has the potential for injury to be caused through dangerous high contact with the ground but where high contact does not actually occur;
- ▶ The guideline in relation to upgrading impact-based on the potential to cause injury expanded to capture all intentional strikes (not limited to head-high strikes only); and
- ▶ The 'contesting the ball' exception in relation to high bumps and forceful front-on contact tightened by changing the requirement that "the Player was contesting the ball and did not have a realistic alternative way to contest the ball" to "the Player was contesting the ball and it was reasonable for the Player to contest the ball in that way".

## 2021 TRIBUNAL STATS

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total MRO charges	160	272	188	207	212
Number of players accepting prescribed penalty (%)	155 (98%)	245 (93%)	169 (92%)	181/204	183 (86%)
Number of players accepting prescribed suspension (%)	39 (93%)	22 (66%)	16 (57%)	14/23	17 (61%)
Tribunal hearings	5	27	19	26	29
Direct Tribunal referrals	2	12	4	3	5
Number of charges upheld at Tribunal (%)	2 (67%)	9 (60%)	10 (66%)	16/23	15 (62%)
Number of charges not sustained at Tribunal (%)	1 (33%)	5 (33%)	1 (7%)	6/23	5 (21%)
Number of charges downgraded at Tribunal (%)	0 (0%)	1 (7%)	4 (27%)	2/23	4 (17%)
Number of players suspended	38	36	26	21	26
Matches lost through suspension	66	64	28	30	42
Average suspension length in matches	1.53	1.68	1.04	1.43	1.62
Longest suspension in matches	6	8	2	4	6
Appeals	1	2	1	1	3
Appeals upheld	1	1	0	1	3
Appeals dismissed	0	1	1	0	0
Classifiable offences	122	113	107	112	133
Low-level classifiable offences (\$)	80 (\$89,000)	78 (\$161,000)	82 (\$178,000)	88 (\$107,500)	105 (\$229,000)
Fixed financial sanctions (\$)	37 (\$50,500)	150 (\$209,000)	78 (\$106,000)	92 (\$62,250)	75 (\$87,500)
Intentional charges	60	44	45	23	31
Careless charges	62	69	62	87	98

## AFL Injury Report

The 2020 AFL Injury Survey Report showed the overall injury incidence, prevalence and recurrence rates had remained relatively stable when compared with recent years.

The total injury incidence (number of new injuries per club per season) was 33.1 new injuries per club in 2020 while the three most common injuries in 2020 were hamstring strains, calf strains and medical illness, which was consistent with the 2019 season.

Hamstring strains remain the most common injury in the AFL, with an incidence of 4.86 new injuries per club, and the most common cause of matches missed, with 15 AFL matches missed per club.

Calf strains were the second most common injury, with an incidence of 2.61 new injuries per club in 2020.

The injury recurrence rate remains low at five per cent and has been relatively stable over the past five years.

The AFL has observed that concussion incidence (whether a match was missed or not) remains relatively stable compared with previous years, with 6.75 per 1000 player hours in 2020 compared with 6.54 in 2019. The results of the report have a direct impact on the AFL's investment into injury research across all levels of the game, from the AFL competition to grassroots football.



## Mental health

The Industry Mental Health Steering Committee, chaired by AFL Commissioner Professor Helen Milroy, guided the AFL mental health team's actions through the year with a focus on how to best support the industry during the shutdown period and subsequently the 2021 AFL season.

An increase in mental health services was initiated to respond to increases in uptake of support, including providing culturally safe psychological services for Indigenous players and staff.

While the AFL has put in place systems to identify and respond quickly to mental health challenges, a significant part of the AFL industry's mental health strategy continues to focus squarely on prevention.

## AFLW and AFL All-Australian selection panels

Personnel changes were made to the respective All-Australian selection panels for the 2021 NAB AFL Women's Competition and the 2021 Toyota AFL Premiership Season.

Courtney Cramey and Melissa Hickey accepted invitations to join the AFLW panel, after being high-performing senior players in the opening four years of the NAB AFL Women's Competition.

Jude Bolton and Nick Riewoldt each accepted invitations to join the AFL panel, with both having had outstanding careers at the elite level.

△ Richmond star Dustin Martin suffered a serious kidney injury in round 18.

## AFLW All-Australian selection panel

Nicole Livingstone (chair), Sarah Black, Courtney Cramey, Tim Harrington, Melissa Hickey, Andrew Dillon, Sharelle McMahon, Kelli Underwood, Josh Vanderloo, Shelley Ware.

## AFL All-Australian selection panel

Gillon McLachlan (chair), Kevin Bartlett, Jude Bolton, Andrew Dillon, Glen Jakovich, Chris Johnson, Cameron Ling, Matthew Richardson, Nick Riewoldt, Warren Tredrea.

## A SIGNIFICANT PART OF THE AFL INDUSTRY'S MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY CONTINUES TO FOCUS SQUARELY ON PREVENTION



# AFL WOMEN'S

▶ **NICOLE LIVINGSTONE OAM**  
GENERAL MANAGER WOMEN'S FOOTBALL



After the 2020 NAB AFLW season was forced into recess due to the emerging COVID-19 pandemic, there was one clear certainty for the 2021 season - everything possible would be done to complete a nine-round season and three weeks of finals to award the Premiership Cup.

It still presented a unique NAB AFLW season in 2021. Challenges were faced down. Clubs, players, umpires and administrators remained calm, agile, and focused to ensure we delivered the best AFLW season yet.

Teams were temporarily moved from their home bases, match venues were changed within 24 hours and the season was brought forward by one week, all to protect the health and safety of our people and the broader community.

To witness the Brisbane Lions hold up the Premiership Cup, in front of a crowd of 22,934 at Adelaide Oval in April, was a testament to the hard work and dedication of the broader women's football community.

In 2021, we also announced the expansion of our competition with all 18 AFL clubs to field a women's side in season seven, welcoming new supporters to our game and allowing our competition to feel whole. Congratulations and welcome to the Essendon, Hawthorn, Port Adelaide and Sydney Swans football clubs.

At all levels, the women's game continues to grow from the grassroots to the elite. Many girls and women have not had the ability to play the game they love during the pandemic and we look forward to welcoming them back to football fields across the nation in the coming year.

Our major partnership with NAB has not only enabled our competition to capture the hearts of football fans all over the country, it has also assisted us to inspire the next generation of talent coming through our women's football pathways. As our game continues to grow, we thank NAB for its support in backing the current and future generation of AFLW stars.

▶ Brisbane Lions players (left to right) Tahlia Hickie, Orla O'Dwyer and Jade Ellenger celebrate the Lions' round one victory over Richmond.



## 2021 NAB AFL Women's Competition

The 2021 NAB AFL Women's Competition consisted of a nine-week home and away season followed by a three-week finals series - the longest NAB AFLW season to date - with ticketing for adults introduced for the first time, while entry remained free for children.

The extended finals series welcomed the introduction of qualifying finals one week before the preliminary finals, where the highest-ranked winner earned the right to host the 2021 NAB AFLW Grand Final.

The Brisbane Lions 6.2 (38) defeated the Adelaide Crows 3.2 (20) to win their maiden NAB AFLW Competition premiership, in front of 22,934 people at Adelaide Oval.

Led by captain Emma Zielke, the Lions were victorious under the guidance of inaugural Brisbane Lions AFLW coach Craig Starcevich, with Brisbane defender Kate Lutkins awarded the Best on Ground Medal.

## AFLW Premiership Cup Ambassador

Jamie Howell from Yeronga South Brisbane Devils Football Club was selected as the 2021 NAB AFLW Premiership Cup Ambassador. Jamie, who is profoundly deaf, captured the hearts of many in 2020 when her teammates surprised her by performing a rendition of their club theme song in Auslan, following a win in the QAFLW league. As part of her role, Jamie presented the AFLW Premiership Cup to the Brisbane Lions following their Grand Final victory over the Adelaide Crows.

## AFLW Community Cup Ambassadors

For the first time, seven representatives from each state and territory were selected as NAB AFLW Community Cup Ambassadors.

Jo Butland (Qld), Charmaine Rogers (WA), Yvette Andrews (NSW/ACT), Lateesha Jeffrey (NT), Shona MacInnes (Vic), Jodie Mather (Tas) and Paul Modra (SA) were selected as the inaugural NAB AFLW Community Cup Ambassadors for their outstanding contribution to female football.

The NAB AFLW Community Cup Ambassador program was established to recognise members of the female football community who were instrumental in facilitating and nurturing the remarkable growth of women's football.

Each of the Ambassadors attended the NAB AFLW Grand Final in Adelaide and their community football clubs received a \$1000 grant from the AFL Women's Football Fund to recognise the outstanding contribution to women's football in their local community.

▽ The pre-Grand Final build-up saw Cup Ambassador Jamie Howell show off the cup to Lions captain Emma Zielke, Lions coach Craig Starcevich, Crows coach Matthew Clarke and Crows acting captain Angela Foley.



## NAB AFLW Competition Expansion

Following a call for NAB AFLW licence submissions in May 2021, the AFL Commission announced in August that all 18 clubs would field a NAB AFLW team from the 2022-23 season onwards, with the final four AFL clubs - Essendon, Hawthorn, Port Adelaide and the Sydney Swans - all granted a licence to enter the competition in season seven.

The Commission endorsed submissions provided by the four clubs that outlined their readiness to enter the national competition, including detailing their resourcing, team build strategy, corporate support and investment into their AFLW program, fan base growth and facilities.

With an additional four clubs entering the NAB AFLW Competition in season seven, the total number of players will grow to 540 across all 18 clubs, making the NAB AFLW Competition the largest employer of female athletes in the country.

◀ Adelaide star Erin Phillips enjoyed another stellar season in 2021, making the All-Australian team for the third time.



## AFLW Competition Committee

Throughout 2021, the AFLW Competition Committee met on four occasions to provide guidance to the AFL Commission and Executive around major issues affecting the women's game.

The key priority of the committee surrounded the successful delivery of the 2021 NAB AFLW season and awarding a premier, while adapting to challenges presented by the pandemic.

The Competition Committee recruited six new members in Breeanna Brock, Jessica Burger, Trent Cooper, Michelle Cowan, Bec Goddard and Kate Roffey, while Mark Evans, Phil Harper, Alicia Janz, Laura Kane and Peta Searle retired from the Committee after outstanding service.

▽ Melbourne's Tyla Hanks was a clear winner of the 2021 NAB AFLW Rising Star award.

## AFLW Best and Fairest

Collingwood co-captain and All-Australian captain Brianna Davey and Fremantle's All-Australian vice-captain Kiara Bowers were named the dual 2021 AFLW Best and Fairest winners.

In the first tied count, Bowers polled one vote in round nine to join Davey at the top of the leaderboard, while Davey was voteless in her side's loss to Adelaide, with the pair sharing the medal with 15 votes apiece.

## 2021 AFL Women's All-Australian team

The selection panel of Steve Hocking (chair), Sarah Black, Courtney Cramey, Tim Harrington, Mel Hickey, Nicole Livingstone, Sharelle McMahon, Kelli Underwood, Josh Vanderloo and Shelley Ware named the following players as All-Australians:

**Backs:** Sarah Allan (Adelaide), Meg McDonald (Geelong)

**Half-backs:** Ruby Schleicher (Collingwood), Kate Lutkins (Brisbane Lions), Janelle Cuthbertson (Fremantle)

**Centres:** Monique Conti (Richmond), Kiara Bowers (Fremantle), Georgia Patrikios (St Kilda)

**Half-forwards:** Jasmine Garner (North Melbourne), Katie Brennan (Richmond), Ellie Blackburn (Western Bulldogs)

**Forwards:** Erin Phillips (Adelaide), Chloe Molloy (Collingwood)

**Followers:** Breann Moody (Carlton), Brianna Davey (Collingwood), Alyce Parker (GWS Giants)

**Interchange:** Ebony Marinoff (Adelaide), Darcy Vescio (Carlton), Brittany Bonnici (Collingwood), Karen Paxman (Melbourne), Emma Kearney (North Melbourne)

**Coach:** Craig Starcevich (Brisbane Lions)

**Captain:** Brianna Davey (Collingwood)

**Vice-captain:** Kiara Bowers (Fremantle)

## Mark and Goal of the Year

Danielle Ponter (Adelaide Crows) won the 2021 Four'N Twenty AFLW Mark of the Year Award and Courtney Hodder (Brisbane Lions) won the rebel Goal of the Year Award.

## Leading Goalkicker

Darcy Vescio from Carlton won the 2021 AFLW Leading Goalkicker Award, ending the home and away season with a career-high 16 goals.



## NAB AFLW Rising Star

Melbourne's Tyla Hanks won the 2021 NAB AFLW Rising Star award with 48 votes, ahead of Richmond's Ellie McKenzie (32) and the West Coast Eagles' Mikayla Bowen (22).

The 21-year-old played her junior footy with Beaconsfield Junior Football Club and was selected with pick six from Gippsland Power in the 2018 NAB AFLW Draft.

Following a permanent move to the midfield, Hanks featured in all nine games in the 2021 home and away season, where she averaged 18.7 disposals and 2.5 inside 50s, up from 10.4 disposals and 1.4 inside 50s in 2020.

## Club membership record

An AFLW club membership record was set, with the combined club tally reaching 25,782 members, surpassing the previous figure of 20,849 set in 2020.

This marked the fifth straight year an AFLW club membership record had been achieved since the competition was established in 2017, with eight clubs notching individual records - the Adelaide Crows, the Brisbane Lions, Carlton, Collingwood, Fremantle, the Geelong Cats, the Gold Coast Suns and the Western Bulldogs.

## Pride Round

After the success of the Western Bulldogs v Carlton Pride Game across the previous three seasons, the inaugural AFLW Pride Round was launched in round two of the 2021 season.

During the round, all AFLW umpires wore rainbow-coloured sweatbands, while goal umpires exchanged their traditional white flags for rainbow ones. Five clubs - the Adelaide Crows, the Brisbane Lions, Carlton, Geelong and the Western Bulldogs - also designed and wore their own Pride Round guernsey to mark the occasion.

Tickets for three games during Pride Round sold out ahead of match-day - Western Bulldogs v Carlton, North Melbourne v St Kilda and the QClash between the Brisbane Lions and Gold Coast Suns.



▽ The AFLW launched its inaugural Pride Round in 2021 while Aunty Joy Murphy AO was selected as the Indigenous Round Honouree.

## Indigenous Round

For the first time, the AFLW launched an Indigenous Round in round five of the 2021 season. In honour of her contribution to Australian Football, senior Aboriginal Elder of the Wurundjeri People of Melbourne and its surrounds, Aunty Joy Murphy AO, was selected as the 2021 AFLW Indigenous Round Honouree.

As part of the dedicated round, all AFLW clubs wore specially designed Indigenous Round guernseys, while umpires donned the 2020 AFL Sir Doug Nicholls Round umpire uniforms, representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Ground signage at all matches also included a representation of the Aboriginal women's art symbol on the outside of the centre circle and featured the name of the traditional owners of the land at each venue.

## Injury Report

The 2021 AFLW Injury Report showed the lowest-observed level of anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) injuries since the inception of the NAB AFLW Competition in 2017. Concussion incidence (whether a match was missed or not) grew slightly from previous years (8.27 in 2021 increased from 4.76 in 2020), due to the changes to the Concussion Management Guidelines for the 2021 AFLW season, which saw players sidelined for at least 12 days following concussion.





## BHP Coaching Academy

The BHP Women's Coaching Academy announced its cohort for the 2021-22 program which started on October 25, 2021. The 2022 BHP Women's Coaching Academy participants are:

- ▶ **Lauren Arnell** - development coach/female head coach, Brisbane Lions Academy
- ▶ **Elise Coventry** - AFLW development coach, Geelong
- ▶ **Courtney Cramey** - AFLW assistant coach, Adelaide Crows
- ▶ **Jacara Egan** - assistant coach under-19 men's/women's, Calder Cannons
- ▶ **Pia Faletti** - Rogers Cup head coach/league assistant coach, Subiaco FC Women's
- ▶ **Daisy Pearce** - AFLW captain, Melbourne
- ▶ **Katherine Smith** - head coach Premier Women's team, Macquarie University FC
- ▶ **Emma Zielke** - AFLW assistant coach, Brisbane Lions.

The Academy aims to support and develop the existing women's coaching group, while identifying and accelerating the development of the next generation of talent.

The coaches who completed their program in 2021 were Emma Grant, Natasha Hardy, Mel Hickey, Shannon Millar, Dale Robinson, Lisa Roper, Emma Sampson and Sam Virgo.

◀ Skipper Katie Brennan marks strongly in the Tigers' Indigenous Round match against the Geelong Cats.

## AFLW Trade Period/ NAB AFLW Draft

The 2021 NAB AFL Women's Sign and Trade period saw 13 trades between AFLW clubs. The 2021 NAB AFLW Draft was held virtually due to the ongoing COVID restrictions, telecast via the AFLW app and *womens.afl*, with draftees tuning in from their home state alongside their friends and families.

The Gold Coast Suns named Charlie Rowbottom from the Oakleigh Chargers as the No. 1 selection in the 2021 NAB AFLW Draft, with a total of 59 players selected by the 14 AFLW clubs.

### Father-Daughter selection

Georgia Campbell, the daughter of former Demon and Bulldog Adrian, was drafted to Melbourne as a father-daughter selection with pick 41 in the 2021 NAB AFLW Draft.



▶ The Gold Coast Suns selected Charlie Rowbottom from the Oakleigh Chargers with the No. 1 pick in the 2021 NAB AFLW Draft.

## 2021 NAB AFLW DRAFT SELECTIONS (FIRST ROUND)

No.	Player	Selected by	Club
1	Charlie Rowbottom	Gold Coast Suns	Oakleigh Chargers
2	Georgie Prespakis	Geelong Cats	Calder Cannons
3	Charlotte Thomas	West Coast Eagles	Subiaco Women's FC
4	Ella Friend	St Kilda	Greater Western Victoria Rebels
5	Stella Reid	Richmond	Oakleigh Chargers
6	Teagan Levi	Gold Coast Suns	Bond University
7	Zali Friswell	Geelong Cats	Calder Cannons
8	Ashanti Bush	Gold Coast Suns	Hawthorn
9	Gabbi Featherston	Geelong Cats	Geelong Falcons
10	Annie Lee	Carlton	Geelong Falcons
11	Keeley Sherar	Carlton	Eastern Ranges
12	Ashleigh Richards	St Kilda	Dandenong Stingrays
13	Tess Craven	North Melbourne	Geelong Falcons
14	Amy Franklin	Fremantle	Claremont Women's FC
15	Annabel Johnson	Geelong Cats	Geelong Cats
16	Emelia Yassir	Richmond	Calder Cannons
17	Zoe Prowse	Adelaide	Sturt
18	Maggie Harmer	Brisbane	Maroochydore WFC

# BROADCASTING

## ▶ TRAVIS AULD

EXECUTIVE GENERAL MANAGER FINANCE, CLUBS AND BROADCAST



The ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic meant that ensuring the completion of both the AFLW and AFL seasons required an extraordinary level of additional effort and adaptability across the industry for the second year running.

The decision was made to hold the 2021 Toyota AFL Grand Final at Optus Stadium in Perth, after the Victorian Government agreed to the event being relocated from the MCG due to the ongoing effects of the pandemic. The West Australian Government and the WA community must be commended and thanked for the way they embraced the finals series and supported the game.

The AFL acknowledges the flexibility and understanding of stakeholders across the game, including broadcasters, clubs, players, football department staff, umpires and fans. The industry-wide commitment, hard work and dedication towards ensuring the AFLW and AFL seasons would continue and conclude was integral to getting two full finals series played and premierships awarded in 2021, something not to be taken for granted after another tumultuous year.

▶ Brisbane's Mitch Robinson went over the top - literally - to celebrate teammate Zac Bailey's winning goal after the siren against Collingwood in round three at Marvel Stadium.





## Fixture changes and flexibility critical in delivering the AFLW and AFL seasons

The challenges presented to our elite game in 2021 arguably created an even greater need for flexibility compared with 2020.

Thanks to incredible support from television and radio broadcast partners, the competition was able to navigate these challenges and deliver for our fans, with so many who would normally attend games watching and listening from their homes.

Remote broadcast coverage from studios was often required, as was hotel quarantine for broadcast personnel and the need for partners to respond quickly to changing fixtures and border restrictions by making significant last-minute logistical arrangements.

Fixturing was regularly revised, including to the point where AFL teams were travelling by air, only to learn mid-flight of changes to state border policy, requiring matches to be rescheduled within days to a different state.

△ Tom Doedee evades a desperate Gryan Miers in Adelaide's upset win over Geelong in the opening round.

At one stage during the season, all clubs were relocated to Victoria at short notice due to border restrictions, while later in the season, as a COVID outbreak emerged in Victoria, all teams moved to Queensland. Both New South Wales clubs, the Sydney Swans and GWS Giants, spent a large proportion of the second part of the season away from their home state due to the COVID outbreak in NSW.

The 2021 Toyota AFL Finals Series was played entirely out of Victoria, with two historic matches in Tasmania in week one while Optus Stadium in Perth and Adelaide Oval each hosted finals for Victorian-based clubs who could not play in their home state.

Equally, the AFLW season required considerable agility across the competition and the GWS Giants were forced for an extended period to relocate to South Australia and Victoria at the start of the AFLW season due to border restrictions.

## Broadcast highlights

### Toyota AFL Finals Series and Toyota AFL Grand Final

The Toyota AFL Grand Final between Melbourne and the Western Bulldogs, which attracted a national average audience of 4.16 million on the Seven Network, was the highest-watched television program in Australia.

It was with the highest-ever audience in Melbourne and the highest-ever in Perth for an AFL match since 2013 (even exceeding West Coast winning the 2018 premiership).

The significant investment in the pre-match show and adjusted timeslot also saw a record pre-match show audience of nearly two million viewers. The AFL Grand Final achieved the highest average audience since 2016 and was up 40 per cent compared with the 2019 decider.

There were significant television ratings outcomes throughout September. Week one of the Toyota AFL Finals Series saw a total average audience of 5.87 million, a 13 per cent increase compared with the first week of the 2019 Toyota AFL Finals Series. A week later, the Brisbane Lions v Western Bulldogs Saturday night semi-final - which was decided by one point - attracted an overall audience of 1.77 million, the largest semi-final audience of the past four seasons.

The AFL Grand Final in Perth was also broadcast legend Dennis Cometti's final radio call on Triple M after more than 50 years in television and radio broadcasting.



▽ The Yolngu Radio broadcast team, which included Elcho Island product Baykali Ganambarr (left), former Lions star Darryl White and Nhulunbuy local William Gumbula, called the Lions-Bulldogs semi-final in traditional language.

### Toyota AFL Premiership Season

Viewership for the 2021 AFL season saw solid growth at nine per cent for home and away games, compared with pre-COVID 2019 levels.

Due to the significant changes to the 2020 season, including shortened matches, a long lay-off with no matches due to the onset of the pandemic and that season extending well into October, comparisons between 2021 and 2019 provide a more accurate reflection of 2021 performance.

Streaming has been the primary driver in viewership figures increasing almost 296 per cent relative to 2019 - bolstering figures with younger demographics and adding an average 90,000 viewers per game.

AFL TV ratings (free-to-air and subscription) continue to be healthy and are seeing less declines than overall trends on these platforms.

The highly successful round 12 Dreamtime Game in Perth between Essendon and Richmond at Optus Stadium attracted 1.12 million television viewers nationally, making it the highest-rating Saturday night home and away match in seven years.

Notable radio broadcast achievements included having the Dreamtime Game in Perth and then the Brisbane Lions v Western Bulldogs semi-final called in traditional language, a collaboration with Yolngu Radio and a first for the AFL.



### NAB AFLW competition

The AFLW attracted its highest-ever viewership in 2021, with a 58 per cent increase in viewership relative to 2019, reaching 5.4 million viewers.

The season started in great fashion as round one delivered the highest-rating round of AFLW since 2018 and the third highest in its history (behind rounds one and two of the inaugural season in 2017).

The AFLW 2021 season concluded with the Brisbane Lions' victory over the Adelaide Crows, with an average audience of 118,000 on Foxtel and Kayo, up 50 per cent on the 2019 Grand Final, ranking it as the fourth-highest rating AFLW game ever on subscription television.

The Brisbane Lions v Collingwood final in week two, played in the Saturday twilight timeslot, was the second most-watched final with an average audience of more than 215,000 viewers, followed by the Adelaide Crows v Melbourne final on the same weekend (187,000).

The 2021 AFLW season attracted average audiences of 35,000 across 68 games on Foxtel and Kayo, up 17 per cent on the similar 2019 year and up eight per cent on the shortened 46-game 2020 season.

## THE AFLW ATTRACTED ITS HIGHEST-EVER VIEWERSHIP IN 2021

## Broadcast partner support critical in keeping seasons going

After reaching new agreements with broadcast partners Seven West Media, Foxtel and Telstra in 2020, which extended coverage rights of the AFL and AFLW competitions by two years across the 2023 and 2024 seasons, the AFL was able to continue to bring games to fans across the country due in large part to the strength of these relationships with broadcast partners.

The past two seasons have presented unprecedented challenges and the AFL looks forward to continuing to work with our valued partners for at least the next three years.

The AFL acknowledges the ongoing support provided by radio broadcast partners Triple M, 3AW, ABC, Sports Entertainment Network, FIVEaa, K Rock and NIRS.

▽ Port Adelaide's Ollie Wines in the aftermath of his historic Brownlow Medal win as he is interviewed by MC Basil Zempilas.

## Brownlow Medal

The Brownlow Medal was presented to the League's fairest and best player, marking the 94th year of the prestigious award.

The event was held across the country with five state-based venues hosting players for the count, including a West Australian event held at Optus Stadium and broadcast by the Seven Network. Many invited players attended the location closest to their residence to avoid challenges presented by COVID-related border restrictions, but with a number of the leading candidates in Perth.

Brownlow audiences on the Seven Network of 1.16 million saw an increase of 13 per cent - reflecting changes to a shorter format for the event and a "closer" count before the winner, Port Adelaide's Ollie Wines, was known in the final round.



## MOST WATCHED GAMES FOR 2021 - HOME AND AWAY SEASON

AFL			
Match	Round	Timeslot	Average TV audience
Collingwood v Essendon	6	Sunday afternoon	1,186,678
Western Bulldogs v Melbourne	11	Friday night	1,160,841
Melbourne v Brisbane Lions	12	Friday night	1,157,800
Richmond v Carlton	1	Thursday night	1,155,048
Essendon v Richmond	12	Saturday night	1,124,861
AFLW			
Match	Round	Timeslot	Average TV audience
Carlton v Collingwood	1	Thursday night	313,879
Western Bulldogs v Carlton	2	Friday night	269,346
Richmond v Brisbane Lions	1	Sunday afternoon	182,935
Western Bulldogs v Melbourne	4	Sunday afternoon	178,758
Richmond v Collingwood	3	Sunday afternoon	174,090

## MOST WATCHED AFL GAMES BY MARKET IN 2021

AFL				
Market	Match	Round	Timeslot	Average TV audience
NSW	Melbourne v Sydney Swans	8	Saturday night	143,320
QLD	Brisbane Lions v Geelong Cats	15	Thursday night	161,907
VIC	Essendon v Richmond	12	Saturday night	571,780
WA	West Coast v Fremantle	7	Sunday twilight	279,311
SA	Port Adelaide v Adelaide Crows	8	Saturday night	152,163
TAS	Melbourne v Collingwood	13	Monday afternoon	52,578
AFLW				
Market	Match	Round	Timeslot	Average TV audience
NSW	Western Bulldogs v Carlton	2	Friday night	21,997
QLD	Carlton v Collingwood	1	Thursday night	25,822
VIC	Carlton v Collingwood	1	Thursday night	150,493
WA	Fremantle v GWS Giants	1	Sunday twilight	54,208
SA	Adelaide Crows v Western Bulldogs	8	Sunday twilight	51,076
TAS	Carlton v Collingwood	1	Thursday night	16,998

▷ The round one clash between Carlton and Collingwood was the most watched 2021 AFLW game in three of the League's six markets.



# GAME DEVELOPMENT

## ▶ ANDREW DILLON

EXECUTIVE GENERAL MANAGER FOOTBALL OPERATIONS,  
LEGAL AND INTEGRITY, GENERAL COUNSEL



The Game Development team provided critical advice and support to all levels of the game around the country as leagues and clubs navigated through an interrupted year of football as the COVID-19 pandemic forced flexibility and agility for everyone involved in football.

In 2021, overall community football participation across the country reached pre-COVID 2019 levels - a fantastic outcome given all the disruptions faced during the past two years.

More than 820,000 people were registered to participate in the game from NAB AFL Auskick through to junior and senior club football for both women and men.

The financial pressures facing many parts of the game is acknowledged by the AFL, which is committed to directing funds and support to where they are most needed from 2022 onwards to acknowledge the importance of community football and the people involved. The new community package for 2022 will go towards getting kids active in schools, helping households return to their community clubs and bolstering support for volunteers, coaches and umpires.

Community football is the foundation of the game and the AFL has made supporting community leagues, clubs, players, umpires, coaches, volunteers and administrators across the country a priority in 2022.

In late 2021, the AFL announced a major \$8m investment package to help bring community football back and ensure the grassroots game thrives, including:

- ▶ \$1.6m towards volunteer support - more resources on the ground in all markets to benefit volunteers;
- ▶ \$1.5m investment into schools - consolidate AFL schools program offerings nationally and help schools/teachers get kids active;
- ▶ \$1.4m to remove coaching and umpiring registration fees across Australia;
- ▶ \$1m COVID fighting fund to benefit Victoria and New South Wales;
- ▶ \$800,000 commitment to covering administrative costs, such as insurance, for clubs in Victoria from the 2021 season;
- ▶ Four-time Hawthorn premiership coach Alastair Clarkson will come on board as a community football coaching ambassador.

▶ Former St Kilda champion Nick Riewoldt was one of many volunteers to help out at their local Auskick centre.







**2021 NAB AFL DRAFT SELECTIONS (FIRST ROUND)**

No.	Player	Club	Selected from
1	Jason Horne-Francis	North Melbourne	Christies Beach
2	Sam Darcy	Western Bulldogs	Glen Iris/Scotch College
3	Finn Callaghan	GWS Giants	Mordialloc-Braeside/St Bede's College
4	Nick Daicos	Collingwood	Kew Rovers
5	Mac Andrew	Gold Coast Suns	Berwick/St Joseph's Ferntree Gully
6	Josh Rachele	Adelaide Crows	Shepparton Swans/Caulfield Grammar
7	Josh Ward	Hawthorn	Fitzroy JFC/Melbourne Grammar
8	Jye Amiss	Fremantle	Bussellton
9	Josh Gibcus	Richmond	Eastpoint/St Pat's College
10	Neil Erasmus	Fremantle	Sorrento-Dun Craig/Hale
11	Nasiah Wanganeen-Milera	St Kilda	Marion
12	Josh Sinn	Port Adelaide	East Brighton JFC/Old Xaviers
13	Ben Hobbs	Essendon	Horsham Demons/Ballarat Clarendon College
14	Campbell Chesser	West Coast Eagles	Lavington Panthers/Melbourne Grammar
15	Leek Aleer	GWS Giants	Central District
16	Darcy Wilmot	Brisbane Lions	Montmorency/Hazelglenn College
17	Tom Brown	Richmond	Mooroopna/Geelong Grammar
18	Angus Sheldrick	Sydney Swans	Mosman Park JFC/Christ Church Grammar
19	Jacob van Rooyen	Melbourne	Claremont
20	Kai Lohmann	Brisbane Lions	Lake Wendoree/St Pat's College

**2021 NAB AFL DRAFTS: WHERE FIRST-TIME DRAFTED PLAYERS CAME FROM**

States	National	Pre-Season	Rookie	Total
Vic Metro	20	1	7	28
Vic Country	15	-	2	17
WA	15	-	1	16
SA	12	-	1	13
NSW/ACT	1	-	1	2
Qld	-	-	1	1
NT	-	-	3	3
Tas	1	-	-	1
Ireland	-	-	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>83</b>



**VFL/VFLW and Talent Pathways Vaccination Policy**

The vaccination policy was adopted at the VFL/VFLW and Talent Pathways level requiring all VFL, VFLW and Talent Pathway players and football program staff to be vaccinated in advance of the start of the 2022 VFL, VFLW and Talent Pathway seasons, in order to best protect the health and safety of all participants.

△ The dreams of several first-round selections were realised at the 2021 NAB AFL Draft while No. 1 pick Jason Horne-Francis (opposite page) was taken by North Melbourne.

**2021 NAB AFL Draft**

The 2021 NAB AFL Draft was held via a virtual format across two nights, broadcast live on Fox Footy and Kayo. *AFL.com.au* provided comprehensive coverage across the whole week leading into the draft, while all 18 clubs submitted their selections online. 3AW and 1116 SEN supplied live radio coverage of the NAB AFL Draft on the Wednesday and Thursday nights of November 24-25.

## Father-Son selections

There were four father-son selections at the 2021 NAB AFL Draft.

- ▶ **Nick Daicos** (Collingwood, son of Peter. Club matched bid made by GWS Giants)
- ▶ **Sam Darcy** (Western Bulldogs, son of Luke. Club matched bid made by Gold Coast Suns)
- ▶ **Jackson Archer** (North Melbourne, son of Glenn)
- ▶ **Taj Woewodin** (Melbourne, son of Shane)

### Five players were selected by their Academy club:

- ▶ **Domanic Akuei** (Carlton)
- ▶ **Andy Moniz-Wakefield** (Melbourne)
- ▶ **Josiah Kyle** (St Kilda)
- ▶ **Jack Peris** (St Kilda)
- ▶ **Cody Raak** (Western Bulldogs)

### Two players were pre-selected directly by their Academy club as Category A rookies:

- ▶ **Sandy Brock** (Gold Coast Suns Northern Academy)
- ▶ **Bodhi Uwand** (Gold Coast Suns Northern Academy)

▽ Sons of guns featured heavily at the 2021 NAB AFL Draft, including (from left) Jackson Archer (with father Glenn), Sam Darcy (with father Luke) and Nick Daicos (with father Peter).

## AFL free agency

The following players qualified for either full or restricted free agency going into the 2021 season, under the rules agreed between the AFL and AFLPA:

### Restricted free agents

- ▶ **Matt Crouch** (Adelaide Crows)
- ▶ **Patrick Cripps** (Carlton)
- ▶ **Zach Merrett** (Essendon)
- ▶ **Jake Kolodjashnij** (Geelong Cats)
- ▶ **Josh Kelly** (GWS Giants)
- ▶ **Jack Billings** (St Kilda)
- ▶ **George Hewett** (Sydney Swans)

### Unrestricted free agents

**Adelaide Crows** - David Mackay<sup>^</sup>, Taylor Walker, Daniel Talia, Tom Lynch, Jake Kelly, Ben Davis<sup>\*</sup>

**Brisbane Lions** - Archie Smith<sup>\*</sup>, Mitch Robinson<sup>\*</sup>, Rhys Mathieson<sup>\*</sup>, Connor Ballenden<sup>\*</sup>, Grant Birchall<sup>\*\*</sup>

**Carlton** - Marc Murphy, Levi Casbault, Eddie Betts<sup>\*\*</sup>, Ed Curnow, Matthew Kennedy<sup>\*</sup>, Oscar McDonald<sup>\*</sup>

**Collingwood** - Scott Pendlebury, Josh Thomas<sup>\*</sup>, Chris Mayne<sup>^</sup>

**Essendon** - Cale Hooker, David Zaharakis, Martin Gleeson<sup>\*\*</sup>, Patrick Ambrose, Dylan Clarke<sup>\*</sup>, Will Snelling<sup>\*\*</sup>

**Fremantle** - David Mundy<sup>^</sup>, Stephen Hill, Bailey Banfield<sup>\*</sup>, Brett Bewley<sup>\*</sup>, Reece Conca<sup>^</sup>, Lachie Schultz<sup>\*</sup>

**Geelong Cats** - Joel Selwood, Cameron Guthrie, Jed Bews, Lachie Henderson<sup>\*\*</sup>, Oscar Brownless<sup>\*</sup>

**Gold Coast Suns** - Sam Day, Jarrod Harbrow<sup>\*\*</sup>, Sean Lemmens, Zac Smith<sup>\*</sup>, Nick Holman<sup>\*</sup>, Jack Hombsch<sup>\*</sup>, Jordan Murdoch<sup>\*</sup>, Jacob Townsend<sup>\*\*</sup>

**GWS Giants** - Matt Buntine<sup>\*</sup>, Sam Reid<sup>\*\*</sup>, Daniel Lloyd<sup>\*</sup>, Zach Sproule<sup>\*\*</sup>, Jake Stein<sup>\*</sup>

**Hawthorn** - Shaun Burgoyne, Tim O'Brien, Dylan Moore<sup>\*</sup>, Keegan Brooksby<sup>\*\*</sup>, Michael Hartley<sup>\*\*</sup>

**Melbourne** - Nathan Jones, Neville Jetta<sup>\*</sup>, Aaron Nietschke<sup>\*</sup>, Mitch Brown<sup>\*\*</sup>, Majak Daw<sup>\*\*</sup>

**North Melbourne** - Robbie Tarrant, Jack Ziebell, Shaun Atley, Taylor Garner<sup>^</sup>, Trent Dumont, Kyron Hayden<sup>\*\*</sup>, Will Walker<sup>\*</sup>, Tom Campbell<sup>\*</sup>, Josh Walker<sup>\*\*</sup>, Connor Menadue<sup>\*</sup>

**Port Adelaide** - Robbie Gray, Hamish Hartlett, Steven Motlop<sup>^</sup>, Tom Rockliff<sup>^</sup>, Boyd Woodcock<sup>\*\*</sup>, Tyson Goldsack<sup>^</sup>



## MATCHED BIDS FOR FATHER/SON AND ACADEMY PLAYERS

Name	Player Category	Bid Team	Match Team	Bid	Points Value to Match	Selections Matched	Selections Received
Sam Darcy	Father-Son	GWS Giants	Western Bulldogs	2	2014	34, 42, 43, 44, 45	2, 69, 90, 91, 92
Nick Daicos	Father-Son	Gold Coast Suns	Collingwood	4	1627	38, 40, 42, 44	4, 69, 87, 90
Mitch Owens	NGA	Sydney Swans	St Kilda	33	366	48, 54	33, 59
Josh Fahey	Northern Academy	Western Bulldogs	GWS Giants	42	198	47, 88	42, 63
Marcus Windhager	NGA	Geelong	St Kilda	47	N/A*	57	42, 63

\*Later bid matched by the next available selection, not DVI points.

**Richmond** - David Astbury, Bachar Houli<sup>^</sup>, Kamdyn McIntosh, Mabior Chol<sup>\*</sup>, Derek Smith<sup>\*</sup>, Matthew Parker<sup>\*</sup>, Ben Miller<sup>\*</sup>

**St Kilda** - Jarryn Geary<sup>^</sup>, Sebastian Ross, Luke Dunstan, Darragh Joyce<sup>\*</sup>, Oscar Clavarino<sup>\*</sup>, James Frawley<sup>\*\*</sup>, Paul Hunter<sup>\*\*</sup>, Shaun McKernan<sup>\*\*</sup>, Mason Wood<sup>\*\*</sup>

**Sydney Swans** - Sam Reid, Luke Parker, Robbie Fox<sup>\*</sup>, Sam Gray<sup>\*</sup>, Kaiden Brand<sup>\*</sup>

**West Coast** - Shannon Hurn, Josh Kennedy, Mark Hutchings<sup>\*\*</sup>, Daniel Venables<sup>\*</sup>, Brendon Ah Chee<sup>\*\*</sup>, Jamaine Jones<sup>\*</sup>

**Western Bulldogs** - Tom Liberatore<sup>^</sup>, Mitch Wallis, Lin Jong, Roarke Smith<sup>\*\*</sup>, Ben Cavarra<sup>\*</sup>, Taylor Duryea<sup>^</sup>, Ryan Gardner<sup>\*\*</sup>, Will Hayes<sup>\*</sup>, Stefan Martin<sup>^</sup>.

<sup>\*</sup> Previously delisted

<sup>^</sup> Previously qualified as free agent

### Free agents exercising their rights

Five players elected to exercise their rights and change clubs for the 2021 season:

- ▶ **Jake Kelly** (Adelaide Crows to Essendon)
- ▶ **Mabior Chol** (Richmond to Gold Coast Suns)
- ▶ **George Hewett** (Sydney Swans to Carlton)
- ▶ **Luke Dunstan** (St Kilda to Melbourne)
- ▶ **Tim O'Brien** (Hawthorn to Western Bulldogs)

▽ Adam Cerra (Fremantle to Carlton) was one of the big deals of the 2021 AFL Trade Period.

A further five players took advantage of the free agency rules for delisted players, allowing them to move to the club of their choice:

- ▶ **Jarrod Brander** (West Coast to GWS Giants)
- ▶ **Sam Skinner** (Brisbane Lions to Port Adelaide)
- ▶ **Tom Campbell** (North Melbourne to St Kilda)
- ▶ **Tyson Stengle** (Adelaide Crows to Geelong Cats)
- ▶ **Hugh Greenwood** (Gold Coast Suns to North Melbourne)

### AFL Trade Period movements

The following players were traded during the AFL exchange period -

- ▶ **Nathan Kreuger** (Geelong Cats to Collingwood)
- ▶ **Jeremy Finlayson** (GWS Giants to Port Adelaide)
- ▶ **Adam Cerra** (Fremantle to Carlton)
- ▶ **Lewis Young** (Western Bulldogs to Carlton)
- ▶ **Sam Petrevski-Seton** (Carlton to West Coast)
- ▶ **Robbie Tarrant** (North Melbourne to Richmond)
- ▶ **Callum Coleman-Jones** (Richmond to North Melbourne)
- ▶ **Patrick Lipinski** (Western Bulldogs to Collingwood)
- ▶ **Jordan Dawson** (Sydney Swans to Adelaide Crows)
- ▶ **Darcy Fort** (Geelong Cats to Brisbane Lions)
- ▶ **Jonathon Ceglar** (Hawthorn to Geelong Cats)
- ▶ **Jordan Clark** (Geelong Cats to Fremantle)
- ▶ **Max Lynch** (Collingwood to Hawthorn)
- ▶ **Peter Ladhams** (Port Adelaide to Sydney Swans)



## GAME DEVELOPMENT

ANDREW DILLON

## 2010-2021 SUMMARY OF AFL PLAYER EARNINGS

Earnings	2011 Played	2011 Listed	2012 Played	2012 Listed	2013 Played	2013 Listed	2014 Played	2014 Listed	2015 Played	2015 Listed	2016 Played	2016 Listed	2017 Played	2017 Listed	2018 Played	2018 Listed	2019 Played	2019 Listed	2020 Played	2020 Listed	2021 Played	2021 Listed
\$0-\$60,000	9	31	1	21	0	9	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
\$60,001-\$100,000	75	114	71	120	48	109	33	90	17	65	21	70	9	38	3	24	5	31	47	113	4	18
\$100,001-\$200,000	180	186	187	199	203	213	177	198	163	188	162	185	112	152	108	159	101	166	165	189	94	133
\$200,001-\$300,000	162	166	166	170	148	156	136	147	143	153	121	131	130	140	129	136	111	124	134	142	106	119
\$300,001-\$400,000	92	94	103	104	114	115	125	128	124	131	137	148	137	148	137	145	118	123	124	131	114	117
\$400,001-\$500,000	53	53	58	60	64	64	75	76	84	85	87	89	87	89	86	88	104	107	58	60	104	109
\$500,001-\$600,000	17	20	25	25	22	22	31	32	44	44	35	40	52	53	44	49	47	48	38	40	68	68
\$600,001-\$700,000	10	10	11	12	19	19	26	26	18	21	22	23	34	34	46	46	41	42	13	13	42	46
\$700,001-\$800,000	3	3	4	4	10	10	10	10	21	21	15	18	23	23	21	24	28	29	4	4	23	24
\$800,001-\$900,000	4	4	1	1	7	7	6	6	3	3	5	5	9	9	15	15	16	16	1	2	11	11
\$900,001-\$1,000,000	1	1	1	1	-	-	2	2	2	2	3	3	10	11	10	10	7	7	1	2	3	3
\$1,000,001-\$1,100,000	1	1	4	4	-	-	2	2	2	2	2	2	4	4	2	2	3	4	1	1	2	2
\$1,100,001-\$1,200,000	-	-	-	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	2	2	3	3	1	1	3	3	1	1	1	1
\$1,200,001+	1	1	4	4	3	3	-	-	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	0	0	3	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>608</b>	<b>684</b>	<b>636</b>	<b>725</b>	<b>640</b>	<b>729</b>	<b>623</b>	<b>719</b>	<b>623</b>	<b>718</b>	<b>614</b>	<b>718</b>	<b>612</b>	<b>707</b>	<b>605</b>	<b>703</b>	<b>586</b>	<b>702</b>	<b>587</b>	<b>698</b>	<b>575</b>	<b>655</b>

NB: Details listed under heading "Played" relates only to Primary Listed Players who participated in at least one senior match during the season. Details listed under heading "Listed" includes all Primary Listed Players. Earnings are Total Player Earnings including ASAs. In 2020, a decrease in player payments arose due to the 29.17% reduction in payments agreed with the AFLPA as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 2010-2021 AFL TOTAL PLAYER EARNINGS

	2010 \$	2011 \$	2012 \$	2013 \$	2014 \$	2015 \$	2016 \$	2017 \$	2018 \$	2019 \$	2020 \$	2021 \$	Movement % 2020-2021
GROSS PLAYER PAYMENTS (GPP)	136,698,418	153,699,344	173,717,042	181,560,623	188,944,174	200,199,169	204,305,032	231,354,739	240,417,657	242,345,042	170,043,949	233,853,380	37.53%
<b>Deductions:</b>													
Finals/Relocation & Living & other Allowances	2,130,159	2,060,463	2,044,477	2,274,355	2,060,850	2,069,108	2,285,343	3,016,111	3,189,413	3,288,039	2,190,456	4,873,323	122.48%
Cost of Living and Expansion Allowances	779,100	804,825	1,722,326	1,791,219	3,047,944	2,357,048	1,691,090	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
Veterans' Allowance	4,614,162	5,361,045	6,239,064	7,886,536	6,560,023	6,959,232	6,611,661	348,027	0	0	0	0	0.00%
Other Deductions	2,296,275	3,921,152	4,663,352	4,303,195	4,032,375	4,790,648	4,334,399	1,883,819	3,492,466	3,839,162	3,309,603	4,121,543	24.53%
Underspend From Previous Years	-	-	-	-	-	1,841,576	764,531	919,286	1,540,436	1,159,113	1,478,675	1,857,417	25.61%
<b>Total Deductions</b>	<b>9,819,696</b>	<b>12,147,485</b>	<b>14,669,219</b>	<b>16,255,304</b>	<b>15,701,193</b>	<b>18,017,612</b>	<b>15,687,024</b>	<b>6,167,244</b>	<b>8,222,315</b>	<b>8,286,314</b>	<b>6,978,734</b>	<b>10,852,283</b>	<b>55.51%</b>
<b>PLAYER PAYMENTS LESS DEDUCTIONS</b>	<b>126,878,722</b>	<b>141,686,376</b>	<b>159,047,825</b>	<b>165,305,319</b>	<b>173,242,981</b>	<b>182,181,452</b>	<b>188,618,008</b>	<b>225,187,495</b>	<b>232,195,342</b>	<b>234,058,728</b>	<b>163,065,215</b>	<b>223,001,097</b>	<b>36.76%</b>
Injury Allowance	5,572,800	3,107,594	2,551,693	2,060,007	1,597,906	2,609,871	3,452,129	3,002,107	5,902,635	5,093,340	0	5,729,699	0.00%
<b>GROSS PLAYER PAYMENTS LESS INJURY ALLOWANCE</b>	<b>121,305,922</b>	<b>138,578,782</b>	<b>156,496,132</b>	<b>163,245,312</b>	<b>171,645,075</b>	<b>179,571,581</b>	<b>185,165,879</b>	<b>222,185,388</b>	<b>226,292,708</b>	<b>228,965,388</b>	<b>163,065,215</b>	<b>217,271,398</b>	<b>33.24%</b>
<b>TPP LIMIT</b>	<b>127,200,000</b>	<b>139,612,500</b>	<b>158,172,750</b>	<b>164,499,660</b>	<b>173,382,660</b>	<b>181,284,120</b>	<b>186,641,640</b>	<b>224,010,504</b>	<b>226,698,624</b>	<b>229,645,710</b>	<b>234,238,626</b>	<b>217,420,290</b>	<b>-7.18%</b>
Gross Player Payments less Injury Allowance	121,305,922	138,578,782	156,496,132	163,245,312	171,645,075	179,571,581	185,165,879	222,185,388	226,292,708	228,965,388	163,065,215	217,271,398	33.24%
Margin/(Excess)	5,894,078	1,033,718	1,676,618	1,254,348	1,737,585	1,712,539	1,475,761	1,825,116	405,916	680,322	71,173,411	148,892	-99.79%
Additional Services Agreements (ASAs)	8,129,960	9,191,723	10,398,625	13,874,676	16,237,924	18,638,497	19,257,040	19,864,805	20,120,412	21,088,574	15,416,183	20,143,358	30.66%
Average Gross Player Earnings (including ASAs)**	Listed \$226,165	Listed \$237,388	Listed \$251,559	Listed \$265,179	Listed \$283,029	Listed \$302,104	Listed \$309,208	Listed \$352,470	Listed \$362,471	Listed \$363,430	Listed \$259,651	Listed \$372,224	
	Played \$249,239	Played \$253,795	Played \$272,074	Played \$288,212	Played \$306,841	Played \$324,643	Played \$329,210	Played \$379,697	Played \$390,202	Played \$401,552	Played \$280,232	Played \$395,740	

NB: In 2020, the decrease in player payments across the competition arose due to the 29.17% reduction in payments agreed with the AFLPA as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Total Player Payments

Gross player payments increased by 37.53 per cent from \$170.0m in 2020 to \$233.9m in 2021. The increase in player payments arose due to the 29.17 per cent reduction in 2020 player payments agreed with the AFLPA as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2021 Total Player Payment limit per club of \$12.1m represented a nine per cent reduction from the previously negotiated limit of \$13.3m, in a CBA variation agreed with the AFLPA.

Additional Service Agreement payments for the provision of marketing services by players increased by 30.66 per cent, from \$15.4m in 2020 to \$20.1m in 2021. The 2021 Additional Services Agreement limit per club of \$1.1m represented a nine per cent reduction from the previously negotiated limit of \$1.2m, in a CBA variation agreed with the AFLPA.

In addition to these amounts, players earned \$1.6m from employment and marketing arrangements with associates of clubs. Taking into account the \$233.9m in gross player payments, \$20.1m in additional services agreements and \$1.6m from employment and marketing arrangements with associates of the clubs, the total earned by players in 2021 was \$255.6m, an increase of 36.87 per cent on the 2020 total of \$186m.

The average payment by clubs for a listed player in 2021 was \$372,224, an increase of 43.36 per cent from 2020. No club was sanctioned during 2021 for a breach of the TPP rules.

▽ Essendon's Darcy Parish had a breakout year, winning All-Australian selection for the first time.

## 2021 VFL competition

The VFL and NEAFL competitions combined into a single VFL competition to sit alongside the SANFL and WAFL in 2021. A total of 22 clubs from Queensland, NSW and Victoria competed in the 2021 season, but the VFL Premiership Season could not be completed, due to the challenges surrounding the COVID-19 situation across the country.

A 2021 VFL premiership was not awarded, but the league recognised Footscray as the VFL minor premier after an undefeated 10-match season.

After 107 home and away games played across three states, the circumstances provided too great a challenge as, due to the part-time nature of the competition, the AFL was unable to obtain approval to play matches under the professional sport exemption.

The 2022 home and away season will feature 21 clubs from Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria and will consist of an 18-game season across 22 rounds.

### CLUBS:

**Standalone VFL clubs:** Coburg, Frankston, Northern Bullants, Port Melbourne, Southport, Werribee, Williamstown.

**Standalone AFL clubs:** Brisbane Lions, Carlton, Collingwood, Essendon, Footscray, Geelong Cats, Gold Coast Suns, GWS Giants, North Melbourne, Richmond, Sydney Swans

**Aligned clubs:** Sandringham, Box Hill Hawks, Casey Demons





## 2021 rebel VFLW

The 2021 rebel VFLW season was called off before the Grand Final could be played, due to the continuing community lockdown within Victoria.

The 2021 rebel VFLW Grand Final was rescheduled four times, but State Government lockdowns meant it was not possible to play on any of the rescheduled dates.

As the final series was not able to be completed, the AFL determined no premiership could be awarded, with Collingwood recognised as the rebel VFLW minor premier after its undefeated season.

All 12 VFLW clubs completed a full 14-game season with a three-week finals series before the scheduled Grand Final, with a total of 90 VFLW games played in 2021.

The 2022 rebel VFLW season is scheduled to start in February 2022, which will see 12 teams play 14 home-and-away matches. The season will again be split into two phases for list management purposes, with VFLW standalone clubs allowed to sign 40 players and AFLW clubs permitted to have 30 non-AFLW listees during the AFLW home and away season.

Entering its sixth season, the rebel VFLW competition has been the pathway for elite women in Victoria. Essendon and Hawthorn have joined Port Melbourne under the AFLW-aligned club classification due to their pending entry into the 2023 AFLW competition, leaving Darebin and Williamstown as the only remaining VFLW standalone teams.

### CLUBS:

**Standalone VFLW clubs:** Darebin, Williamstown

**Standalone AFLW clubs:** Carlton, Collingwood, Geelong Cats, North Melbourne, Western Bulldogs

**Aligned clubs:** Port Melbourne, Essendon, Hawthorn, Casey, Southern Saints

## 2021 NAB AFLW Draft

The 2021 NAB AFL Women's Draft was broadcast live on [AFL.com.au](http://AFL.com.au). All AFLW clubs were on a call in a central location broadcast through the RMIT AFL Review Centre (ARC), with each pick broadcast live to the public through the studio show. A total of 59 players found their way on to AFLW lists, headlined by top picks Charlie Rowbottom, Georgie Prespakis and Charlie Thomas.



Charlie Rowbottom was taken by Gold Coast as the overall No. 1 selection at the 2021 NAB AFLW Draft

## 2021 NAB AFLW DRAFT SELECTIONS (FIRST ROUND)

No.	Player	Club	Selected from
1	Charlie Rowbottom	Gold Coast	Oakleigh Chargers
2	Georgie Prespakis	Geelong	Calder Cannons
3	Charlotte Thomas	West Coast	Subiaco Women's FC
4	Ella Friend	St Kilda	Greater Western Victoria Rebels
5	Stella Reid	Richmond	Oakleigh Chargers
6	Teagan Levi	Gold Coast	Bond University
7	Zali Friswell	Geelong	Calder Cannons
8	Ashanti Bush	Gold Coast	Hawthorn
9	Gabbi Featherston	Geelong	Geelong Falcons
10	Annie Lee	Carlton	Geelong Falcons
11	Keeley Sherar	Carlton	Eastern Ranges
12	Ashleigh Richards	St Kilda	Dandenong Stingrays
13	Tess Craven	North Melbourne	Geelong Falcons
14	Amy Franklin	Fremantle	Claremont Women's FC
15	Annabel Johnson	Geelong	Geelong Cats
16	Emelia Yassir	Richmond	Calder Cannons
17	Zoe Prowse	Adelaide	Sturt
18	Maggie Harmer	Brisbane	Maroochydore WFC

Geelong players were ecstatic with their VFLW preliminary final win, but were unable to challenge for the premiership after the Grand Final was cancelled.



### NAB AFL Rising Star Award

Melbourne's emerging young ruckman Luke Jackson won the 2021 NAB AFL Rising Star award with 51 votes, ahead of GWS Giants midfielder Tom Green (38 votes) and Port Adelaide's power forward Mitch Georgiades (28 votes). Jackson received the Ron Evans Medal, a \$20,000 personal investment portfolio and a dedicated private banker, courtesy of NAB, at the AFL Awards ceremony held virtually on Fox Footy. The Melbourne ruckman has played 27 matches in his first two seasons with the Demons after being selected with the club's first pick and No. 3 selection overall at the 2019 NAB AFL Draft. He was a member of the club's 2021 premiership side.

#### NAB AFL Rising Star Top 5 voting

**Luke Jackson**, Melbourne - 51 votes  
**Tom Green**, GWS Giants - 38 votes  
**Mitch Georgiades**, Port Adelaide - 28 votes  
**Justin McInerney**, Sydney - 14 votes  
**Errol Gulden**, Sydney - 11 votes

△ Melbourne's Luke Jackson was the 2021 NAB AFL Rising Star

### 2021 NAB AFL RISING STAR NOMINEES

Rd	Player	AFL Club	Votes
1	<b>Errol Gulden</b>	Sydney Swans	11
2	<b>Braeden Campbell</b>	Sydney Swans	-
3	<b>Chad Warner</b>	Sydney Swans	-
4	<b>Lachlan Sholl</b>	Adelaide Crows	-
5	<b>Mitch Georgiades</b>	Port Adelaide	28
6	<b>Jacob Koschitzke</b>	Hawthorn	-
7	<b>Luke Jackson</b>	Melbourne	51
8	<b>James Jordan</b>	Melbourne	-
9	<b>Tom Green</b>	GWS Giants	38
10	<b>Cody Weightman</b>	Western Bulldogs	-
11	<b>Trent Rivers</b>	Melbourne	-
12	<b>Nik Cox</b>	Essendon	-
13	<b>Riley Thithorpe</b>	Adelaide Crows	-
14	<b>Harrison Jones</b>	Essendon	-
15	<b>Deven Robertson</b>	Brisbane Lions	-
16	<b>Justin McInerney</b>	Sydney Swans	14
17	<b>Archie Perkins</b>	Essendon	-
18	<b>Jeremy Sharp</b>	Gold Coast Suns	-
19	<b>Harry Schoenberg</b>	Adelaide Crows	-
20	<b>Hayden Young</b>	Fremantle	-
21	<b>Miles Bergman</b>	Port Adelaide	-
22	<b>Jake Bowey</b>	Melbourne	-
23	<b>Connor Idun</b>	GWS Giants	-

### 2021 NAB AFLW RISING STAR NOMINEES

Rd	Player	AFL Club	Votes
1	<b>Belle Dawes</b>	Brisbane Lions	-
	<b>Tarni White</b>	St Kilda	-
2	<b>Tyla Hanks</b>	Melbourne	48
	<b>Jess Fitzgerald</b>	Western Bulldogs	-
3	<b>Natalie Grider</b>	Brisbane Lions	10
	<b>Abbie McKay</b>	Carlton	-
4	<b>Tyanna Smith</b>	St Kilda	19
	<b>Rebecca Webster</b>	Geelong	-
5	<b>Mikayla Bowen</b>	West Coast	22
	<b>Ellie McKenzie</b>	Richmond	32
6	<b>Tarnie Brown</b>	Collingwood	-
	<b>Daisy Bateman</b>	North Melbourne	-
7	<b>Lauren Bella</b>	Gold Coast Suns	-
	<b>Eliza McNamara</b>	Melbourne	-
8	<b>Courtney Hodder</b>	Brisbane Lions	-
	<b>Isabella Lewis</b>	West Coast	-
9	<b>Eleanor Brown</b>	Western Bulldogs	-
	<b>Tahlia Hickie</b>	Brisbane Lions	-

### NAB AFLW Rising Star Award

Melbourne's Tyla Hanks was crowned the 2021 NAB AFL Women's Rising Star. Hanks won the award with 48 votes, ahead of Richmond's Ellie McKenzie (32 votes) and West Coast's Mikayla Bowen (22 votes). Hanks received a \$20,000 personal investment portfolio and a dedicated personal banker, courtesy of NAB, at the 2021 W Awards ceremony held on April 20. The 21-year-old was one of the most improved players in the competition this year, averaging almost 19 disposals, three clearances, five tackles and three marks.

#### 2021 NAB AFLW Rising Star Top 5 voting

**Tyla Hanks**, Melbourne - 48 votes  
**Ellie McKenzie**, Richmond - 32 votes  
**Mikayla Bowen**, West Coast - 22 votes  
**Tyanna Smith**, St Kilda - 19 votes  
**Natalie Grider**, Brisbane Lions - 10 votes

△ Tyla Hanks made it a Demon double when she won the 2021 NAB AFLW Rising Star award.

## NAB AFL Mid-Season Rookie Draft

The 2021 NAB AFL Mid-Season Rookie Draft took place on June 2 in a virtual broadcast live and exclusive on [AFL.com.au](http://AFL.com.au) and via the AFL Live Official app, thanks to Telstra, with the draft conducted virtually within the ARC. The AFL competition welcomed 22 players who were selected by clubs after 602 players across all major football leagues across Australia nominated for the draft. Selections were made from the NAB League, VFL, SANFL and WAFL competitions.

North Melbourne bolstered its forward/ruck stocks by selecting highly regarded Sandringham Dragons recruit Jacob Edwards, with pick No. 1.



► Jacobs Edwards (left) was the No. 1 selection in the 2021 NAB AFL Mid-Season Rookie Draft.

### 2021 NAB AFL MID-SEASON ROOKIE DRAFT

No.	Player	Club	Selected from
1	Jacob Edwards	North Melbourne	Sandringham Dragons
2	Jai Newcombe	Hawthorn	Box Hill Hawks
3	Ash Johnson	Collingwood	Sturt
4	Patrick Parnell	Adelaide	Murray Bushrangers
5	Ned Moyle	Gold Coast	Oakleigh Chargers
6	Alex Mirkov	Carlton	Carlton VFL
7	Max Heath	St Kilda	Sandringham Dragons
8	James Peatling	GWS	Pennant Hills Demons
9	Sam Durham	Essendon	Richmond
10	Matthew Parker	Richmond	South Fremantle
11	Will Collins	West Coast	Swan Districts
12	Lachlan McAndrew	Sydney	Manly Warringah Wolves
13	Jed McEntee	Port Adelaide	Sturt
14	Kalin Lane	Brisbane	Claremont
15	Kye Declase	Melbourne	Werribee
16	Charlie Ham	North Melbourne	Geelong Falcons
17	Jackson Callow	Hawthorn	Norwood
18	Aiden Begg	Collingwood	Eastern Ranges
19	PASS	Gold Coast	-
20	Jordan Boyd	Carlton	Footscray
21	Cooper Sharman	St Kilda	Woodville-West Torrens
22	PASS	Essendon	-
23	Connor West	West Coast	West Perth
24	Daniel Turner	Melbourne	Murray Bushrangers
25	PASS	Carlton	-
26	PASS	St Kilda	-
27	PASS	St Kilda	-

## Next Generation Academies

The Next Generation Academies (NGA) - targeting Indigenous and multicultural players - will be implemented by the AFL Talent Pathway Team going forward, with support from AFL clubs.

The Northern Club Academies (Sydney Swans, GWS Giants, Brisbane Lions, Gold Coast Suns) will remain the responsibility of the AFL clubs, with support to be provided by the AFL.

The following changes to the NGA concession model were implemented ahead of the 2021 and 2022 NAB AFL Drafts:

- From 2021, nominated NGA prospects will only be eligible to be matched from pick 21 in the NAB AFL Draft. All other players selected from pick 41 onwards can be matched by their club using their next available selection, while undrafted players are still eligible to be pre-selected on the rookie list.
- From 2022, nominated NGA prospects will only be eligible to be matched from pick 41 onwards by their club using their next available selection, while undrafted players are still eligible to be pre-selected on the rookie list.

This model allows for elite talent to be available to all AFL clubs while still ensuring late prospects can find their way on to an AFL list and continue their relationship with the respective club that has been supporting them.

▽ Essendon's Shane Clough and St Kilda's Roanin Jackson before a Next Generation Academy match.

## National AFL and AFLW Talent Programs

### Girls

The AFL confirmed in March that the 2021 NAB AFLW Under-19 Championships had been moved from the Gold Coast to Melbourne due to the COVID-19 outbreak in Queensland and were held in April.

Six matches were played across two days at two venues, with all matches streamed live and free on [womens.afl/about/u19s](http://womens.afl/about/u19s).

Queensland did not play its championship matches in Melbourne in April, but was able to play a game against Victoria Country in May. The game against Victoria Metro did not proceed due to COVID-19.

At the end of the championships, the 2021 All-Australian team was announced.

The 2021 NAB Player of the Championships medal was awarded to Western Australia's Ella Roberts. The 16-year-old Margaret River Senior High School student had a game-high 31 disposals, six inside 50s and two goals in game two against Victoria Metro. Roberts is eligible for the 2022 NAB AFLW Draft.

### Boys

The AFL confirmed in September that the 2021 NAB AFL Under-19 Championships would not be held, due to the challenges surrounding the COVID situation across Australia and movement across state borders.

Western Australia, South Australia and the Allies played matches when permitted in other states, including a game between Western Australia and South Australia on AFL Grand Final Day as a curtain-raiser at Optus Stadium.

Victoria Metro and Victoria Country did not participate in the championships due to the COVID situation in Victoria but played a NAB AFL Under-19 Challenge match against each other in July at Windy Hill.

The AFL Talent Pathway Programs have been remodelled following the impact of COVID-19 and will continue to provide boys' and girls' programs with opportunities for elite development and a connection to community football.

The new calendar of football will have alignment with competitions across Australia and provide talented players with multiple options for football competition to showcase their skills and qualities ahead of the NAB AFL and AFLW Drafts.

## 2022 Talent Pathway Programs

- NAB AFL/W National Development Championships (U16) and NAB AFL/W National Championships (U18).
- National Championships for girls will be staged in March/April and the majority of boys games in June/July.
- NAB League coaching and wellbeing resources increased to further support the boys and girls in these regional programs.
- NAB AFL/W Futures (U17) games for boys and girls during 2022 as was planned for 2021.





## GAME DEVELOPMENT

ANDREW DILLON

### NAB AFL Academy squad

The 2021 NAB AFL Academy Squad played Geelong's VFL side at GMHBA Stadium in April. Geelong VFL defeated the NAB AFL Academy 22.17 (149) to 2.7 (19). Josh Fahey starred for the Australian NAB AFL Academy team winning the AFL Commission Chairman's Medal as Australia's best player.

#### Boys' squad members

- ▶ **Mac Andrew** (Victoria Country/Dandenong Stingrays)
- ▶ **Braden Andrews** (Victoria Metro/Oakleigh Chargers)
- ▶ **Sam Banks** (Tasmania/Clarence)
- ▶ **Rhett Bazzo** (Western Australia/Swan Districts)
- ▶ **Jace Burgoyne** (South Australia/WWTFC)
- ▶ **Finn Callaghan** (Victoria Metro/Sandringham Dragons)
- ▶ **Campbell Chesser** (Victoria Country/Sandringham Dragons)
- ▶ **Toby Conway** (Victoria Country/Geelong Falcons)
- ▶ **Nick Daicos** (Victoria Metro/Oakleigh Chargers)
- ▶ **Neil Erasmus** (Western Australia/Subiaco)
- ▶ **Josh Fahey** (New South Wales/ACT Giants)
- ▶ **Josh Gibcus** (Victoria Country/GWV Rebels)
- ▶ **Cooper Hamilton** (Victoria Country/Bendigo Pioneers)
- ▶ **Austin Harris** (Queensland/Gold Coast Suns)
- ▶ **Ben Hobbs** (Victoria Country/GWV Rebels)
- ▶ **Jason Horne-Francis** (South Australia/South Adelaide)
- ▶ **Blake Howes** (Victoria Metro/Sandringham Dragons)
- ▶ **Matthew Johnson** (Western Australia/Subiaco)
- ▶ **Ned Moyle** (Victoria Metro/Oakleigh Chargers)
- ▶ **Cooper Murley** (South Australia/Norwood)
- ▶ **Blayne O'Loughlin** (South Australia/North Adelaide)
- ▶ **Josh Rachele** (Victoria Country/Murray Bushrangers)
- ▶ **Matt Roberts** (South Australia/South Adelaide)
- ▶ **Josh Sinn** (Victoria Metro/Sandringham Dragons)
- ▶ **Tyler Sonsie** (Victoria Metro/Eastern Ranges)
- ▶ **Ned Stevens** (Northern Territory/Waratah/Suns)
- ▶ **Jacob van Rooyen** (Western Australia/Claremont)
- ▶ **Nasiah Wanganeen-Milera** (South Australia/Glenelg)
- ▶ **Jack Williams** (Western Australia/East Fremantle)

### NAB AFLW Academy squad

A group of 20 players were selected in the 2021 NAB AFLW Academy intake. Under the tutelage of Academy coach Tarkyn Lockyer, the group was selected from across the country and participated in a high-intensity training camp in Melbourne. Unfortunately, the match against a VFLW side did not proceed due to COVID-19.

#### AFLW squad members

- ▶ **Jessica Doyle** (Manly-Warringah/Swans NSW/ACT, forward)
- ▶ **Ally Morphett** (Murray Bushrangers/Giants NSW/ACT, ruck)
- ▶ **Ashanti Bush** (Darwin NT, forward)
- ▶ **Maggie Harmer** (Maroochydore/Lions Qld, key position)
- ▶ **Teagan Levi** (Bond Uni/Suns Qld, midfielder)
- ▶ **Mikayla Pauga** (Maroochydore/Lions Qld, small forward)
- ▶ **Bella Smith** (Maroochydore/Lions Qld, utility)
- ▶ **Zoe Prowse** (Sturt SA, ruck)
- ▶ **Gypsy Schirmer** (South Adelaide SA, forward)
- ▶ **Perri King** (Launceston Tas, midfielder)
- ▶ **Nyakoat Dojiok** (GWV Rebels Vic Country, defender)
- ▶ **Ella Friend** (GWV Rebels/Vic Country, small forward)
- ▶ **Tara Slender** (Bendigo Pioneers/Vic Country, defender)
- ▶ **Maykaylah Appleby** (Northern Knights/Vic Metro, midfielder)

- ▶ **Tahlia Gillard** (Calder Cannons/Vic Metro, key position)
- ▶ **Georgie Prespakis** (Calder Cannons/Vic Metro, midfielder)
- ▶ **Charlie Rowbottom** (Oakleigh Chargers/Vic Metro, mid/forward)
- ▶ **Amy Franklin** (Claremont WA, defender)
- ▶ **Courtney Rowley** (Peel Thunder WA, midfielder)
- ▶ **Charlotte Thomas** (Subiaco WA, small forward)

### National Diversity Programs 2021

The AFL's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flagship programs are the Boomerangs (established 2006) and Woomeras (established 2014).

These programs have directly increased school attendance rates and leadership within their respective schools and communities and seen 46 AFL and nine AFLW players drafted into the AFL system.

AFLW player Krstel Petrevski (Melbourne), who was an assistant coach, is also a past Woomeras participant. Shaun Burgoyne, Jarman Impey and Chad Wingard were guest speakers on leadership.

In the multicultural space, the Medleys program for females (established 2017) and the World Team for males (established 2011) provide an elite AFL development pathway program designed to give participants a unique opportunity to develop football skills and be exposed to a program to encourage personal development and growth.

AFLW player Monique Conti (Richmond) was an assistant coach with guest speakers Mabirol Chol, Martin Frederick and Changkuoth Jiath.

The Diversity programs came together in April for the first time since 2019 as the Woomeras and Medleys played off in line with the NAB AFLW Under-19 Championships. In September, the team delivered an online program for the Boomerangs and World Team with 40 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and 30 multicultural young men participating

### State Diversity programs 2021

There was limited opportunity for state programs with various lockdowns across the country at critical times.

- ▶ South Australia engaged 120 male and female participants in a State Academy format in April after a regional identification process and nominations.
- ▶ Western Australia engaged 60 male participants in a state program with support from Fremantle and West Coast Next Generation Academy staff.
- ▶ New South Wales engaged 60 male participants in a State Academy program in April and continued with online sessions throughout the year.
- ▶ Victoria engaged 30 participants on a weekly basis over five weeks in partnership with the Reach Foundation.

### Diversity coaching and umpiring program

This project will involve identifying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural coaches and umpires to be accelerated into the elite-level competitions through a dedicated pathway program.

- ▶ **Georgie Prespakis**, who was part of the NAB AFLW Academy squad in 2021, was selected by Geelong with pick No. 2 in the NAB AFLW Draft.



## Legal & Integrity

For the second consecutive year, the operations of the Legal and Integrity Department were required to be fast moving in an extremely challenging environment as the COVID-19 pandemic again took hold of the game in 2021.

The past two years have seen pressures placed on many parts of the game. The AFL and our valued partners continue to work together in a dramatically changing economic environment to get the best outcome for football.

The AFL announced the promotion of Stephen Meade to the position of General Manager - Legal & Regulatory. Stephen oversees an expanded portfolio, leading Legal, Risk & Safety (Insurance, Occupational Health and Safety, Child Safeguarding, Risk and Compliance) and Concussion & Healthcare (including the medical unit). These functions are key priorities for the AFL and speak to the importance of the health and safety of our participants across all levels of the game.

### AFL Vaccination Policy

The AFL, in conjunction with the AFL Players Association (AFLPA), released its COVID-19 vaccination policy for all AFL and AFLW players and Football Program Staff.

In general terms, the Policy required all AFL and AFLW players and Football Program Staff to be vaccinated in advance of the start of the 2022 AFL and AFLW seasons according to a progressive schedule.

The Policy was introduced following an extensive education program across the clubs and industry in regard to COVID-19 vaccinations and the AFL will continue to work with the AFLPA to provide all players and staff further support and guidance through the evolving situation.

The Policy reflected the AFL's strongly held view that, as the governing body of the sport, we share responsibility to address the risk of exposure to COVID-19 of our players and Football Program Staff, and in delivering upon this responsibility, TGA-approved vaccines offer the best possible protection in keeping our people safe, healthy and together.

### VFL/VFLW and Talent Pathways vaccination policy

The vaccination policy was adopted at the VFL/VFLW and Talent Pathways levels, requiring all VFL, VFLW and Talent Pathway players and Football Program Staff to be vaccinated in advance of the start of their respective 2022 seasons.

In order to best protect the health and safety of all participants, the AFL required all players and Football Staff in the VFL, VFLW, NAB League and other Talent Pathway programs to be vaccinated.

### Adelaide Crows FC flight mask sanctions

The AFL fined the Adelaide Crows \$50,000 for breaching the League's COVID-19 protocols in June. A number of Crows' players and officials did not wear facemasks while on a commercial flight from Sydney to Adelaide.

The AFL, in conjunction with the club, investigated the matter with 100 per cent of the sanction to be included in their Football Department Soft Cap.

▽ Players must be sidelined for at least 12 days if they suffer a concussion.

### Taylor Walker sanction

A serious matter occurred at an SANFL match on July 17, 2021, between the Adelaide Football Club and the North Adelaide Football Club.

Taylor Walker of the Adelaide Crows, who was not playing in the match, made a racist comment regarding North Adelaide player Robbie Young to an Adelaide Crows teammate who was playing.

The incident was then investigated by the AFL Integrity Unit under the Peek Rule (Rule 35 of the AFL Rules), which relates to discrimination and racial and religious vilification.

Through a conciliation, the parties agreed the complaint be resolved in the following manner:

1. Taylor Walker did not play in the Adelaide Crows' remaining three matches of the 2021 AFL season and will not play in the first three games of the 2022 AFL season;
2. Taylor Walker made a donation of \$20,000 to an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program in South Australia;
3. Taylor Walker undertook an education program.

### Collingwood FC match-day use of mobile phones Sanction

The AFL fined the Collingwood Football Club \$20,000 for breaching AFL Rule 30 regarding the use and possession of Communications devices in the Match-Day Restricted Areas (MDRA) during the club's loss to West Coast in round five.

The AFL worked with Collingwood and determined that while players Jordan De Goey and Jeremy Howe had used their phones to contact family members and/or club staff on the status of their in-game injuries, the rules clearly state there was no mobile phone usage in the change rooms permitted by anyone who is not an authorised device carrier.



### Hawthorn FC training session boxing investigation

The AFL conducted an inquiry into an incident at training that left Hawthorn player Mitchell Lewis concussed.

Hawthorn informed the AFL that WorkSafe completed its investigation of the incident and was satisfied with Hawthorn's response and did not take any further action.

The AFL deferred the finalisation of its investigation, pending the conclusion of WorkSafe's inquiries, and, after assessing the incident, which included interviews with club officials and various players, the AFL determined that the training incident does not breach any applicable AFL rule.

### Josh Carr Fremantle FC COVID rules sanction

The AFL found Fremantle FC assistant coach Josh Carr guilty of breaching WA Government Quarantine Directions.

He was suspended for four matches and Fremantle fined \$25,000 for the breach. Carr served two of the four matches after being stood down in rounds 20 and 21. He will serve the remaining two matches across rounds one and two of the 2022 Premiership Season.

Fremantle's \$25,000 fine, of which \$12,500 was suspended, was included in the club's 2021 Football Department Soft Cap.

△ The AFL outlined plans to all AFL and AFLW clubs for two major concussion projects that were undertaken across the 2021 season.

### Jason McCartney GWS Giants FC umpire approach sanction

Greater Western Sydney Giants football boss Jason McCartney was fined \$20,000 after breaching AFL rule 15.2 after approaching the umpires at half-time during the Giants' loss to the Western Bulldogs in round six.

### Concussion Guidelines

The AFL released its updated 2021 AFL/AFLW Concussion Guidelines ahead of the start of the 2021 NAB AFLW and 2021 Toyota AFL Premiership Seasons.

Under the revised guidelines, players must be sidelined for at least 12 days if they suffer a concussion. The minimum 12-day return to play protocol is a substantive increase on the previous six days required under the 2020 guidelines.

All players suffering a concussion will miss at least one match (assuming standard fixturing) and sometimes they will miss more than one match depending on clinical symptoms.

The Concussion Guidelines are reviewed on an annual basis and the updated version was prepared by the AFL's then-Chief Medical Officer Peter Harcourt and now-Chief Medical Officer Michael Makdissi.

## Concussion Research Projects

The AFL wrote to all AFL and AFLW clubs in March 2021 outlining plans for two major concussion-related projects detailed below that were undertaken across the 2021 Toyota AFL Premiership Season. The studies were conducted to better understand head trauma and how the industry can work to protect the health and safety of our participants.

### Study #1 - BioEye

BioEye is an eye-tracking technology that has the potential to aid in the management of concussion in AFL players by providing an objective set of data to supplement the current subjective data/information used by medical teams.

BioEye engaged Monash University to carry out the research project which aims to determine whether BioEye's eye tracker can assist with diagnosing and managing concussion.

### Study #2 - HitIQ

The AFL and HitIQ have undertaken research during 2019 and 2020 on a mouthguard-based head impact sensor system to quantify head impact incidents in Australian Football and examine any correlative links between impact exposure and concussive events.

Over the next three years, this program will be expanded via a phased roll out. This expansion will see the technology deployed to the men's competition from 2021 and the women's competition from 2022 to better understand and measure the impact of head knocks.





NSW/ACT

- ▶ 2021 saw a return to 98 per cent of community football 2019 participation levels. This represented 18 per cent growth on 2020 community football participation.
- ▶ While COVID-19 disrupted the Auskick season, AFL NSW/ACT's teams pivoted to an online delivery model, putting thousands of participants through their paces online. The team worked fast to provide these sessions for Auskick participants and for children of corporate partners such as AAMI, NAB, Toyota and Marsh. Before the lockdown, community Auskick returned to 86 per cent of 2019 participation levels, growing 40 per cent on 2020 participation.
- ▶ More than 8500 students playing for almost 600 teams contested the Paul Kelly Cup, one of the biggest primary school knockout competitions in Australia.
- ▶ One hundred girls' teams from 12 schools competed in Independent Schools competitions.
- ▶ AFL Friends of Parliament launched in NSW, with the initial event at Parliament House hosted by AFL CEO Gillon McLachlan and attended by the NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian as well as almost 50 MPs from across the political spectrum.
- ▶ AFL NSW/ACT delivered Youth Leadership Camps to more than 60 Indigenous and multicultural boys and, during the COVID lockdown, pivoted the program to run multiple online leadership workshops.
- ▶ More than 50 community clubs celebrated Sir Doug Nicholls Round by wearing commemorative guernseys, holding smoking ceremonies, delivering dance and painting workshops, and delivering acknowledgements of country.
- ▶ Seven players from NSW/ACT were drafted to AFLW clubs - Ally Morphett (Belconnen), Jessica Doyle (Manly Warringah), Brodee Mowbray (Southern Power), Georgie Fowler (East Coast Eagles), Casidhe Simmons (UNSW-ES), Erin Todd (Inner West Magpies) and Isadora McLeay (North Shore).
- ▶ Two players from NSW/ACT were drafted to AFL clubs - Josh Fahey from Queanbeyan and Patrick Voss from Turvey Park.
- ▶ Through strong partnerships with local community clubs and all levels of government, AFL NSW/ACT delivered 18 key projects worth \$24m of total facility development.
- ▶ Fourteen players from NSW/ACT were selected for the U19 AlliesW team that competed at the national championships. This augurs well for talent pathways when the AFLW competition expands in NSW with the introduction of the Sydney Swans' AFLW side, likely to start at the end of 2022.

△ More than 50 community clubs celebrated Sir Doug Nicholls Round with various activities, including these youngsters taking part in a traditional game of Marngrook.

Around the Regions

The AFL state offices across NSW, Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania and Northern Territory have been restructured to focus more on community football, growth in participation and development of facilities. Executive General Manager Game Development Rob Auld will lead the new-look team in 2022.

AFL state-based leaders:

- ▶ Head of AFL Victoria - Ben Kavenagh
- ▶ Head of AFL Queensland - Trish Squires
- ▶ Head of AFL NSW/ACT - Tiffany Robertson
- ▶ Head of AFL Tasmania - Damian Gill
- ▶ Head of AFL NT - Sam Gibson

VICTORIA

- ▶ Community football across Victoria was again disrupted in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with the season eventually cut short before most leagues could hold finals series and award premierships. Credit must go to the thousands of players, coaches, umpires, administrators and volunteers at all levels who contributed to bringing the game back after the cancelled season in 2020.
- ▶ Registered participation numbers for community club football were up in 2021 compared with pre-COVID 2019 levels - a fantastic outcome for the game.
- ▶ AFL Victoria welcomed a new head executive, with Ben Kavenagh appointed to replace Brad Scott, who moved into a senior role in the AFL football department. Kavenagh joined as Head of AFL Victoria after an extensive career in sports administration, most recently as CEO of the Adelaide 36ers/Lightning NBL teams.
- ▶ The AFL reaffirmed its commitment to community football through the re-launch of the Strategic Community Investment Fund, part of the League's \$18m investment into Victorian community football. This funding opportunity was taken up by many clubs in 2021.
- ▶ AFL Victoria welcomed the Victorian Government's commitment to backing more community sporting clubs, with players, leagues, clubs, volunteers and officials to benefit from the government investment of \$70m. Highlights directly impacting community football included:
  - ▶ \$55m for new and improved community sports infrastructure, including female-friendly facilities;
  - ▶ \$11.6m to continue programs that are driving participation and inclusion for women and girls;
  - ▶ Funding that will benefit AFL/AFLW and VFL infrastructure and community projects.
- ▶ Key facility announcements in 2021 included:
  - ▶ A \$13.3m facility at MacPherson Park in Melton, named a joint winner of the prestigious National Project of the Year as part of the AFL's 2020 Ken Gannon Community Football Facilities Awards;
  - ▶ AFL Victoria contributing \$250,000 from the Australian Football Facilities Fund towards the redevelopment of the Reid Oval in Warrnambool.
- ▶ A total of 28 players from Victoria (out of 59 selected) were picked up by teams at the AFLW Draft, while 45 of the 83 players drafted by AFL clubs were from Victoria, highlighting the strength of the state as the biggest breeding ground for the elite game.

△ St Kilda coach Brett Ratten gives some tips at a Community Coach Camp.

▶ MacPherson Park in Melton was a joint winner of the National Project of the Year.



- ▶ A number of community football programs were able to be completed and premierships awarded:
  - ▶ The Victorian Wheelchair Football League saw Collingwood winning the Grand Final in a thrilling match against Essendon, with a large crowd watching the decider in Boroondara. The Magpies won in memory of Collingwood captain Brendan Stroud who passed away a short time before the Grand Final.
  - ▶ The Victorian Blind Football League Grand Final was contested between St Kilda and the Western Bulldogs.
  - ▶ Key diversity talent programs for under-15 and under-16 players - All Nations (multicultural) and Kickstart (Indigenous) - culminated in a match between the two groups shortly after the NAB AFL Draft, giving many of the best boys in the state the chance to showcase their skills for future draft contention.
- ▶ Other programs have been rescheduled to 2022 to ensure their continued positive impact:
  - ▶ The V/Line Cup for under-15 age girls and boys from country Victoria will continue from April 2022, while the Herald Sun Shield for interschool competition will also return in the coming year.
- ▶ AFL Victoria partners continued to throw their support behind the game in significant ways, including:
  - ▶ The Transport Accident Commission (TAC) Club Rewards Program and Road Safety Round saw 160 football clubs across Victoria share in more than \$1m as a reward for promoting road safety and up to \$10,000 for individual clubs. This 30-year partnership is highlighted by the annual Road Safety Round, with 450,000 participants donning blue armbands as a reminder to drive safely.
  - ▶ Twelve country football clubs received up to \$5000 from the WorkSafe Club Safety Fund, a 20-year partnership designed to assist in making improvements to the safety of club environments.
  - ▶ Energy Safe Victoria, through the Safer Canteens program, delivered \$30,000 in funding to 32 clubs to upgrade old or dangerous canteen appliances. Energy Safe Victoria also support the Victorian Blind Football League.



△ SANFL's inaugural season of the Wheelchair Football League was a major success.

▽ St Kilda and the Bulldogs contested the Victorian Blind Football League Grand Final.

**SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

- ▶ The SANFL delivered a successful 18-round home and away men's State League season and 10-round Women's League season. More than 234,000 fans attended SANFL league games.
- ▶ AFL clubs the Adelaide Crows and Port Adelaide returned to the SANFL State League in 2021 after being unable to field teams in 2020 due to COVID.
- ▶ Channel Seven-broadcast games dominated viewing timeslots, with SANFL minor round matches achieving 33 per cent market share and SANFL finals an average of 44 per cent. The SANFL Digital Pass live streaming platform grew from 5000 subscribers in 2020 to 11,000 in 2021.
- ▶ Woodville-West Torrens created history, winning the club's first back-to-back SANFL premierships after a 67-point victory over minor premier Glenelg on October 3, in front of 22,956 fans.
- ▶ SANFL retained the Haydn Bunton Jnr Cup after defeating the WAFL by 53 points in the state game at Adelaide Oval on May 15.
- ▶ South Adelaide's Bryce Gibbs and Woodville-West Torrens' James Tsitas were crowned joint winners of the 2021 Magarey Medal.
- ▶ Glenelg Football Club, in its Centenary Year, won its first SANFLW premiership, defeating reigning premier North Adelaide. Glenelg also was awarded the Stanley H. Lewis Trophy as the best performing club of 2021 across all men's, women's and under-age competitions.
- ▶ The SANFLW Best and Fairest Medal was won by West Adelaide's 15-year-old Lauren Young.
- ▶ Across all of football in SA, participation returned to 2019 pre-COVID levels, with SANFL recording almost 54,000 club registrations for males and females across the state.
- ▶ Auskick registrations reached more than 9500, while the SANFL Schools Competition included 130 teams and 1400 participants.
- ▶ SANFL Juniors - one of the largest junior sporting competitions in Australia - completed a full season and continued to grow in participation numbers. The competition saw 14,109 boys and girls, from under-7s through to under-17.5s, play across 704 teams and 60 community clubs.



△ Peel Thunder's Ella Roberts was named MVP for WA at the 2021 NAB AFLW Under-19 Championships.

- ▶ Across SA, 3049 coaches were registered, with 100 completing Level 2 Accreditation. For the first time in Australia, a Level Two Coaching Accreditation was offered to coaches of junior age groups (U8s-U12s).
- ▶ SANFL successfully delivered its inaugural season of the Wheelchair Football League with four SANFL clubs - Central District, Norwood, Sturt and Woodville-West Torrens - represented and the Double Blues claiming the first premiership.
- ▶ SANFL's commercial partners continued their support for SANFL. The SANFL acknowledges longstanding partner Statewide Super, who will not be continuing as the State League naming rights partner beyond 2021.
- ▶ Major partner West End continues its historic partnership with the SANFL, despite the closure of Lion's brewery in SA. The great tradition of the SANFL premiers' colours on the brewery chimney continues at a new location, the 42m-high Brickworks Kiln at Thebarton.

**WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

- ▶ Ten WA players were selected in the AFLW Draft - first round selections Charlie Thomas (Subiaco) and Amy Franklin (Claremont) and later picks Courtney Rowley (Peel), Beth Schilling (Peel), Dana East (Swan Districts), Makaela Tuhakaraina (South Fremantle), Sara Lakay (Swan Districts) Emily Bennett (Claremont), Jessica Low (Claremont) and Sarah Wielstra (Swan Districts).
- ▶ A total of 16 WA players were selected in the NAB AFL Draft - Jye Amiss (selection eight, East Perth), Rhett Bazzo (37, Swan Districts), Eric Benning (54, Claremont), Greg Clark (62, Subiaco), Neil Erasmus (10, Subiaco), Brady Hough (31, Peel), Matthew Johnson (21, Subiaco), Arthur Jones (43, Claremont), Jesse Motlop (27, South Fremantle), Angus Sheldrick (18, Claremont), James Tunstall (41, East Perth), Jacob van Rooyen (19, Claremont), Corey Warner (40, East Fremantle), Jack Williams (57, East Fremantle), Isiah Winder (57, Peel), Taj Woewodin (65, East Fremantle).

- ▶ Four WA players were added to AFL lists following the NAB AFL Mid-Season Draft - Matthew Parker (South Fremantle) at pick 10 to Richmond, Will Collins (Swan Districts) pick 11 to West Coast, Kalin Lane (Claremont) pick 14 to Brisbane and Connor West (West Perth) pick 22 to West Coast.
- ▶ One WA player was selected in the AFL Rookie Draft - Judd McVee (East Fremantle) at pick 16 to Melbourne.
- ▶ At the 2021 NAB AFLW Under-19 Championships, Western Australia finished with one win and two losses. Ella Roberts (Peel) was name MVP for WA.
- ▶ At the 2021 NAB AFL Under-19 Championships, Western Australia remained undefeated against South Australia, recording three victories. WA's Matt Johnson was named best-on-ground in the AFL Grand Final curtain-raiser against South Australia.
- ▶ The 2021 WAFL competition reverted to a 20-round home and away season and a five-team finals series.
- ▶ Subiaco claimed the 2021 WAFL premiership in front of 30,000 fans at Optus Stadium - the largest crowd in 20 years. Greg Clark won the Simpson Medal.
- ▶ Claremont's Bailey Rogers won the 2021 Sandover Medal.
- ▶ The WA state team lost to the SANFL in Adelaide. Jye Bolton won the Simpson Medal.
- ▶ Peel Thunder claimed back-to-back WAFLW premierships, with Sabreena Duffy as best-on-ground. Claremont captain Ella Smith claimed the 2021 Dhara Kerr Medal for the WAFLW best and fairest.
- ▶ There were 70,161 participants in community football in 2021- the largest number ever in WA. Female participation grew 39.65 per cent to 11,762 - the fastest-growing segment of WA football.
- ▶ A total of 16,249 children participated in NAB AFL Auskick in 2021.
- ▶ Kingsway claimed the 2021 A-Grade Amateur Grand Final.
- ▶ The 2021 Premiership Cup Tour of WA saw the premiership cup travel 4500km around the state and visit 12 iconic locations.
- ▶ Glen Jakovich, premiership centre half-back for West Coast in 1992 and 1994, was named the AFL Premiership Cup ambassador for the 2021 Toyota AFL Finals Series.
- ▶ Andrew Embley, 2006 Norm Smith medallist, was invited to present the Norm Smith Medal at the 2021 Grand Final at Optus Stadium.
- ▶ John Worsfold, 2006 West Coast premiership coach, presented the Jock McHale Medal to victorious Melbourne coach Simon Goodwin.
- ▶ Nearly 50 WA-based Australian Hall of Fame members, AFL life members and greats of the WAFL were invited to attend a formal function at the 2021 Grand Final, representing an extraordinary gathering of talent in the one room. Past champions included Bill Dempsey, Ross Glendinning, Justin Longmuir, Shaun McManus, Peter Mann, Denis Marshall, Stephen Michael, Ian Miller, Graham Moss, David Mundy, Matthew Pavlich, Brian Peake, Aaron Sandilands, Brian Sierakowski, Ray Sorrell, John Todd, Bill Walker, Rob Wiley and Shane Woewodin.




**NORTHERN TERRITORY**

- ▶ The Michael Long Cup returned to Darwin in 2021 with a refreshed focus on hosting the most promising youth players from across the Territory and a new female program was introduced.
- ▶ A total of 74 boys and 54 girls were selected as part of the under-17 NT Thunder Academy and 56 boys and 62 girls formed part of the under-19 program. Players were selected from all over the Territory - coming from Darwin, Central Australia, Katherine, the Tiwi Islands, Tennant Creek and Arnhem Land.
- ▶ Four females and nine males were selected as part of the 2021 Allies squads.
- ▶ Due to COVID impacts, the NT Thunder Academy squads played in a revised NAB Challenge consisting of under-17 and under-19 NT Thunder Academy players.
- ▶ Ashanti Bush was selected as pick No. 8 in the 2021 AFLW Draft by the Gold Coast Suns.
- ▶ 2019 AFL draftee Malcom Rosas and 2020 draftee Joel Jeffrey both made their debut for the Gold Coast Suns in 2021, as did Richmond 2020 draftee Maurice Rioli jr.
- ▶ NT product Janet Baird made her debut for the Gold Coast Suns in 2021 after being drafted in 2020.
- ▶ The Northern Territory Football League (NTFL) was able to complete the 2020-21 season without any COVID interruptions. Nightcliff celebrated its third successive premiership in the men's Premier League Grand Final which went into extra time.
- ▶ The NTFL saw the expansion of its junior competitions from 67 to 97 teams as it builds towards a completed pathway for boys and girls.
- ▶ The Central Australian Football League (CAFL) in Alice Springs was able to complete most of the season, losing only two rounds to COVID lockdowns. The competition saw the introduction of a Youth Girls grade and games were played under lights at Albrecht Oval for the first time.

△ NT Thunder Academy squads played in a revised NAB Challenge.

- ▶ The community of Santa Teresa, located 80km from Alice Springs, saw the launch of its re-grassed oval in June - a project formed in 2017 in conjunction with the Melbourne Football Club, Northern Territory Government and Melbourne Cricket Club.
- ▶ A CAFL senior women's match featured an all-female umpire line-up for the first time. Female community football umpiring participation is 23 per cent, the highest female umpire participation rate in the country.
- ▶ The Big Rivers Football League continued to expand with the inclusion of a second division of remote Indigenous community teams, spread from Nauyiu in the Daly River region to Kalkarindji, more than 450km from Katherine.
- ▶ The first four-team female football competition was hosted in the remote Indigenous community of Wadey and the West Daly Region.
- ▶ A new remote project was established in the remote Indigenous community of Gunbalanya.
- ▶ The first all abilities AFL program was established for people with physical and intellectual disabilities in Alice Springs as the only peak sporting body to offer regular sport activities in the region.
- ▶ A successful Wheelchair AFL pilot program was co-delivered with Disability Sports NT.
- ▶ The first NT specific Inclusion AFL Carnival was hosted for footballers with intellectual disabilities, to build the player base for the 2022 carnival.
- ▶ The Michael Long Learning and Leadership Centre (MLLLC) Programs restarted in May following a 14-month dormancy due to COVID impacts. Fifteen remote communities have participated in programs, while an MOU was developed with Charles Darwin University to share expertise and resources and receive an academic evaluation of its operations.
- ▶ Northern Territory Government Department of Education MLLLC funding has been extended for an additional year on the back of positive feedback and the ability to restart programs following the impacts of COVID.

**QUEENSLAND**

- ▶ The legacy of becoming the "unofficial" home of the AFL in 2020 saw more people playing, watching, supporting, following and involved in the game than ever before in 2021.
- ▶ A 14 per cent increase in player registrations at all levels of community club football across Queensland surpassed the previous participation record established in 2019. Women and girls now comprise 25 per cent of all registered participants.
- ▶ The AFL and the Queensland Government launched the AFL Queensland Grand Final Facilities Fund - an \$8m partnership that provides funding to assist local governments, grassroots community Australian Football clubs, umpiring organisations and schools to develop facilities.
- ▶ The Brisbane Lions' round 15 win over the Geelong Cats at the Gabba had the highest Queensland TV AFL audience for 10 years. During finals, Brisbane's TV audience was 98,000, the highest-ever Saturday night TV audience in the first week of finals.
- ▶ The Brisbane Lions and Gold Coast Suns set club membership records in 2021; 40,289 people are members of the Lions, while the Suns' membership base hit 19,460.
- ▶ The AFL partnered with the Brisbane Lions, the Queensland and Australian governments and Ipswich City Council to begin construction on the new \$70m Brighton Homes Arena in Springfield, which will eventually host Brisbane Lions' AFLW and VFL games.
- ▶ The Brisbane Lions won their first NAB AFLW premiership, defeating the Adelaide Crows by 18 points. Interestingly, 78 per cent of the team was drafted from and played their senior and junior footy in local cubs around the state.
- ▶ Lions premiership captain Emma Zielke now has the QAFLW Best and Fairest Award named in her honour, after winning four state league flags over her playing career.
- ▶ In the Bond University QAFLW, the University of Queensland defeated Bond University to win its maiden premiership.
- ▶ In the QAFL, the Broadbeach Cats ended a 25-year drought to win their maiden premiership, defeating the Maroochydore Roos by 38 points.
- ▶ The 76th J.A. Grogan Medal and Emma Zielke awards night was held virtually. Broadbeach's Jordan Moncrieff won the J.A. Grogan Medal and Bond University captain Shannon Danckert won the Emma Zielke Medal.
- ▶ 2021 saw a 16 per cent increase in umpire numbers across the state.
- ▶ An under-9 girls' competition was launched in South East Queensland with 21 teams, while 50 teams competed in the second year of the under-11s competition.

▽ AFL Queensland hosted an AFLX Inclusion competition with teams from Brisbane, Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast taking part for the first time.

- ▶ StreetSmarts Queensland sponsored the AFLQ Schools Cup with 608 teams playing in the premier school football competition in the state. The state finals were held at the Maroochydore Multisport Complex with Villanova College (primary male), Mooloolaba State School (primary female), Palm Beach Currumbin State High School (junior male, junior female, senior female) and Helensvale State High School (senior male) crowned state champions.
- ▶ More than 1200 girls created history as the Queensland Girls Secondary Schools Sports Association (QGSSSA) staged its first AFL interschool sporting competition.
- ▶ Queensland's new \$18.8m facility at Moreton Bay was joint winner of the prestigious National Project of the Year as part of the AFL's 2020 Ken Gannon Community Football Facilities Awards.
- ▶ Three Queenslanders made their AFL debut in 2021 - Alex Davies (Gold Coast Suns) and Will Martyn and Samson Ryan (Richmond).
- ▶ Four Queensland teams were part of the expanded 22-team VFL premiership season.
- ▶ The 2021 NAB AFL Draft Combine and NAB AFLW Draft Combine were state-based and held on the Gold Coast.
- ▶ Seven Queenslanders were drafted to the Brisbane Lions and Gold Coast Suns in the 2021 NAB AFLW Draft, while a further two Queenslanders were drafted from the QAFLW to the Gold Coast Suns ahead of the 2022 NAB AFLW season.
- ▶ For the first time, AFL Cape York House was at full capacity across its boys and girls houses in 2021. A total of 100 Indigenous youth, who represent 25 different Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, called AFL CYH home.
- ▶ Fifteen-year-old Queensland football representative (and Brisbane Lions Academy member) Zimra Hussain was awarded the Outstanding Contribution from a New Queensland in the Queensland Government's Multicultural Queensland Awards, after arriving in Queensland seven years ago as a refugee from Afghanistan.





- ▶ The Association of Independent Colleges First XVIII competition saw the introduction of the Andrews-Cameron Cup to be contested between Padua College and Marist Ashgrove College. The cup is named after former students and now Brisbane Lions players Charlie Cameron (2011) and Harris Andrews (2014).
- ▶ Thuringowa Bulldogs co-captain Jessee Gwynne played her 100th senior match in Townsville, becoming the first female to reach 100 games in the region.
- ▶ Community clubs across Queensland celebrated the third annual statewide Pride Round.
- ▶ AFL Queensland hosted an AFLX Inclusion competition with teams from Brisbane, Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast taking part for the first time.
- ▶ In a Queensland first, an official mini-season of inclusive Wheelchair AFL was played on the Gold Coast.
- ▶ NITV broadcast weekly QAFL and Bond University QAFLW games to a national audience.

TASMANIA

- ▶ All leagues in Tasmania were able to complete a full season in 2021:
  - ▶ Launceston claimed a second Tasmanian State League premiership in as many years, defeating cross-town rival North Launceston by 34 points. Clarence claimed the Development League and under-18 flags, getting the better of Launceston and Lauderdale respectively.
  - ▶ For the second successive season, Huonville and Cygnet played off in the SFL Grand Final. Cygnet won by 18 points, while Glenorchy was a dominant force in the SFLW Division 1, winning every game, including a 36-point Grand Final triumph over Claremont.

△ The home ground of Mount Pleasant, premiers in the Oatlands District Football Association.

- ▶ Devonport claimed its first NWFL premiership since 1988, beating Penguin by just three points. Ulverstone was a class above in the NWFLW, completing an undefeated season with a 45-point win over Wynyard.
- ▶ The Old Scholars Football Association was closely contested and produced a thrilling finish, with OHA holding on to defeat St Virgil's by just seven points.
- ▶ The NTFA Premier Division produced one of the great finals runs, with Bracknell winning its way from fourth on the ladder to a premiership after a 19-point triumph over minor premier South Launceston. Lilydale claimed the Division One flag.
- ▶ The Oatlands District Football Association returned in 2021, with Mount Pleasant as premier while the Darwin Football Association also returned after a year's hiatus, with Queenstown winning both the seniors and reserves Grand Finals over Somerset.
- ▶ Motton Preston made it back-to-back premierships in the NWFA, downing Forth by 10 points.
- ▶ Scotchtown proved too strong for Redpa in the Circular Head Football Association.
- ▶ The King Island Football Association three-team league was won by Grassy with a 20-point win over North.
- ▶ Toyota AFL Finals Series action came to Tasmania for the first time, with Launceston's University of Tasmania Stadium playing host to the Sydney v GWS and Western Bulldogs v Essendon elimination finals.
- ▶ The first Women's State-wide All-Stars Series was a resounding success. The North West claimed bragging rights, with Wynyard's Emma Humphries named series MVP.



△ A picture-perfect backdrop greeted players and fans at this match in Canada.

- ▶ Clubs also played off for the Women's State-wide premiership, with the winners from the NTFW (Launceston), the NWFLW (Ulverstone) and the SFLW (Glenorchy) advancing to the finals. Glenorchy prevailed by 13 points over Ulverstone at North Hobart Oval.
- ▶ Key growth areas in participation were:
  - ▶ six per cent growth in total registered participants.
  - ▶ 12 per cent growth in overall youth football participation.
  - ▶ 23 per cent growth in female youth football participation.
  - ▶ two per cent growth in senior football participation.
  - ▶ 13 per cent growth in registered umpires.
- ▶ AFL Tasmania launched the Football Futures Project, an in-depth consultation process and situational analysis to develop a long-term vision for football across the state.
- ▶ Three Tasmanians were selected in the AFLW Draft - Perri King (pick 43, North Melbourne), Meagan Kiely (pick 48, Richmond) and Ella Maurer (pick 56, North Melbourne).
- ▶ The Tasmania Devils NAB League Girls side enjoyed a historic campaign, with a 6-2 win-loss record to secure the program's first finals berth. The NAB League Boys side also performed strongly, winning five games before the season's cancellation.

INTERNATIONAL

- ▶ COVID-19 brought the game to halt in most countries globally, but Australian Football made a strong recovery in a number of key markets.
- ▶ The 2020 International Cup was postponed to 2021, but Australia's closed border again prevented the event from proceeding. It will now be held in 2023, in line with regular three-year scheduling.
- ▶ The Department of Foreign and Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) Pacific Sports Partnership (PSP) program continues its work towards the improvement of health in Nauru through participation in Australian Football, while strengthening the ties between the two countries. Almost 30 per cent of the country's population now participate in the game.
- ▶ Significant lockdowns impacted two key markets in the Pacific region in Papua New Guinea and Fiji.
- ▶ Paradise Foods Limited re-signed as an AFL partner in PNG, bringing the partnership to seven consecutive years.
- ▶ USAFL participation reached 93 per cent of its pre-COVID levels.
- ▶ USAFL Nationals returned in full force in 2021 in Austin, Texas, with four men's divisions and one women's division. Collingwood player and native Texan Mason Cox returned to the USAFL Nationals for the third year in a row as the ambassador for the event.
- ▶ In New Zealand, despite 79 of the scheduled 120 school days being impacted by Government Alert Levels related to COVID, there were more than 15,000 KiwiKick participants.
- ▶ Overall participation in New Zealand in 2021 increased above 2019 pre-COVID levels.
- ▶ AFL Asia released its Strategic Plan for 2021-25, outlining key initiatives to achieve participation growth across the continent.
- ▶ The Development Grants Program was launched in Asia, with eight projects receiving funding support, including increasing leadership capacity, bolstering female talent pathways and assisting COVID recoveries.
- ▶ Three new leagues were launched across Asia, despite difficulties with lockdowns.
- ▶ In Canada, AFLW matches, including finals, were aired for the first time. Canada now has two male and five female players playing in Australia.
- ▶ AFL Canada initiatives have seen umpire numbers increase to 61, with a head umpire appointed and the development of an umpiring incentive program.
- ▶ South Africa experienced ongoing COVID-19 impacts for much of the year, but AFL South Africa achieved strong participation in the time restrictions were eased.
- ▶ In Europe, the AFL Festival of Footy returned with 50 teams from 15 countries playing concurrently on the same day in August.
- ▶ Local teams in France hosted a day of footy in the area surrounding the Eiffel Tower as part of the 2021 Australia Now Festival.

# CUSTOMER AND COMMERCIAL

▶ **KYLIE ROGERS**

EXECUTIVE GENERAL MANAGER CUSTOMER AND COMMERCIAL



**T**he importance of aligning with great organisations that share the AFL's vision and values was central to the success of our game in 2021.

Despite navigating the ongoing COVID-19 challenges throughout the past 18 months, the strong commitment shown by our partners to support football has allowed us to deliver key initiatives that engage with fans, grow the game and make it accessible for all.


An enhanced focus was directed to fans and audience, resulting in record club membership figures, while we were also proud to welcome a number of new partners in 2021 and strengthen our relationships with the renewal of key partners into 2022 and beyond.

The AFL sincerely and formally thanks all those organisations who have aligned with us, many for decades or more - our naming rights partners, premier partners, major partners and all of our licensee and support partners.


▶ A highlight for Auskick participants is getting close to AFL stars after the half-time grid games.




## CORPORATE PARTNERS




**PREMIER PARTNER**





**MAJOR PARTNERS**




**OFFICIAL PARTNERS**




**ASSOCIATE PARTNERS**


**PREMIER PARTNER**



**MAJOR PARTNERS**



**OFFICIAL PARTNERS**




▷ The NAB AFL Auskick program is all about creating fun and excitement for boys and girls.



#### Toyota

Toyota's contribution to Australian Football was celebrated in 2021 with the establishment of the inaugural Toyota Good For Footy Round.

This marked the first dedicated round recognised simultaneously across the elite men's and women's competitions. As part of the round, Toyota launched its Toyota Good For Footy Suggestion Box, which provided the wider football community the opportunity to share their suggestions on how Toyota could make footy 'gooder' for all. The longstanding Toyota Good For Footy raffle continued to provide benefits for grassroots football clubs across the country, with the initiative breaking the million dollar fundraising milestone in 2021, and a record 648 clubs taking part.

△ Toyota HiLux vehicles again assisted the Premiership Cup Tour in 2021.

◁ The Good For Footy suggestion box was well received by the football community.

Toyota's dedication to both supporting grassroots football and making the game accessible for all was strengthened with its continued sponsorship of the Toyota AFL National Inclusion Carnival, Toyota National Wheelchair AFL Championships, Toyota National Volunteer of the Year awards and support for ongoing initiatives including funding for new club uniforms and sponsorship from dealerships in local communities.

Further, Toyota renewed its partnership for the 2021 Toyota AFL Premiership Cup Tour which travelled more than 4500km around Western Australia. Facilitating the trip in Toyota HiLux vehicles, the annual 2021 Toyota AFL Premiership Cup Tour provided a great opportunity for people in remote communities to get swept up in Toyota AFL Finals fever and bring West Australian footy fans closer to the game they love.

## CUSTOMER AND COMMERCIAL

KYLIE ROGERS

### NAB

NAB continued to play a pivotal role in supporting Australian Football from the grassroots to the elite level in 2021. NAB's ongoing support of the NAB AFL Auskick program was highlighted at the 2021 Toyota AFL Grand Final, quickly identifying 23 local West Australian Auskick participants to take part in a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Thanks to NAB, selected Auskickers participated in a training session at Optus Stadium with their AFL and AFLW heroes, attended the Grand Final open training session, formed a guard of honour for the Grand Final teams at half-time and presented the medallions to the 2021 premiers.

### NAB League

After a significantly impacted 2020 season, the NAB League returned in 2021 to see the Oakleigh Chargers crowned premiers of the girls' competition.

The NAB League boys' competition conducted 68 games across the state, despite COVID interruptions, resulting in another strong cohort of players selected as part of the 2021 NAB AFL Draft.

The 2021 NAB AFL Championships continued to showcase the top male and female talent across the country, delivering 18 games across under-19 and under-17 grades, highlighted by a special NAB Challenger match between WA and SA as a curtain-raiser at Optus Stadium before the 2021 Toyota AFL Grand Final.

For the second consecutive year, the NAB AFL Combine was conducted in each state and territory to ensure all prospective recruits were able to showcase their talents in a COVID-safe environment.

For the second year in a row, the 2021 NAB AFL Academy adapted its program to deliver three- and four-day high-performance camps with top draft prospects from across the boys' and girls' competitions.

▶ The 2021 Toyota Premiership Cup Tour visited many regions in WA, including Cable Beach in Broome.

▽ Telstra was the presenting partner of the Grand Final entertainment, before the game and at half-time.

### Telstra

Telstra has been a proud partner of the AFL for almost two decades and continues to leverage its network and technology to connect all fans closer to the game.

In 2021, Telstra came on board as the presenting partner of the 2021 Telstra Pre-Match and Half-Time Entertainment which featured an all-Australian line-up that aligned with Telstra's 'Australia Is Why' brand campaign.

After another challenging year for Australian businesses, Telstra leveraged its partnership with the AFL to support small businesses through an industry-first initiative that provided nine small businesses with access to exclusive AFL sponsorship assets - including having the name of each of the small businesses up in lights in front of millions of AFL fans - an opportunity usually reserved for big business. Telstra continues to focus on enabling tech solutions across our digital platforms for our fans, right through to our Marvel Stadium upgrade.

### Coles

The AFL's partnership with Coles to promote healthy lifestyles was strengthened through the Coles Healthy Kicks Program.

Moving from the virtual environment from 2020, the program, in partnership with various schools across Australia, delivered the national primary school holiday program with more than 8000 children focusing on embracing healthy cooking, mindfulness and exercise.







### Colgate

Colgate's partnership as the Official Smile of the AFL and AFLW saw the Grand Final Day Sprint held along the 50m arc at Optus Stadium, representing the same shape as the iconic Colgate Smile.

For the first time, a Colgate AFLW Grand Final Sprint was held ahead of the 2021 NAB AFLW Grand Final at Adelaide Oval, with players from each AFLW club taking part.

In another first, eight players from the West Coast Eagles and Fremantle competed in the Colgate AFL Grand Final Sprint before the 2021 Toyota AFL Grand Final in a Western Derby that determined the quickest player in the west.

Under the partnership of 'Smile Strong', Colgate provided a donation to Ladder, an AFL player-led charity tackling youth homelessness, in honour of the winner.

### Virgin Australia

Virgin Australia's ongoing support of the AFL was vital in keeping our sport alive throughout the year as the game navigated evolving border restrictions.

The AFL and its clubs frequently relied on specific charter flights for the safe travel of players and key personnel, and the professionalism of all Virgin Australia staff and operations was vital for matches to continue to proceed as fixtured.

Virgin Australia also supported the 2021 Toyota Premiership Cup Tour through Western Australia, as well as delivered a special Grand Final Make A Wish Foundation experience for a young Port Hedland boy.

### Accor

Accor's support during the 2021 Toyota AFL Premiership Season was again pivotal in ensuring the safe accommodation of players and key personnel.

An extraordinary level of planning and co-ordination was required to deliver smooth travel that supported club operations, families and quarantine requirements to keep the season continuing.

The exceptional hospitality from the Accor team ensured players and support crew were always looked after to the highest standard, even dealing with strict protocols and restrictions.

Accor also proudly supported the Yolngu Radio commentary team by providing accommodation for the team's historic in-language broadcast of the first AFL finals match called in traditional Yolngu Matha language.

### Google Footy Skills Lab

The AFL and Google's shared belief that every Australian - no matter their age, ability, location, culture or socio-economic status - should have access to the same tools to improve their health, knowledge and happiness was a key driver behind the creation of the Footy Skills Lab. Using Google AI technology, the Footy Skills Lab helps budding footballers in Australia and across the world improve their skills through training activities in ball-handling, decision-making and kicking direct from their smartphone.



△ West Coast's Josh Rotham won the Colgate AFL Grand Final Sprint.

△ The Coles Healthy Kicks Program promoted healthy lifestyles for young children.



## Community support

Our partners continued to lean in and support the broader football community through new and returning grassroots funding initiatives.

Bunnings launched its Bunnings Helping Hands program which awarded one community football club from each state/territory with \$30,000 to build or upgrade infrastructure for female footballers.

The AAMI Clangers for Good initiative returned in 2021, with AAMI donating \$10 per clanger throughout the Toyota AFL Premiership Season and \$100 per clanger throughout the Toyota AFL Finals, donating about \$10,000 in funding for 12 community clubs around Australia.

## New business

The AFL welcomed a number of new partners in 2021, with the addition of **Continental Tyres**, **Therabody**, **Aqium** and **Mondelez (Cadbury)** joining the football family.

Continental Tyres was announced as the exclusive naming rights partner of the AFL Trade Period and the official sponsor of AFL club runners, with the company's iconic logo featured on the front of runners' shirts.

Therabody's industry-leading devices and research into injury prevention and performance saw it join the AFL as the Official Recovery Partner of the 2021 Toyota AFL Premiership Season and naming rights partner for the 2021 AFL All-Australian team.

Aqium became the Official Hand Sanitiser Partner of the AFL and Marvel Stadium, with hand sanitiser stations installed throughout Marvel Stadium and on the players' interchange benches.

Mondelez (Cadbury) joined our game as an AFLW partner, sponsoring the AFLW runners, which aligns to its broader support of women in sports campaign.

△ Richmond's Katie Brennan headlined the launch of the Bunnings Helping Hands project. She is pictured with (from left) Claudio Panozzo (Lower Plenty), Claire Leahy (Darebin Falcons), Hinako Eyre (Fitzroy) and Ruby Panozzo (Lower Plenty).

## Renewals

The AFL was pleased to announce a number of key partnership renewals in 2021, extending a long-standing relationship with McDonald's.

First establishing a partnership in 2014, McDonald's extended its support of Australian Football for a further 10 years, as sponsor on the official match ball.

McDonald's also reconfirmed its ongoing sponsorship of AFLW, as well as the much-loved fan activity of the Macca's Kick 2 Kick program.

We saw an extended partnership across our AFL, AFLW and Marvel relationships through Treasury Wine Estate, Patties Pies and Aqium, while the AFL was also thrilled to extend partnerships with Chemist Warehouse, Coca Cola Europacific Partners and Monster.

**WE SAW AN EXTENDED PARTNERSHIP ACROSS OUR AFL, AFLW AND MARVEL RELATIONSHIPS**

## AFL club membership

The support from fans for our game at a time when many were unable to attend matches in person was again extraordinary, with one in 23 Australians a member of an AFL club in 2021.

AFL club membership reached new heights with 1,113,441 members, surpassing the previous record of 1,057,572 set in 2019.

Ten AFL clubs reached membership records (the Brisbane Lions, Carlton, Geelong Cats, Gold Coast Suns, Melbourne, North Melbourne, Port Adelaide, Richmond, St Kilda and West Coast Eagles) with Richmond and West Coast Eagles each exceeding 100,000 club members in consecutive years.

An AFLW membership record was also set in 2021, with 25,782 fans signing up to show their support of elite women's football in a year that saw the competition ticketed for the first time.

### AFL Membership

AFL Members continued their unwavering commitment to Australian Football to record our second-highest membership tally of all-time, with 56,552 AFL members signing up for 2021.

### Stadium Membership - Medallion Club

After a significant adjustment in the hospitality and premium membership market in 2020, Medallion Club members returned in strong numbers in 2021.

Season 2021 welcomed the long-awaited official match-day opening of our two new premium restaurants curated by leading celebrity chefs - Lee Ho Fook by Victor Liong and Gallery by Adrian Richardson. These world-class restaurant partnerships are the first of their kind in Australian sport and have created a point of difference in our premium customer match-day experience.



## AFL CLUB MEMBERSHIP

CLUB (* RECORD)	2020	2021	YOY +/-
Adelaide Crows	54,891	60,232	+5341
Brisbane Lions	29,277	40,289	+11,012
Carlton*	67,035	81,302	+14,267
Collingwood	76,862	82,527	+5665
Essendon	66,686	81,662	+14,976
Fremantle	51,577	50,342	-1235
Geelong Cats	60,066	70,293	+10,227
Gold Coast Suns*	16,236	19,460	+3224
GWS Giants*	30,841	30,185	-656
Hawthorn	76,343	77,079	+736
Melbourne	40,571	53,188	+12,617
North Melbourne	38,667	46,357	+7690
Port Adelaide	46,820	56,532	+9712
Richmond	100,420	105,084	+4664
St Kilda*	48,588	55,802	+7214
Sydney Swans	48,322	50,144	+1822
West Coast Eagles*	100,776	106,422	+5646
Western Bulldogs	38,876	46,541	+7665
<b>Totals</b>	<b>992,854</b>	<b>1,113,441</b>	<b>+120,587</b>

## AFLW MEMBER TOTALS

CLUB	TOTAL
Adelaide Crows	2735
Brisbane Lions	1003
Carlton	1008
Collingwood	1248
Essendon	0
Fremantle	2071
Geelong Cats	1965
Gold Coast Suns	1099
GWS Giants	1363
Hawthorn	348
Melbourne	471
North Melbourne	1401
Port Adelaide	0
Richmond	2437
St Kilda	3119
Sydney Swans	0
West Coast Eagles	3081
Western Bulldogs	2433
<b>Totals</b>	<b>25,782</b>

## 2021 STATE BREAKDOWN

STATE	TOTAL
ACT	11,261
NSW	74,530
NT	4896
QLD	64,008
SA	102,360
TAS	32,237
VIC	608,355
WA	145,538
Overseas	6931
Unknown	63,325
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1,113,441</b>

◀ Lee Ho Fook by Victor Liong was one of two new premium restaurants available to Medallion Club members in 2021.

## Consumer Products and Retail

Consumer Products defied trends in 2021 to record outstanding year-on-year growth, returning revenue to pre-pandemic levels.

Key Consumer Products growth categories included Memorabilia and Supporter Apparel, which were underpinned by Melbourne's drought-breaking 2021 premierships campaign, achieving the third-largest tally in history in terms of total sales, sitting behind Richmond (2017) and Collingwood (2010).

The AFL's Trading Card category achieved all-time sales revenue results, selling through TeamZone and Select ranges in record time and generating demand for 2022 releases.

AFL Stores continued to expand its physical footprint to 25 stores across Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland and Victoria, including the first Myer concession store in Myer Melbourne. AFL Stores also capitalised on the landmark Perth Grand Final, trading in 13 locations within WA during Grand Final week.

## Events

To protect the health and wellbeing of AFL players, officials and the wider community, a number of major AFL events were held as virtual and/or state-based ceremonies in 2021.

The 2021 Brownlow Medal was held across three cities - Brisbane, Perth and as a virtual event in Melbourne - as part of the Seven Network broadcast on September 19.

With players attending the event virtually and in person at secure locations around the country, Port Adelaide midfielder Ollie Wines became the first player in the club's history to claim the award, being crowned the 2021 Brownlow medallist.

For the first time, the AFLW Awards were held simultaneously in five different cities across the country, while the AFL Awards evening, broadcast by Fox Footy, combined the NAB AFL Rising Star, the announcement of the Therabody All-Australian team, 2021 Coleman Medal winner and the AFL Coaches Association Champion Player and Best Young Player Awards.

The Australian Football Hall of Fame induction was held as a broadcast event on Fox Footy, during which Jack Oatey and Merv McIntosh were elevated to Legend status, while Chris Judd, Nathan Burke, Robert Wiley and Debbie Lee were inducted into the Hall of Fame. Lee was the first woman to be inducted.

The 2021 Telstra AFL Grand Final Pre-match and Half-Time Shows featured an incredible all-Australian line-up of talent, including many West Australian and First Nations artists which elevated the Grand Final match-day experience for all patrons.

### Grand Final hospitality - Optus Stadium

Demand for premium hospitality and ticket packages for the 2021 Toyota AFL Grand Final in Perth experienced unprecedented interest, with all packages selling out within seven days of on-sale.

Presented by Virgin Australia, the AFL also welcomed more than 1200 VIP and premium guests from the Perth sport, media and business community to the first non-Victorian official Grand Final Eve lunch at the Crown Ballroom in Perth.

▶ Once again, the AFL Grand Final was the hottest ticket in town.

### Grand Final ticketing

Entry-level ticket prices for the 2021 Toyota AFL Grand Final in Perth were frozen for the third year in a row, after previous prices freezes in 2019 and 2020.

Consistent with previous years, competing club members were prioritised and received the biggest allocation of tickets. In addition, football fans in Western Australia were rewarded with a minimum 10,000 tickets allocated to the general public, following strong crowds at AFL Finals matches at Optus Stadium.

## Premiership Cup Tour

The 2021 Toyota AFL Premiership Cup embarked on a two-week tour of Western Australia in the lead-up to the Grand Final on September 25.

Travelling more than 4500km around WA, one of Australia's most prestigious pieces of silverware road-tripped down the west coast in a convoy of Toyota HiLux vehicles. Other locations around the state included local football communities in Halls Creek, Karratha, Exmouth and Geraldton.

With the support of Virgin Australia, the Cup visited a number of Western Australia's most iconic destinations, including the Bungle Bungle Range in Purnululu National Park, Broome's Cable Beach, Margaret River and Karinjini National Park.

Two-time West Coast Eagles premierships star Glen Jakovich, who was named as the official 2021 AFL Premiership Cup Ambassador, officially launched the 2021 Toyota AFL Premiership Cup Tour.

## Marvel Stadium

In another challenging year for Victoria and the broader sport and entertainment venue sector, the Marvel Stadium operations team worked diligently throughout the year to ensure the events that were delivered were conducted in a safe and effective manner.

In addition, Marvel Stadium has played an important role in numerous industry forums and workshops, ensuring the return to operations and crowds has been seamless.

A \$2m project for the redevelopment of RSEA Park Oval for the St Kilda Football Club remains on track for completion in early 2022.

The venue will also welcome the return of key events with the Big Bash League, AFL matches and a strong concert calendar featuring Justin Bieber already listed for the coming year.





Despite many interruptions during the 2021 season, fans appreciated the high standard of football.

### ATTENDANCE SUMMARY

	2021	2020	VARIANCE	%
JLT Community Series	69,545	93,337	-23,792	-25.5%
Premiership Season	3,794,417	820,262	2,974,155	362.6%
Finals Series	272,746	206,669	66,077	32.0%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4,136,708</b>	<b>1,120,268</b>	<b>3,016,440</b>	<b>269.3%</b>

### AFLW HOME GAME ATTENDANCE BY CLUB

CLUB	2021	AVERAGE	2020	AVERAGE	% VARIANCE
Adelaide Crows	40,680	5811	13,714	6857	-15.3%
Brisbane Lions	14,667	2933	6299	3150	-6.9%
Carlton	12,736	3184	11,400	5700	-44.1%
Collingwood	14,124	2825	29,620	9873	-71.4%
Fremantle	11,261	2252	15,591	5197	-56.7%
Geelong Cats	4349	870	8762	4381	-80.1%
Gold Coast Suns	6039	1007	14,082	4694	-78.5%
GWS Giants	11,105	2776	6898	2299	20.7%
Melbourne	7617	1904	5300	2650	-28.2%
North Melbourne	2410	603	8223	2741	-78.0%
Richmond	4768	1192	23,940	7980	-85.1%
St Kilda	4587	1147	15,882	5294	-78.3%
West Coast Eagles	14,257	2851	37,640	18,820	-84.9%
Western Bulldogs	7308	1462	11,392	5696	-74.3%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>155,908</b>	<b>2327</b>	<b>208,743</b>	<b>5964</b>	<b>-61.0%</b>

### ATTENDANCE BY VENUE

VENUE	2021 MATCHES	ATTENDANCE	AVERAGE	2020 MATCHES	ATTENDANCE	AVERAGE	% VARIANCE
Adelaide Oval	20	550,155	27,508	20	192,412	9621	185.9%
Blundstone Arena	6	32,348	5391	-	-	-	-
Cazalys Stadium	1	5969	5969	4	13,019	3255	83.4%
Giants Stadium	6	37,629	6272	9	14,403	1600	291.9%
GMHBA Stadium	11	117,511	10,683	3	0	0	-
Manuka Oval	2	19,627	9814	-	-	-	-
Mars Stadium	3	9979	3326	-	-	-	-
Marvel Stadium	45	637,296	14,162	11	0	0	-
MCG	42	1,055,844	25,139	9	0	0	-
Metricon Stadium	13	91,604	7046	43	102,463	2383	195.7%
Optus Stadium	22	719,913	32,723	16	319,395	19,962	63.9%
SCG	11	243,734	22,158	5	9845	1969	1025.3%
The Gabba	10	217,532	21,753	30	156,235	5208	317.7%
TIO Stadium	-	-	-	2	10,537	5269	-
TIO Traeger Park	-	-	-	1	1917	1917	-
UTAS Stadium	6	55,276	9213	-	-	-	-
<b>Totals</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>3,794,417</b>	<b>19,164</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>820,226</b>	<b>5361</b>	<b>257.5%</b>

### HOME GAME ATTENDANCE BY CLUB

VENUE	2021	AVERAGE	2020	AVERAGE	% VARIANCE
Adelaide Crows	247,495	22,500	90,328	10,036	124.2%
Brisbane Lions	226,607	20,601	86,140	9571	115.2%
Carlton	236,385	21,490	31,337	3917	448.6%
Collingwood	259,551	23,596	16,718	2090	1029.0%
Essendon	272,642	24,786	22,807	2851	769.4%
Fremantle	299,718	27,247	161,966	16,197	68.2%
Geelong Cats	158,021	14,366	41,120	4569	214.4%
Gold Coast Suns	75,934	6903	26,322	2632	162.3%
GWS Giants	64,111	5828	13,923	1740	234.9%
Hawthorn	166,192	15,108	17,061	2437	519.9%
Melbourne	222,847	20,259	16,248	1805	1022.4%
North Melbourne	111,635	10,149	8523	1065	853.0%
Port Adelaide	302,660	27,515	89,879	9987	175.5%
Richmond	256,704	24,681	23,102	2888	754.6%
St Kilda	136,861	12,442	17,760	2220	460.5%
Sydney Swans	233,298	21,209	24,422	3053	594.7%
West Coast Eagles	376,642	34,240	124,716	13,857	147.1%
Western Bulldogs	147,114	13,374	7890	986	1256.4%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>3,794,417</b>	<b>19,164</b>	<b>820,262</b>	<b>1917</b>	<b>257.5%</b>



## Digital

In a year that restricted many fans from engaging with our sport in person, AFL Media continued to bring fans closer to the game, through the delivery of new products, engaging content and cutting-edge technology.

The popular AFL social media channels experienced significant growth across all platforms, while total average monthly user traffic across the AFL Live app and *AFL.com.au* grew 44 per cent on the 2020 season, maintaining its place as one of Australia's leading sports media platforms.

With a new focus on creating a commercially driven entertainment network, AFL Media optimised its digital revenue opportunities through the sponsorship of all major shows, products and new assets, resulting in an increase in external revenue.

Through our marketing, editorial-owned and operated channels, AFL Media tackled key social issues, while a shift towards more agile production capabilities across content, product and data ensured we continued to be a central place for fans to remain digitally connected to the game.

## Digital Growth

Australians spend more time on our platforms than any other news or sport publisher in the country, and the AFL Media ecosystem continued to deliver high-quality content for fans of all ages.

All five social media platforms experienced significant audience growth from 2020 with an overall 5.4 per cent increase in followers. YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter saw a 6.7 per cent increase in impressions and a 11.6 per cent increase in interactions, while the AFL increased its reach on TikTok by 178 per cent.

The creation of engaging video content has been pivotal to the increase in audiences across our channels, with total video views up 17 per cent and 100 per cent growth in AFLW audiences and video views in the past two years.

AFL Fantasy also increased its number of registered players by nine per cent and continues to be a growth opportunity in 2022.

◀ AFL Photos' chief photographer Michael Willson won two major awards for his 'Flying Bulldog' image of Bailey Smith (opposite) and his 'Leaning Tower of Tayla' image of Tayla Harris.

## Editorial + Branded content

AFL Media's reputation of being a leading and trusted source of football news in Australia was strengthened in 2021, with the introduction of a number of new programs across AFL and AFLW channels.

Setting the daily news agenda, the new *AFL Daily* podcast delivered more than one million listens in the first six months, while the popular *AFL Exchange* podcast became a live streaming event during the season.

AFLW welcomed a new vodcast *Cutting Oranges* with Darcy Vescio, a weekly online TV show *The W Show* with Daisy Pearce and Nat Edwards, and the *League Leaders* podcast, which profiled women leaders across the industry.

In addition, the AFL's ability to produce high-quality branded content continued to be sought after by corporate partners, with initiatives for partners including Coles Fan Awards, Toyota Good For Footy, Bunnings Weekend Warriors and Colgate Kids.

## AFL Photos

AFL Photos' industry-wide reputation of the best photographic team across the game was reinforced this year, with chief photographer Michael Willson awarded The Women in Sport Photo Action Awards (WISPAA) prize for the third year running with his image 'The Leaning Tower of Tayla' and the Australian Football Media Association Award for best action photograph with his image of the 'Flying Bulldog' Bailey Smith.

The popular Footy Focus amateur photography competition returned in 2021, with more than 6500 entries received, while a new AFLW Lens Photography Program was launched to help educate 15 AFLW players in photography.

## AFL MEDIA CONTINUED TO BRING FANS CLOSER TO THE GAME

▼ Tayla Harris during the shooting of the documentary *Kick Like Tayla*.





## Amazon documentaries

Following the success of the 2020 *Making Their Mark* documentary, the AFL has again partnered with Amazon Prime to produce two feature-length documentaries that will be realised in 2022.

*Kick Like Tayla* will take an in-depth look at the life of Tayla Harris and the changes established to protect AFL/AFLW players and staff from online abuse.

The *Warriors on the Field* documentary, to be delivered in conjunction with EQ Media, will explore how sport can be a great leveller and an agent for change in the national conversation around racism and discrimination. Told by proud Kurna and Ngarrindjeri man and Sydney Swans great Michael O'Loughlin and directed by Larissa Behrendt OA, the documentary showcases the experiences of First Nation AFL players Michael Walters (Fremantle) and Tarryn Thomas (North Melbourne).

Both 60-minute documentaries are due for release mid-2022.

△ Megan Waters joined Tony Armstrong as co-host of the *Yokayi Footy Show*.

## Yokayi Footy Show

In its second season, the *Yokayi Footy Show* welcomed new co-host Megan Waters alongside Tony Armstrong.

In partnership with NITV/SBS, *Yokayi* continued to provide an important platform for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices, celebrating the on-field talents of First Nations AFL and AFLW players, creating new pathways for Indigenous production staff, and raising awareness for important topics such as racism and the Black Lives Matter movement.

Running from March to September, the show produced 28 episodes and will return for season three in 2022.

## AFL On Demand

The AFL On Demand platform welcomed a number of new original series in its second year, including *Dynasties* and *Unveiling an Icon* documentary.

The first episode of *Dynasties* focused on the Brisbane Lions of the early 2000s and featured interviews with greats Leigh Matthews, Jonathan Brown, Jason Akermanis and Simon Black.

*Unveiling an Icon* - due to be released in 2022 - reflects on Nicky Winmar's iconic moment of pointing to his chest and how he came to have a statue made in his honour.

## Infrastructure

The AFL's ability to store audio and visual content for future generations was strengthened, with the commencement of the Intelligent Archiving project set to be completed early in 2022.

With the support of Telstra Broadcasting Services, AWS storage and DALET Flex Media Asset Management, the AFL digitised more than 22,000 physical assets, which will allow for the reproduction and redistribution of the game's best moments to a global audience.

Further, AFL Media is investing in an overflow studio model that will make creative production processes more efficient, productive and compliant.

With workloads impacted by a resource reduction throughout 2020, AFL Media is trialling a flexible studio model in partnership with Clemenger Studio to redirect overflow work and increase creative capacity for the wider business in order to grow and diversify the AFL's audiences.

▽ 'This Is Us' proved to be an award-winning campaign in 2021.

## 'This is Us' campaign

For the first time, the AFL created an overarching brand platform for both the AFLW and AFL called 'This is Us', which was promoted in alignment with the 2021 NAB AFLW Premiership and 2021 Toyota AFL Premiership Season launch.

Developed internally by AFL Digital, the campaign was acknowledged by the Outdoor Media Association as the winner of the 2021 Creative Collection Award for Best Use of Digital.

In line with 'This is Us', the AFL released its 2021 Toyota AFL Final Series campaign, 'The Best of Us', that told the story of a season that could be the hardest-fought AFL premiership in history, through the voices of the game's legendary past coaches.



# STRATEGY, TECHNOLOGY & DATA

▶ **WALTER LEE**  
EXECUTIVE GENERAL MANAGER STRATEGY



**A**cross 2021, the Strategy, Technology and Data team was central in supporting the AFL Commission, clubs and the wider industry as it navigated strategic planning around the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic with changing restrictions, the Delta outbreak and vaccination requirements.

Throughout the year, the team also worked across key industry projects such as the AFL Players' CBA, industry funding models, AFLW expansion, the Colin Carter Tasmanian Review, provided critical contact tracing support and drove the AFL Technology Transformation and Marvel Technology Upgrade.

▶ The exciting Liam Ryan provided plenty of hope for West Coast fans but in the end the Eagles missed the eight.



## Strategic planning and COVID-19

The Strategy team provided important support in navigating the AFL and the wider industry throughout the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The team provided ongoing research and analysis to the business to identify potential industry outcomes and inform decisions through the evolving pandemic situation and government responses - across fixturing, state borders and crowds.

This included scenario modelling on federal and state government easing of restrictions based on community transmission and vaccination rates. Research and data was presented to Industry Conferences (Commission, club CEOs and club presidents) to support contingency planning discussions.

Finally, the team undertook extensive industry consultation and supported AFL Legal/Healthcare teams to inform vaccination policy across the AFL Workforce, AFL and AFLW Players and Football Program Staff. More recently, the Strategy team supported an options analysis in preparation for AFLW Season Six (2022) to ensure maximum flexibility for the competition.

The key outcomes achieved throughout the year continue to be a primary focus in ensuring strong competition outcomes going forward, including the return to crowds, ability to cross state borders and the AFL and AFLW Player and Football Program Vaccination Policy.

## Industry Finances

The team continued its work on a restructure of industry finances, which included supporting the AFL and clubs to revise the funding model for the industry. In addition, the Strategy team also supported the ongoing discussions on the AFL Players Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Future plans for AFLW expansion were also confirmed, including a readiness assessment of the AFLW competition and club licence bids from Essendon, Hawthorn, Port Adelaide and the Sydney Swans.

In the latter part of the year, the team assessed the state government presentations to host the 2021 Toyota AFL Grand Final.

The outcomes of this work saw the announcement of four new AFLW teams from Season Seven (2023) onwards, the 2022 Club Funding Model agreed with 18 clubs and, finally, the 2021 Toyota AFL Grand Final hosted in Perth.

## THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE TASMANIA TASKFORCE AND CARTER REVIEW WAS A SIGNIFICANT PROJECT

▽ Scanning tickets on mobile devices is now part of the process for fans as they enter venues.

## Tasmania Taskforce and Carter Review

The establishment of the Tasmania Taskforce and Carter Review was a significant project throughout the year. Former Geelong president and AFL Commissioner Colin Carter was appointed to review the business case for a 19th licence in Tasmania.

The Strategy team supported Carter as he assessed the requirements and pre-conditions for a successful and sustainable team and the impact on the competition of a Tasmanian team, if a licence was to be granted.

The review was presented to the AFL Commission in early August 2021, identifying a strong case for Tasmania with the best form of a team to be determined.

The Strategy team will continue to support the ongoing review in forming a recommendation on the most successful and sustainable model.

The AFL will continue to work with the Tasmanian Government to see what a potential model might look like.



## AFL Technology Transformation

Our technology transformation has continued to unlock value and create foundations for enhanced productivity and digital product growth.

Key projects included delivering a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) for the AFL and clubs, supporting new revenue opportunities and reducing sales and service staff workloads.

This also included the delivery of a new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) platform for the AFL and clubs to streamline finance administration and reduce manual effort and, finally, uplifting cybersecurity across the entire AFL technology landscape, remediating risks and putting in place tools for monitoring, alerting and response.

The team has acted as a strategic partner for technology-based growth opportunities, including commencing the build out of a single customer identity project and the successful delivery of PlayHQ nationally.

Across the year, it became clear that a 'product' focus to technology has enabled the AFL to support the industry with scalable and effective solutions that meet the needs of the AFL and clubs in a cost-efficient and secure way. It has also provided engagement and collaboration across the industry.

The Technology Transformation modernised platforms for the AFL and clubs that have now laid the groundwork for ongoing technological evolution, resulting in a significantly simplified and more secure technology landscape for all stakeholders.

△ The AFL Review Centre (ARC) has been a welcome addition to the AFL technological landscape.

## Marvel Stadium technology upgrade

The Marvel Stadium technology upgrade involved consolidating and uplifting the Marvel technological landscape to create better experiences for all stadium users. This project resulted in key outcomes such as:

- ▶ Simplified and consolidated technical architecture, support teams and infrastructure;
- ▶ Enhanced support model for Marvel event days;
- ▶ Supporting the identification of best-in-class audio-visual technology to enhance the fan experience as part of the Marvel redevelopment;
- ▶ Rollout of a high speed 4G/5G mobile connectivity and next generation wireless networking as a platform for delivering greatly improved fan experiences.
- ▶ Throughout this upgrade, the process has led to a more resilient, secure, and cost-effective operating environment. This has also led to leveraging our partners' expertise in this space (Telstra, Cisco) which has resulted in a world-class connectivity solution for our fans.



## Data & Analytics and Club Shared Services

Started in 2019, the Fan Data Service (FDS) is the data and analytics shared service that is offered to clubs. In 2021, the remaining five clubs signed on to FDS, with all 18 clubs now subscribing to the shared service. With an increasing number of data sources being managed by FDS, the industry now has a comprehensive 360 view of AFL fans.

With an initial focus on assisting club membership teams with data and analytics, FDS has expanded to offer clubs data capability across all aspects of club operations, including Marketing, Digital, Commercial, Community and Philanthropy.

It became clear throughout the season that the COVID pandemic has accelerated the industry's demand for data, analytics and insights. Fan and member behaviour has fundamentally changed due to the pandemic, with data and insights providing signals into this changing behaviour.

With all 18 clubs now signed on to FDS, the upcoming 2022 year will be focused on driving adoption across each of the clubs individually to help achieve their goals and strategies.

△ Carlton's Maddy Prispakis, AFL General Manager Women's Football Nicole Livingstone and Melbourne's Tayla Harris at the launch of the Google Footy Skills Lab.

## Contact tracing support

In partnership with the Victorian Department of Human Services (DHS), three COVID-positive case outbreaks were successfully managed during the men's home and away season across Marvel Stadium and the MCG.

The AFL was able to provide the fast, automated and secure delivery of contacts at AFL/AFLW games within a few hours, which enabled quick contact tracing from government health authorities.

This enhanced capability is not mandated by government health authorities, but demonstrates the AFL is leading the way in a safe return to crowds.

Government health authorities across all states in Australia were continually impressed by the level of preparedness from the AFL when it came to contact tracing capabilities.

The AFL must continue to lead the way within Australia and globally as we continue to navigate through the pandemic.

## Presidents & club CEOs meetings

Throughout the year, at all presidents and CEO meetings, major themes discussed included:

- ▶ Key rule changes (e.g. 6/6/6 at centre square restarts) and their positive effect towards achieving game-day objectives;
- ▶ Updates on AFL group finances and AFL club finances and investments;
- ▶ Discussions on the impact of COVID on the industry - attendance, viewership, participation and club membership;
- ▶ Shared funding responsibility for industry investments;
- ▶ Soft Cap - management of issues and relative industry value of increasing football spending;
- ▶ Shared responsibility for growth in AFLW - season length, player payments, football program spending, workforce model and revenue generation;
- ▶ Sustaining investment in community football and development of the game;
- ▶ Funding contributions to cyclical upgrades to AFL Club Training and Administration bases;
- ▶ COVID-19 and vaccination policy;
- ▶ Communicating the national framework for workplace wellbeing and call to action for clubs to provide evidence-based, practical actions to prevent and respond to wellbeing impacts on staff and players due to COVID-19.

The outcomes of these meetings continue to be focused on the high level of alignment, transparency and engagement between the AFL and clubs.

▽ The wellbeing impact on staff and players due to COVID-19 was discussed by club presidents and CEOs.

## COVID-19 Timeline of large-scale industry-wide decisions and meetings

### March

- ▶ AFLW Competition Committee
- ▶ AFL Commission/presidents and CEOs meeting/AFL captains/AGM

### April

- ▶ AFL Competition Committee
- ▶ AFLW Competition Committee

### May

- ▶ AFL Commission
- ▶ Club CEOs meeting on AFLW expansion
- ▶ Club CEOs meeting on developing COVID situation
- ▶ Commission meeting on season update and club presidents meeting around the rapidly escalating COVID situation.

### June

- ▶ AFL Commission/presidents full mid-year meeting
- ▶ AFL Commission/presidents update on 2021 season progression with COVID situation

### July

- ▶ AFL Competition Committee
- ▶ AFLW Competition Committee
- ▶ Club CEOs meeting

### August

- ▶ AFL Commission
- ▶ AFL Commission/presidents meeting update on Carter Report
- ▶ AFL Commission/presidents meeting update on 2021 Grand Final location
- ▶ AFL Competition Committee

### September

- ▶ AFL Commission/presidents and CEOs meeting

### October

- ▶ AFL Commission

### November

- ▶ Club CEOs meeting, tied to NAB AFL Draft

### December

- ▶ AFL Commission





# PEOPLE & CULTURE

▶ **SARAH FAIR**  
EXECUTIVE GENERAL MANAGER PEOPLE



The 2021 year presented unique challenges for our industry following an uncertain 2020. As we continued to navigate the impacts of the pandemic, the health and wellbeing of our people remained paramount in all decision-making at the AFL.

We continued to build on our experiences of working virtually as our people enjoyed our hybrid flexible work model, allowing our team to return to AFL workplaces via two Connect Days per week, ensuring the connection, culture and fun which is so important to working at the AFL was maintained under challenging circumstances.

When we shifted back to working remotely across various states during restrictions, the AFL People and Culture team led several initiatives to allow our people to feel connected during a difficult time, particularly for our team members based in Victoria and New South Wales, while also allowing for national connection across the country.

We know if we create positive experiences for our people, we can deliver the best experiences for our fans, community and partners, which remains at the forefront of everything we do.

▶ Delivering the best experiences for the community is at the forefront of the AFL - and there is no better example of that than NAB AFL Auskick.





## Play Well launch

The health and wellbeing of our people remains at the centre of everything we do. When we paused and reimagined how we would now work and live, the People and Culture team launched Play Well - our new health and wellbeing program.

Through Play Well, our team were entitled to one Wellness Day per quarter, whereby our people were encouraged to take a day away from work to undertake a wellness activity of their choice, for which they would be reimbursed up to \$100.

Play Well also included a virtual Wellbeing Series with the AFL's Head of Mental Health and Wellbeing, Dr Kate Hall, where our team were invited to engage in various online sessions discussing topics related to the four Play Well fundamentals: Healthy Body, Healthy Mind, Healthy Workplace and Healthy Life.

Building on the momentum of the Play Well launch, Converge was announced as the AFL's wellbeing partner. Providing free and confidential support to our people across the areas of mental, physical and social wellbeing, Converge provides a holistic and proactive approach to assist with the prevention of health issues to our team members and their immediate family members.

Further, the Play Well eMagazine and online portal were launched, with informative health and wellbeing content for all AFL team members to access.

△ The AFL said 'Thank You Team' to its staff after another challenging year.

## September Sanity

To mark the Toyota AFL Finals Series and celebrate a special time for our people and the game, the People and Culture team launched September Sanity for all AFL staff across the country. Team members were encouraged to join a weekly virtual quiz, a Q&A session with Melbourne AFLW captain Daisy Pearce and online Grand Final footy trivia to build engagement during a busy time for our team.

## Flex Cultural Leave

As part of our commitment to continuing to build a more inclusive and culturally diverse workplace, the AFL introduced Flex Cultural Leave.

The new leave allows team members to take 'floating public holidays' where team members have full flexibility to work on the day of an existing public holiday in their state or territory and use the day's leave in lieu to celebrate another cultural or religious event or holiday that is of more significance to their nationality or cultural identity at another time in the year (i.e., Lunar New Year, Ramadan and NAIDOC Week).

## Enhanced Parental Leave

To support our team members as best as we can before, during and post pregnancy, we introduced five days' paid leave for miscarriage and six months' paid leave for stillbirth (primary carer) as well as six weeks for the secondary carer.

## COVID-19 vaccinations

The AFL People and Culture team conducted education sessions with AFL Chief Medical Officer Michael Makdissi for all team members surrounding the COVID-19 vaccine.

To support our team to get vaccinated, all permanent team members were entitled to receive paid time off to attend an appointment and recover from any side effects related to the COVID-19 vaccine, with no need to submit annual or personal leave.

An anonymous survey was also conducted to further understand the vaccine status and health and safety concerns of our people. The survey helped develop a 'Frequently Asked Questions' document and allowed the People and Culture team to introduce initiatives to address any health and safety concerns.

## AFL Women's Summit

The 2021 AFL Women's Summit was held online and attended by more than 500 female players and industry team members across the AFL industry.

It featured Australian of the Year Grace Tame as the keynote speaker and celebrated women within the game, while highlighting the pathways of talented women across the AFL and clubs.

## Developing our people and teams

The inaugural Accelerate program for emerging executive women was a major success with the three-month intensive program helping to accelerate the careers of our emerging executive women within the AFL industry.

Targeting our talented senior women who aspire to further progress to club and AFL Executive level positions, this program focuses on building their leadership 'readiness' by further developing leadership style, capability, relationships and profile.

Similarly, our Executive Women's Program, GenW, continued in 2021. In this program, eight of our industry's most talented women across senior positions received mentoring and sponsorship from industry leaders, while also building collaborative networks and enhancing their industry knowledge and expertise.

Our program for middle management team members - the Women in Leadership Program - continued in 2021, with facilitator Andi Pert leading a team of 21 women within the industry to actively pursue their career aspirations by building enhanced self-awareness, leadership capability and critical skills.

## An Inclusive AFL

As part of our ongoing efforts to build a more inclusive working environment that brings out the very best in all our people, we rolled out several initiatives.

In May 2021, AFL team members completed online Healthy Workplace Training, before virtual and in-person Respectful Relationship Sessions to further encourage a safe, inclusive, respectful and gender equal working environment for everyone.

We also reviewed and refreshed various policies which now include a greater emphasis on our aspirational state; they are more people centric with a much stronger focus on ongoing support and wellbeing and have been changed to make the policies easier for our people to use and navigate.

## Jim Stynes Community Leadership Award

Port Adelaide's Travis Boak was named winner of the 2021 Jim Stynes Community Leadership Award at the Brownlow Medal count at Optus Stadium on September 19. Boak was recognised for his dedication and commitment to supporting children and families impacted by cancer through his role as an ambassador for the Childhood Cancer Association.

**The other 2021 Jim Stynes Community Leadership Award finalists were:**

- ▶ Georgie Rankin (Geelong Cats)
- ▶ Jordan Roughead (Collingwood)
- ▶ Nicola Stevens (Carlton)



△ Port Adelaide's Travis Boak was the winner of the 2021 Jim Stynes Community Leadership Award.

## Graeme Samuel Scholarship

Western Bulldogs' Chief Operating Officer Sue Clark was awarded the 2021 Graeme Samuel Scholarship.

Awarded to a senior manager within the football industry who is working in the areas of business or administration, the Graeme Samuel Scholarship provides the recipient with \$20,000 to be put towards a study course to further their career development.

Sue's experience in AFL administration spans more than 12 years, having worked at the Geelong Cats as the club's Chief Financial Officer before joining the Western Bulldogs in 2018.

Since arriving at the Western Bulldogs, Sue led the masterplan and redevelopment for Whitten Oval, successfully negotiated and facilitated the sale of the club's two gaming venues to exit the club from all gaming activities and implemented a new fundraising and philanthropy strategy for the club.

## Jill Lindsay Scholarship

AFL National Partnerships Manager Rosie Butler was awarded the 2021 Jill Lindsay Scholarship at the 13th Women's Industry Summit held virtually on October 21.

Rosie has long been involved in Australian Football and has a strong passion for the game at all levels. Her commitment to excellence is underpinned by her strong work ethic and through her work she has become known as a values-based leader who puts her team first, is honest, respectful and delivers first-class results.

The Jill Lindsay Scholarship was established in 2011 to support the further development and career aspirations of talented women who are regarded as rising stars within the AFL industry.

# INCLUSION & SOCIAL POLICY

▶ **TANYA HOSCH**

EXECUTIVE GENERAL MANAGER INCLUSION AND SOCIAL POLICY



There were many highlights of 2021, despite another year of continued border challenges and snap lockdowns. The first Dreamtime match played in WA was a memorable occasion as Perth proved its capabilities as host and delivered an impactful match, complete with local Australian entertainment and a Welcome to Country conducted by the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation.

The two weekends of Sir Doug Nicholls Round highlighted the memorable contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander footballers and administrators from our past, our present, and those who are emerging both on and off the field.

The department's wider work through 2021 included strengthening the game's ability to speak up and provide leadership around key social issues - including racism, sexism, trolling and reconciliation - which remains pivotal work in our game and across Australia. Key tasks for this action continue to be the Peek Rule, Racism Action Plan and an increasing presence of Indigenous voices in our game, including a game called in Yolgnu language from the Gabba by Nhulunbuy local William Gumbula and Elcho Island product Baykali Ganambarr.

▶ After a season ruined by injury in 2020, Sydney star Lance Franklin was back to his best in 2021.



## Rule 35 - The Peek Rule

The implementation of Rule 35, now known as the Peek Rule, was originally designed to combat on-field abuse relating to race, colour and religion. The rule was amended in 2013 to incorporate vilification relating to disability, appearance and sexuality.

Rule 35 applies to both the AFL and AFLW competitions and picks up all forms of vilification, including homophobia, as well as being adopted by community leagues around the country.

On the recommendation of Michael Long, it was formally announced in March 2021 that Rule 35 will now be known as the Peek Rule, to recognise and honour the work of long-term AFL administrator Tony Peek.

Tony worked closely with the League's Indigenous players to understand the impact of vilification in the code and develop the original Rule 30 to combat vilification.

The department released an update of the Peek Rule, to be supported by a series of recommendations to ensure a more inclusive environment for the wider game.

This followed an extensive review into the operation of the rule and its impact across elite and community football.

The main pillars of the recommendations are:

- ▶ Educational programs
- ▶ Media and broadcast
- ▶ Sanction models and consistency of application
- ▶ Second tier and community football
- ▶ Mental health and wellbeing
- ▶ Maintenance and reporting

### The Rule 35 committee consisted of:

- ▶ **Ro Allen** - Victorian Commissioner for Gender & Sexuality
- ▶ **Paul Briggs** - Executive Director, Kaiela Institute
- ▶ **John Cranwell** - CEO, Inclusive Sport SA
- ▶ **Andrew Dillon** - Executive General Manager Football Operations, Legal and Integrity, General Counsel, AFL
- ▶ **Tanya Hosch** - Executive General Manager Inclusion and Social Policy, AFL
- ▶ **Steve Hocking** - General Manager - Football Operations, AFL
- ▶ **Bachar Houli** - Current player, Richmond Football Club
- ▶ **Tony Keane** - Head of Integrity and Security, AFL

▽ St Kilda's Hannah Priest (left) and Caitlin Greiser proudly wear 'Free The Flag' T-shirts.



The application of the Peek Rule was demonstrated after an incident occurred at a SANFL match on July 17, 2021, at Prospect Oval. Taylor Walker of the Adelaide Crows, who was not playing in the match, made a racist comment regarding North Adelaide player Robbie Young to an Adelaide Crows' teammate who was playing.

An Adelaide Crows official overheard the comment and reported the incident to the club, which reported it to the AFL. The incident was then investigated by the AFL Integrity Unit under the Peek Rule (Rule 35 of the AFL Rules).

A conciliation was held in Adelaide on August 5, 2021, involving Walker, Young, the Adelaide Crows official and the AFL. The conciliation was successful, and the parties agreed the complaint could be resolved with a process to follow including: education, a suspension for Walker, a donation of \$20,000 to an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program in South Australia and Walker privately addressing players and staff of the Adelaide Football Club and players of the North Adelaide Football Club, to apologise in relation to his prohibited conduct.

The department is continuing to work with other departments of the AFL to review the sanction process of this rule, for its continued best operation.

## Reconciliation Action Plan

The AFL reaffirmed its commitment to recognising, welcoming, understanding and respecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their communities in 2021 by launching its Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

The RAP was formally endorsed by Reconciliation Australia and aims to build upon the AFL's commitment to addressing racism and inequality across society and improving relationships and engagement with and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

After launching its inaugural RAP in 2014, the AFL's latest RAP was developed through collaboration with internal and external stakeholders, members of the AFL's RAP Working Group and supported by the AFL's National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Council.

The AFL's strategic intent for the RAP is to grow and improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander outcomes across all areas of the game by:

1. Using the AFL's reach to proactively promote our reconciliation message.
2. Drive equality, respect and open the doors to opportunities on and off field.
3. Build on the strengths of our partnerships internally and externally to maximise growth of these efforts across our industry.
4. Challenging negative perspectives of people while influencing positive change and working to eradicate discrimination against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
5. Creating and growing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the industry in all areas.



## Sir Doug Nicholls Round

The significance of the Sir Doug Nicholls Round saw it again fixtured over two dedicated rounds (round 11 and 12) of the 2021 Toyota AFL Premiership Season with the theme 'Our Legacy - This is Us'.

'Our Legacy - This is Us' highlights contributions from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders of the game, such as Sir Doug Nicholls, and 2021 Sir Doug Nicholls Round honouree and Indigenous team of the Century member Syd Jackson.

Due to border closures, matches across these rounds were moved from Victoria, relocating Dreamtime at the G to Optus Stadium in Perth. The game was further enhanced by a strongly supported Long Walk, led by Michael Long and WA Premier Mark McGowan.

Fans in Western Australia gave the game the same enthusiastic engagement and attendance as we saw in Darwin in 2020 and as always at the MCG. A special addition was a cultural dance conducted by representatives from the Richmond and Essendon football clubs and entertainment included Australian artists John Butler, Ziggy Ramo, Sycco and Budjerah.

Matches across the round were also played in New South Wales, Queensland, SA and WA, with the Marn Grook game between the Sydney Swans and Carlton relocated to the SCG.

### Yiooken Trophy voting

- ▶ **Darcy Parish** (Essendon) - 8 votes (3, 3, 2)
- ▶ **Dustin Martin** (Richmond) - 6 votes (3, 2, 1)
- ▶ **Shai Bolton** (Richmond) - 3 votes (2, 1)
- ▶ **Kyle Langford** (Essendon) - 1 vote (1)

△ Sir Doug Nicholls Round honouree Syd Jackson (middle), with Indigenous greats Gavin Wanganeen (left) and Nicky Winmar (right) at the launch of the round. They were joined by current Indigenous players Kysaiah Pickett (Melbourne) and Bradley Hill (St Kilda).

## Racism Action Plan

As we reaffirmed our commitment to recognising, understanding and respecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and our communities in 2021, we launched the AFL's Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

With formal endorsement from Reconciliation Australia, the RAP aims to build upon the AFL's commitment to making its contribution to addressing racism and inequality across society and improving relationships and engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in all elements of our code.

After launching the inaugural RAP in 2014, the AFL's latest edition has been developed with deep commitment and collaboration from both internal and external stakeholders represented on the AFL's RAP working group and supported by the AFL's National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council.

### Some highlights from the inaugural RAP include:

- ▶ Increased participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander talent in broadcasting our game on television and radio;
- ▶ A ground-breaking partnership with NITV creating *Yokayi Footy* - a show about Australian Football hosted and produced by First Nations people;
- ▶ Early stages of trialling a coaching program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander coaches;
- ▶ A review of the AFL Vilification Rule (the Peek Rule) which is supported by a significant suite of recommendations designed to address racism and discrimination in all of its forms more effectively at all levels of the game;
- ▶ Nicky Winmar statue in partnership with the West Australian Government;
- ▶ The first appointment of an Aboriginal person on the AFL Tribunal - Peter Matera;
- ▶ The appointment of the first Aboriginal person elected to the AFL Commission - Professor Helen Milroy. A founding member and Co-Chair of the AFL Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council, Professor Milroy joined the Commission in March 2019.

## AFLW Pride Round

Round two of the 2021 NAB AFLW Competition saw the launch of the inaugural AFLW Pride Round.

As part of the dedicated round, all AFL umpires wore rainbow-coloured sweatbands, while goal umpires replaced their traditional white flags for rainbow flags.

In addition, the official NAB AFLW competition logo swapped its iconic coral coloured-emblem for a rainbow one in celebration of the round, while all 50-metre arc ground markings were also painted rainbow for the occasion.

Five AFLW clubs wore specially designed Pride Round guernseys to mark the historic event - the Adelaide Crows, the Brisbane Lions, Carlton, Geelong and the Western Bulldogs.

We look forward to the growth of this round celebrating and recognising the diversity and contribution of Pride communities in our game and across the nation.

## First Indigenous Round in AFLW

The inaugural Indigenous Round was celebrated in round five of the 2021 NAB AFL Women's Competition.

In honour of her contribution to Australian Football, senior Aboriginal Elder of the Wurundjeri People of Melbourne and surrounds, Aunty Joy Murphy AO, was selected as the 2021 AFLW Indigenous Round Honouree.

As part of the dedicated round, all AFLW clubs wore specially designed Indigenous Round guernseys, while AFL umpires wore the 2020 Sir Doug Nicholls Round designed umpire uniforms which represented Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

In addition, ground signage at AFLW matches included a representation of the Aboriginal women's art symbol on the outside of the centre circle and featured the name of the traditional owners of the land on which the matches were played.

## Mob nights

Working in conjunction with Football Operations, there was a successful introduction of Mob Nights to mirror what occurs at a number of clubs around the League.

The first night organised by the AFL for male and female players had a great attendance, covering key discussion areas of importance and gathering key feedback from players on areas including:

- ▶ Tackling online racism collectively;
- ▶ Senior players' regular catch-up with the AFL CEO, EGM Inclusion and Social Policy and other senior executives;
- ▶ Ensure we stay connected with past players and their wellbeing as they transition out of the AFL;
- ▶ Centralised and coordinated support from AFL house dealing directly with welfare issues across the playing group;
- ▶ Creation of a co-designed safe space as part of the redesign of AFL House;
- ▶ Improved ability to attend NAIDOC events, the Apology Breakfast and Reconciliation events as a collective and contributing to facilitating the participation of Elders and other community members;
- ▶ contribute to the AFL's Diversity programs.

▶ The Western Bulldogs' Izzy Huntington, AFL General Manager Women's Football Nicole Livingstone and Carlton's Darcy Vescio at the launch of Pride Round.

▶ The Dreamtime in the West clash between Essendon and Richmond attracted 55,656 fans to Optus Stadium.

## Collingwood Do Better Report

In February 2021, the Collingwood Football Club's 'Do Better' report was released, following an independent review into the club's responses to incidents of racism and cultural safety in the workplace and its internal processes and culture.

The report's recommendations aim to enhance "transparency, accountability and consequence" for racist incidents at the club, urging the club to strive for best practice in diversity and anti-racism.

The AFL led a further formal review of the findings which was led by AFL Executive General Manager Social Policy and Inclusion Tanya Hosch and AFL General Counsel Andrew Dillon.

The AFL will be working with guidance of the AFL National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council in the implementation of the AFL response to this report.

## eSafety Online Safety Statement of Commitment

As part of the broader commitment to making our game safe for all, the AFL teamed up with eSafety to help combat online abuse in sport.

The commitment from the AFL also included 23 other major sporting organisations from around Australia to actively support the work of the eSafety Commissioner. The aim of this work is to help keep all Australians, from grassroots to professional athletes, staff and officials, safe online.

## Spectator Racism Guidelines - Australian Human Rights Commission

The AFL and 19 other sporting organisations and venues were signatories to the 'Guidelines for addressing spectator racism in sport', encouraging sports to commit to a zero-tolerance approach to racial discrimination and racial vilification.

The Guidelines seek to provide clarity and consistency in responding to spectator racism when it occurs and to send a unified message that racism will not be tolerated.



# CORPORATE AFFAIRS, GOVERNMENT & COMMUNICATIONS

**BRIAN WALSH**

EXECUTIVE GENERAL MANAGER CORPORATE AFFAIRS



The first Grand Final played in Western Australia was a key focus for the team in 2021.

Working with both traditional and non-traditional media, it was imperative to build momentum in the run to the 2021 Toyota AFL Grand Final, with staff working to amplify announcements and build interest in our showpiece finals matches.

The first Premiership Cup Tour in the state generated enormous coverage and interest, travelling to iconic WA destinations including Kununurra, the Bungle Bungle Ranges and Broome's Cable Beach, as well as regional communities, while the capacity Grand Final day crowd of 61,118 enjoyed a historic day as Melbourne broke a 57-year premiership drought.

Working with the wider organisation, the 2021 year saw more than 110 fixture updates and changes across the AFL and AFLW seasons, requiring constant updates and information to all fans and members, as well as stakeholders across the game, from the department.

Former Western Bulldogs teammates Ellie Blackburn and Emma Kearney (now North Melbourne captain) share a laugh at the 2021 AFLW Captains Day.



## AFL club media protocols

Media protocols in 2021 built on the protocols established in 2020. At times, media work had only digital interaction or socially distanced contact between clubs/players and the media, but AFL clubs continued to find new and innovative ways of engaging their members and supporters.

Weekly media engagements were held remotely through digital communication technology and clubs targeted exclusive player/coach content through their websites and social media channels.

## Government relations

The AFL works proactively to build and maintain relationships at federal, state and local government level across the country. The AFL seeks to work closely with all sides of politics, to best represent the interests of Australia's only Indigenous game, and to achieve strong outcomes for community and metropolitan leagues, as well as outcomes that will assist the many hundreds of thousands of supporters and members of the game at the elite level.

In 2021, the collaboration between the AFL and all forms of government across Australia allowed the game to continue to be played at all levels with the key priority to adhere to all government and health authority guidelines around the country, while continuing to navigate through the pandemic.

The AFL worked closely with governments and chief health officers at federal and state/territory level to ensure that we were able to establish a set of protocols that not only protected players and staff but also protected the wider community. We remain grateful to the various federal, state and territory leaders and senior ministers for their support in ensuring the AFLW and AFL seasons were able to be completed.

▽ Club media teams such as the Brisbane Lions engaged their fans and members via their own websites and social media channels.



## Communication throughout on-going pandemic

The 2021 season required regular adjustments from the AFL and its clubs to deal with a constantly changing environment. Regular communication with the game's fans was paramount to best inform clubs, players, officials, umpires, members and supporters of the ever-changing environment.

The ongoing impact of the pandemic meant difficult and quick decisions were made at all levels of football and required effective communication to all key stakeholders.

Among the major issues tackled in 2021, often on frequent short notice, were: matches moved location, crowds were locked out for some games, travel restrictions, the ongoing lockdowns for the community, restructure to our football and game development areas, training and return to play protocols, COVID breaches, rolling fixture announcements and finals moved to WA when Victoria was unable to host matches during the final part of the season.

Strong and regular collaboration across the 18 clubs, where information on the best methods of engaging supporters and members was readily shared, saw the AFL continue to be strongly represented around the country, even during the period where there were no games.

## Media accreditation

The department handles media accreditation for the AFL and AFLW seasons, along with managing media relationships at major events such as the Season Launch, AFL Finals Launch, award ceremonies including the Brownlow Medal, AFLW Awards and All-Australian awards, the virtual Australian Football Hall of Fame induction, plus the AFL and AFLW respective state-based Combines and Drafts and AFL trade period.

Across the combined elite seasons, some 2000 people working in various media roles were accredited to work at AFL match-day venues.

In 2021, additional complexities were presented with the need to adhere to COVID protocols and restricted access in venues across the country. Access could only be provided to pre-approved working media, requiring the use of an online working registry established to monitor attendance at games and the observance of key protocols.

All on-field photographers completed a COVID test before working key matches, due to their close working environment with players, umpires and officials located within match-day 'bubbles'.



△ Taylor Adams and Jack Viney joined Neale Daniher to help promote the 2021 'Big Freeze' event.

▽ AFL CEO and 2021 slider Gillon McLachlan proved a hit with his tribute to Meat Loaf.

## Corporate social responsibility and charity partners

The AFL has three official charity partnerships.

### FightMND

FightMND was founded in 2014 with the purpose of finding effective treatments and ultimately a cure for Motor Neurone Disease. Since 2014, FightMND has been the voice and the guiding star for Australians who want to fight 'The Beast'. The inspirational driving force behind FightMND is former Essendon champion and Melbourne coach Neale Daniher and the major annual fundraising drive is 'Big Freeze'.

### Children's Cancer Foundation

Children's Cancer Foundation was founded in 1992 by parents who envisioned more welcoming and spirited treatment environments for children, and practical support for families. Since 2005, the annual Million Dollar Lunch has raised more than \$22.5m, enabling the Foundation to fund crucial programs in therapeutic care, cancer research and family support.

### Lifeline

Lifeline is a national charity providing all Australians experiencing a personal crisis with access to 24-hour crisis support and suicide prevention services. The AFL has committed to the principles of the partnership by encompassing club, community engagement, education and fundraising across the Lifeline network.

## Jim Stynes Leadership Award

The AFL is also a proud supporter of the Jim Stynes Community Leadership Award. Port Adelaide's Travis Boak was announced as the winner of the 2021 award, with his support of charities that assist children facing cancer.

The award is an enduring tribute to Jim's standing in the game and his unwavering service and leadership throughout the community and commemorates his legacy as someone who always looked to help others.

Presented each year on Brownlow Medal night by the AFL and the Jim Stynes Foundation, the award recognises current players who demonstrate the same values as personified by Jim.



### Captains Day - AFLW and AFL

Adapting to the environment and circumstances at the time, the team hosted the AFLW and AFL Captains Day as national, state-by-state events, rather than gathering all players together in the one state.

Each event state event gathered significant attendance of more than 100 media representatives combined, with coverage reaching every state and territory.

Established in 2003, Captains Day is a key pre-season promotional event on the AFL calendar, launching the season ahead and servicing the AFL's key rights partners across the media industry.

△ Stephen Coniglio (Giants) and Josh Kennedy (Swans) had the perfect backdrop at Captains Day in Sydney.

### Media in Perth for 2021 Toyota AFL Grand Final

Moving the 2021 Toyota AFL Grand Final to Perth, and the subsequent border restrictions in place, required the media team to ensure the east coast media had the appropriate access to the competing clubs and the Grand Final event.

A handful of key stakeholders from media partners News Ltd, Fairfax, Seven, Nine, Ten and [AFL.com.au](http://AFL.com.au) travelled with a small working group from the AFL to firstly quarantine, as per state requirements, and then report on the Grand Final.

The two-week lead into the match meant there needed to be more content available to fill the extra seven days before game-day and ensure the momentum of the event and occasion was amplified. The AFL worked closely with the City of Perth, the WA Government and Seven West Media to provide access and ensure all media operations ran smoothly.

▽ The AFL was appreciative of the media support for the 2021 Grand Final which was played in Perth.

Activations included the Premiership Cup Tour and Ambassador Glen Jakovich, Brownlow Medal count, competing clubs' media opportunities, Grand Final entertainment announcements, ticketing, open training at Optus Stadium, Grand Final Eve press conference, Premiership Cup presenters, AFL Chief Executive and Executive General Manager Clubs and Broadcasting media opportunities.

On behalf of the AFL, we would like to thank all our media partners for the extra effort made over the past year to keep our fans informed and engaged with our games.

We endured yet another challenging season, and with the collective commitment and support of all our media partners, we were able to successfully navigate through unprecedented and at times unbelievable circumstances and deliver our fans a memorable season.

Our game and everyone involved thank you for all your continued support.





# AWARDS, RESULTS & FAREWELLS

It was a year of firsts in the AFL and AFLW competitions with Melbourne and the Brisbane Lions creating their own piece of history.

The Demons secured their first premiership since 1964 when the League was a 12-team competition based in Victoria with games played mostly on suburban grounds on a Saturday afternoon.

The Lions upset home side the Adelaide Crows to win their first AFLW title after going so close in 2017 and 2018 when they lost to Adelaide and the Western Bulldogs respectively.

In the AFL Grand Final played at Perth's Optus Stadium after the MCG was unavailable for the second successive year due to Victoria's COVID lockdowns, Melbourne blew a gallant Western Bulldogs apart in the third term before romping to a 74-point win.

The fact it was an all-Victorian final played in Western Australia mattered little as a capacity crowd of 61,118 saw the Demons produce a devastating burst.

With both sides trading goals in the first half, the Bulldogs, led by superstar midfielder Marcus Bontempelli, held a 19-point lead at the 11-minute mark of the third quarter.

But from that point, the Demons kicked 16 of the next 17 goals with Norm Smith medallist Christian Petracca, who had an equal Grand Final record 39 disposals, Bayley Fritsch (six goals) and Clayton Oliver (33 touches, 10 tackles) unstoppable.

It was vindication of the Demons' faith in fifth-year coach Simon Goodwin after Melbourne reached the preliminary final in 2018, fell to 17th in 2019 and finished outside the eight in 2020.

The Bulldogs' long journey around the country just to reach the Grand Final told in the end, but Luke Beveridge's men could hold their heads high. Their season highlight was thumping Port Adelaide by 71 points in the preliminary final at Adelaide Oval.

While extremely disappointed with that result, the Power celebrated a few weeks later when midfielder Ollie Wines became the club's first Brownlow medallist.

It was another disrupted year for both competitions, but all games were eventually played, albeit often without crowds.

Another first came in the AFLW when Collingwood co-captain Brianna Davey and Fremantle midfielder Kiara Bowers tied in the Best and Fairest. Melbourne young gun Tyla Hanks was crowned the NAB AFL Women's Rising Star - the first Demons player to win the award.

It was a Demon double with Luke Jackson winning the 2021 NAB AFL Rising Star award.

Another first in 2021 saw women's football pioneer Debbie Lee become the first female inducted into the Australian Football Hall of Fame. She was joined by former stars Chris Judd, Nathan Burke and Rob Wiley, while three-time Sandover Medal winner Merv McIntosh and 10-time SANFL premiership coach Jack Oatey AM were elevated to Legend status.

Skipper Max Gawn holds the premiership cup aloft as the Demons celebrate their first Grand Final win since 1964.





## The Premiers

A glance at the final margin would suggest the 2021 Grand Final was a snooze-fest. Melbourne by 74 points over the Western Bulldogs.

But it was far from the case. There have been few more fascinating premiership deciders than that of last season, starting with the location - Perth's Optus Stadium - when for the second successive year the COVID-19 pandemic caused the game to be moved away from its traditional home, the MCG.

This was a Grand Final replete with major shifts in momentum and moments of individual brilliance.

And it ended with tears of joy and widespread jubilation as the Demons put to bed 57 years of heartbreak and humiliation with their 13th premiership flag.

Concerns that Melbourne would be underdone after just one game in 28 days disappeared in the opening term and it led by 21 points at quarter-time.

But with superstar midfielder Marcus Bontempelli at his best, the Bulldogs took control of the next 45 minutes and by the 11-minute mark of the third term they held a 19-point lead.

What took place from the 18-minute mark will go down in football folklore as perhaps the greatest 15 or so minutes ever played, certainly in a Grand Final.

In the blink of an eye, fortunes swung dramatically. Two goals to Bayley Fritsch in a matter of seconds were followed by another to Ben Brown after Christian Petracca came streaming out of the middle.

### 2021 TOYOTA AFL GRAND FINAL

	4.5	5.9	12.11	21.14 (140)
Melbourne				
Western Bulldogs	1.2	7.5	9.5	10.6 (66)

**BEST: Melbourne** - Petracca, Fritsch, Oliver, Brayshaw, Salem, Gawn, Jackson.  
**Western Bulldogs** - Bontempelli, Daniel, B. Smith, Treloar, Macrae, Liberatore, Dale.

**GOALS: Melbourne** - Fritsch 6, B. Brown 3, Petracca 2, Neal-Bullen 2, McDonald 2, Spargo, Brayshaw, Sparrow, Oliver, Langdon, Jackson.  
**Western Bulldogs** - Bontempelli 3, Treloar 3, R. Smith, Naughton, Hunter, Johannisen.

**Umpires:** Brett Rosebury, Matt Stevic, Jacob Mollison

**Crowd:** 61,118 at Optus Stadium.

A Caleb Daniel miskick led to an Angus Brayshaw mark and goal to put the Demons in front.

The Dogs desperately tried to stem the bleeding, but Melbourne now had complete control and goals to Petracca, Clayton Oliver and Charlie Spargo inside the magical last 60 seconds took the lead out to 24 points. The 6-6-6 rule meant the Bulldogs could not put numbers behind the ball.

Melbourne fans dared not to dream through an anxious final change, but after goals to Brown and Fritsch in the opening few minutes of the last quarter, the lid was off and the premiership cup was coming home to the MCG.

Petracca capped off a brilliant season with a clear best-on-ground performance, while Fritsch's six-goal haul was the best in a Grand Final since Darren Jarman for Adelaide in 1997.

But in a year in which 10 Demons played every game and another four missed just one, it was fitting that this was as comprehensive a team performance in a Grand Final that you will ever see.

### TEAMS AS SELECTED

Melbourne v Western Bulldogs			
<b>F</b>	<b>Alex Neal-Bullen</b>	<b>Ben Brown</b>	<b>Bayley Fritsch</b>
<b>B</b>	Easton Wood	Alex Keath	Taylor Duryea
<b>HF</b>	<b>Kysaiah Pickett</b>	<b>Tom McDonald</b>	<b>James Harnes</b>
<b>HB</b>	Caleb Daniel	Zaine Cordy	Bailey Dale
<b>C</b>	<b>Angus Brayshaw</b>	<b>Christian Petracca</b>	<b>Ed Langdon</b>
<b>C</b>	Bailey Smith	Tom Liberatore	Lachie Hunter
<b>HB</b>	<b>Jake Bowey</b>	<b>Harrison Petty</b>	<b>Christian Salem</b>
<b>HF</b>	Cody Weightman	Aaron Naughton	Adam Treloar
<b>B</b>	<b>Michael Hibberd</b>	<b>Steven May</b>	<b>Jake Lever</b>
<b>F</b>	Jason Johannisen	Tim English	Mitch Hannan
<b>R</b>	<b>Max Gawn (c)</b>	<b>Clayton Oliver</b>	<b>Jack Viney</b>
<b>R</b>	Stefan Martin	Jack Macrae	Marcus Bontempelli (c)
<b>I/C</b>	<b>Luke Jackson, Charlie Spargo, Trent Rivers, Tom Sparrow</b>		
<b>EM</b>	<b>Jake Melksham, James Jordon, Jayden Hunt, Kyle Chandler</b>		
<b>Coach</b>	<b>Simon Goodwin</b>		
<b>I/C</b>	Bailey Williams, Josh Dunkley, Roarke Smith, Josh Schache		
<b>EM</b>	Laitham Vandermeer, Ed Richards, Anthony Scott, Ryan Gardner		
<b>Coach</b>	Luke Beveridge		

## Norm Smith Medal

There were fleeting moments through the shortened 2020 season when Melbourne midfielder Christian Petracca played the sort of football that led some to forecast he was on his way to fulfilling his destiny to become the best player in the AFL.

But the very best players take their team along with them for the journey, which is what Petracca did in 2021 as the Demons won their long-coveted, and long-overdue, 13th premiership.

They sealed the deal in the Grand Final, a 74-point thrashing of the Western Bulldogs that was highlighted by one of the best individual performances seen in a premiership decider.

Petracca had 39 disposals, matched only by Brisbane's Simon Black in 2003. Throw two goals, 11 inside 50s, four tackles, three marks and 15 score involvements into the mix and the magnitude of his contribution on the night is clear.

He played a major part in the final stages of the third term, when the Demons turned a 19-point deficit into a four-goal lead at the last change, winning key possessions and kicking a wondrous goal from deep in the forward pocket that trickled through from a near-impossible angle.

### NORM SMITH MEDAL VOTING

<b>Luke Hodge</b> (Channel 7, Chair)	3 C. Petracca (Melb), 2 B. Fritsch (Melb), 1 C. Oliver (Melb)
<b>Harry Taylor</b> (ABC Radio)	3 C. Petracca (Melb), 2 B. Fritsch (Melb), 1 C. Salem (Melb)
<b>Tania Armstrong</b> (Triple M)	3 C. Petracca (Melb), 2 B. Fritsch (Melb), 1 C. Oliver (Melb)
<b>Andrew Krakouer</b> (NIRS/Yokayi Footy Show)	3 C. Petracca (Melb), 2 B. Fritsch (Melb), 1 C. Daniel (WB)
<b>Callum Twomey</b> (AFL.com.au)	3 C. Petracca (Melb), 2 B. Fritsch (Melb), 1 C. Oliver (Melb)
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>15 Petracca, 10 Fritsch, 3 Oliver, 1 Salem, 1 Daniel</b>

## Jock McHale Medal

Simon Goodwin didn't enter 2021 in the coaching hot seat, but there was a growing level of impatience after two years of missing out on the finals.

Now he is a great of Melbourne, having achieved what 16 men who sat in the same chair before him could not - leading the Demons to the 2021 premiership, their first in 57 years.

Not many had the Demons in their premiership calculations, but Goodwin was quietly confident, telling friends that given a good run with injuries, they could win the flag. And he was right.

He sold that confidence to his players, and it was noted all year how bright and bubbly he was.

"Back to smiling, back to loving the game and to enjoying what I do," is how he described his approach to the season.

And he was backed by his players, who talked the talk in the pre-season, as pretty much every club does, but turned the talk into action.

"It took missing the finals last year for the players to say, 'Enough is enough. We've got talent. We need to be better and we need the team to be better.' That's when the biggest shift happened," Goodwin said.

As momentum built, the talk out of Melbourne was not so much about his strong tactical nous - which goes back to his 275-game playing career, including two premierships, with Adelaide when it was clear he was a coach in the making - but of his deep connection with his players.

The mandatory hard edge was there.

"He is ruthless when he needs to be," star midfielder and former skipper Jack Viney said.

"He drives behaviours and standards. He understands what it takes to be a good football team and there are certain things he won't compromise with."

△ Proud coach Simon Goodwin and Norm Smith medallist Christian Petracca front the media after the Demons' drought-breaking premiership.



### Brownlow Medal

Brownlow Medal wins don't come more dominant than that of Port Adelaide's Ollie Wines in 2021.

The star on-baller polled a record-equalling 36 votes to finish three clear of Western Bulldogs skipper Marcus Bontempelli, who was favoured to win the award for most of the year.

Wines equalled Dustin Martin's 2017 tally after an incredible season, especially the second half when he polled votes in 11 of the last 12 games.

All up he polled votes in a record 16 games and sealed victory in the final game of the season against the Bulldogs when he polled two votes to Bontempelli's none.

It was a Brownlow count in which the cream rose to the top, with Melbourne's Clayton Oliver polling 31 votes and Carlton's Sam Walsh finishing with 30. Never have four players polled 30 votes or more in the same count.

Wines averaged a career-high 32.1 disposals as well as six clearances, 5.2 inside 50s and 443m gained and credited his improved form in 2021 with understanding that his role was purely that of an inside midfielder and contested ball-winner.

### BROWNLOW MEDAL

Player	Votes	3	2	1	Games
<b>Ollie Wines (PA)</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>22</b>
Marcus Bontempelli (WB)	33	9	3	0	22
Clayton Oliver (Melb)	31	8	2	3	22
Sam Walsh (Carl)	30	8	2	2	22
Darcy Parish (Ess)	26	7	2	1	22
Jack Steele (StK)	26	6	2	4	22
Tom Mitchell (Haw)	25	6	3	1	22
Travis Boak (PA)	25	5	4	2	21
Jarryd Lyons (BL)	23	4	5	1	22
Christian Petracca (Melb)	23	5	3	2	22

### Coleman Medal

Harry McKay faced an anxious final fortnight of the season as he waited to see whether he would win his first Coleman Medal.

The Carlton spearhead had kicked 58 goals through 20 games, before missing the final two games with a shoulder injury.

But over the final fortnight, neither Geelong's Tom Hawkins nor Richmond's Jack Riewoldt could catch him, ending with 54 and 51 goals respectively.

It left McKay as Carlton's first Coleman medallist since Brendan Fevola in 2009.

McKay kicked goals in every game he played in 2021, other than the West Coast clash in round 12 when he was concussed and left the ground early.

He kicked seven goals against Fremantle in round three, six against Brisbane in round six and five against St Kilda in round 20.

### COLEMAN MEDAL

	Home & Away				Including Finals			
	G	B	Gms	G	B	%	Ave	Gms
<b>Harry McKay (Carl)</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>19</b>
Tom Hawkins (Geel)	54	33	22	62	37	63	2.5	25
Jack Riewoldt (Rich)	51	29	22	51	29	64	2.3	22
Josh Bruce (WB)	48	21	20	48	21	70	2.4	20
Lance Franklin (Syd)	48	23	17	51	24	68	2.8	18
Taylor Walker (Adel)	48	29	17	48	29	62	2.8	17
Charlie Cameron (BL)	47	31	22	55	33	63	2.3	24
Bayley Fritsch (Melb)	47	20	21	59	24	71	2.5	24
Ben King (GCS)	47	25	22	47	25	65	2.1	22
Charlie Dixon (PA)	46	22	22	48	24	67	2	24
Joe Daniher (BL)	45	31	22	46	32	59	1.9	24

### McClelland Trophy

Melbourne's drought-breaking premiership in 2021 also saw the Demons secure the McClelland Trophy after a dramatic end to the home and away season.

When skipper Max Gawn booted the match-winning goal after the siren in the round 23 clash against Geelong, it meant the Demons finished on top of the ladder for the first time since 1964 - their previous premiership year.

But the drought between McClelland Trophies was not as long due to a change in criteria for the award.

From 1951 to 1990, the McClelland Trophy was awarded to the club accumulating the highest number of premiership points by its senior, reserve and under-19 teams.

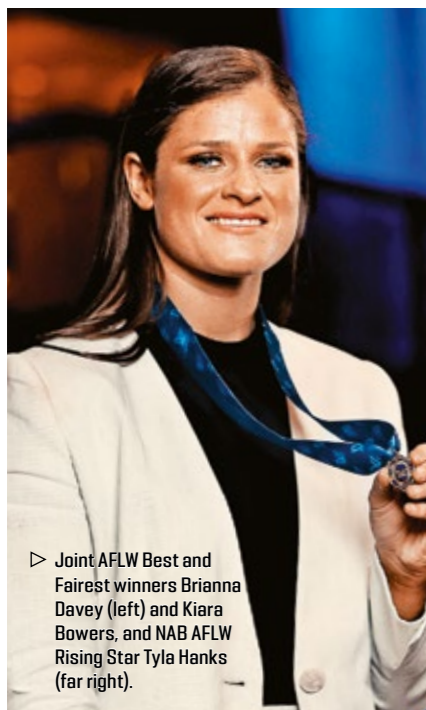
With the move to a one-team national competition, the AFL Commission decided that as from 1991, the trophy would be awarded to the team finishing on top of the ladder at the end of the AFL home and away season.

Under the old criteria, the Demons won the McClelland Trophy in 1990 thanks to the total premiership points accumulated by their senior, reserves and under-19 teams.

The trophy was instituted to recognise the service of Dr Wm. C. McClelland as a player and club delegate for Melbourne and VFL president from 1926-55.

### 2021 PREMIERSHIP SEASON LADDER

#	CLUB	P	W	L	D	For			Against			Mch Pts	Home			Away			Form W/L	Scores High Low		Av Margin W L		W < 7pts	L < 7pts	Rd 18 2020	1st Year Players	Qtrs Won	4th Qtrs Won	
						Gls	Beh	Pts	Gls	Beh	Pts		%	W	L	D	W	L		D	High	Low	W							L
1	Melbourne	22	17	4	1	270	268	1888	211	177	1443	130.84	70	7	3	1	10	1	0	4W	128	55	28	11	1	1	9	2	55	13
2	Port Adelaide	22	17	5	0	276	228	1884	210	232	1492	128.27	68	8	3	0	9	2	0	6W	140	44	32	31	4	0	1	5	51	13
3	Geelong Cats	22	16	6	0	269	231	1845	205	226	1456	126.72	64	9	2	0	7	4	0	1L	136	50	30	17	3	2	4	4	52	14
4	Brisbane Lions	22	15	7	0	313	253	2131	231	213	1599	133.27	60	9	2	0	6	5	0	3W	142	54	44	19	1	1	2	3	56	15
5	Western Bulldogs	22	15	7	0	288	266	1994	215	211	1501	132.84	60	7	4	0	8	3	0	3L	167	37	40	16	0	2	7	6	52	12
6	Sydney Swans	22	15	7	0	293	228	1986	237	234	1656	119.93	60	9	2	0	6	5	0	2W	136	51	30	18	2	2	16	3	52	13
7	GWS Giants	22	11	10	1	258	220	1768	255	243	1773	99.72	46	4	7	0	7	3	1	3W	107	56	22	25	2	2	10	6	44	8
8	Essendon	22	11	11	0	287	231	1953	261	224	1780	109.11	44	5	6	0	6	5	0	3W	143	45	37	22	0	3	13	7	47	14
9	West Coast Eagles	22	10	12	0	257	210	1752	274	236	1880	93.19	40	7	4	0	3	8	0	4L	132	26	29	35	1	0	5	3	44	10
10	St Kilda	22	10	12	0	237	222	1644	260	236	1796	91.54	40	5	6	0	5	6	0	1W	128	33	29	37	0	1	6	5	42	11
11	Fremantle	22	10	12	0	219	264	1578	265	235	1825	86.47	40	7	4	0	3	8	0	1L	108	31	23	39	2	0	12	5	39	6
12	Richmond	22	9	12	1	253	225	1743	258	232	1780	97.92	38	6	4	1	3	8	0	10	134	22	31	26	1	3	3	7	40	13
13	Carlton	22	8	14	0	250	246	1746	288	244	1972	88.54	32	3	8	0	5	6	0	3L	123	44	22	29	0	0	11	3	36	8
14	Hawthorn	22	7	13	2	239	195	1629	282	220	1912	85.2	32	4	7	0	3	6	2	10	102	46	16	30	2	1	15	8	32	8
15	Adelaide Crows	22	7	15	0	230	236	1616	287	249	1971	81.99	28	5	6	0	2	9	0	1W	109	21	19	32	2	3	18	9	32	11
16	Gold Coast Suns	22	7	15	0	201	224	1430	268	255	1863	76.76	28	4	7	0	3	8	0	2L	113	30	27	41	1	0	14	3	37	10
17	Collingwood	22	6	16	0	225	207	1557	269	204	1818	85.64	24	1	10	0	5	6	0	3L	106	42	20	23	1	2	8	9	32	9
18	North Melbourne	22	4	17	1	210	198	1458	299	281	2075	70.27	18	1	9	1	3	8	0	4L	116	39	16	40	0	0	17	6	31	7



▷ Joint AFLW Best and Fairest winners Brianna Davey (left) and Kiara Bowers, and NAB AFLW Rising Star Tyla Hanks (far right).



## AFLW Best and Fairest

Collingwood co-captain Brianna Davey and Fremantle midfielder Kiara Bowers created history when they were announced as joint winners of the 2021 AFL Women's Best and Fairest.

Davey and Bowers each finished the count with 15 votes ahead of Western Bulldogs captain Ellie Blackburn and the GWS Giants' Alyce Parker (14 votes).

In an outstanding season, Bowers played all nine games and led the competition for tackles (10.3 a game) and clearances (6.3 a game), while also ranking ninth for disposals (21.2 a game).

Also enjoying a career-best season, Davey continued to prove herself as one of Collingwood's prime ball-winners and one of the AFLW's premier midfielders. Averaging 23.1 disposals, 3.5 inside-50s and 10.9 handballs a game, Davey was a standout for the Magpies all season.

Named as captain and vice-captain of the 2021 AFL Women's All-Australian team respectively, Davey and Bowers also received recognition through the AFL Players Association and AFL Coaches Association, taking out the AFLPA MVP Award (Davey) and AFLCA Champion Player of the Year Award (Bowers).

Bowers and Davey became the fourth and fifth players to receive the AFLW's highest honour after Erin Phillips (2017, 2019), Emma Kearney (2018) and Madison Prespakis (2020).

## 2021 AFLW BEST AND FAIREST

	Votes
<b>Brianna Davey (Collingwood)</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Kiara Bowers (Fremantle)</b>	<b>15</b>
Ellie Blackburn (Western Bulldogs)	14
Alyce Parker (GWS Giants)	14
Karen Paxman (Melbourne)	13
Anne Hatchard (Adelaide)	13
Brittany Bonnici (Collingwood)	12
Monique Conti (Richmond)	12
Ebony Marinoff (Adelaide)	11

## NAB AFLW Rising Star

Melbourne's Tyla Hanks was crowned the 2021 NAB AFL Women's Rising Star - the first Demons player to win the award.

Hanks won with 48 votes, ahead of Richmond's Ellie McKenzie (32) and West Coast's Mikayla Bowen (22).

One of the most improved players in the competition, Hanks averaged almost 19 disposals, three clearances, five tackles and three marks a game.

The Melbourne midfielder was rewarded with her nomination in round two after she put in a dominant display against Richmond, recording 19 disposals and laying five tackles to be one of her side's best in the victory at Casey Fields.

In winning the award, Hanks received a \$20,000 personal investment portfolio and a dedicated personal banker, courtesy of NAB.

Taken with selection six in the 2018 NAB AFL Women's Draft, the talented junior built her core strength and running capacity in 2021 to match it with some of the best midfielders in the competition.

Hanks grew up playing her junior football in Beaconsfield in Victoria and progressed to co-captain Gippsland Power in the NAB League in 2018 and was awarded with NAB League Team of the Year and All-Australian honours.

## 2021 NAB AFLW RISING STAR VOTING

	Votes
<b>Tyla Hanks (Melbourne)</b>	<b>48</b>
Ellie McKenzie (Richmond)	32
Mikayla Bowen (West Coast)	22
Tyanna Smith (St Kilda)	19
Nat Grider (Brisbane Lions)	10
Jess Fitzgerald (Western Bulldogs)	7
Isabel Dawes (Brisbane Lions)	5
Rebecca Webster (Geelong)	4
Courtney Hodder (Brisbane Lions)	2
Eliza McNamara (Melbourne)	1



◁ The 2021 All-Australian defenders are announced at the AFLW Awards.

## Leading goalkicker

Carlton star Darcy Vescio claimed their second AFLW goalkicking award with a record 16 goals for the 2021 season.

Vescio won the award in the first year of the competition in 2017 when they booted 14 majors.

A feature of Vescio's game is their accuracy - they booted 16.4 for the season.

Their efforts also won them a place in the All-Australian side in 2021, adding to their selection in the 2017 team.

Vescio capped off a fine season when they won their maiden best and fairest for the Blues.

With 44 goals across their five seasons in the AFLW, Vescio is the competition's all-time leading goalkicker.

One of the highlights of their 2021 season was a career-high five goals in Carlton's 60-point win over the Gold Coast Suns in round eight.

## Mark and Goal of the Year

Danielle Ponter from the Adelaide Crows claimed the 2021 Four'N Twenty AFLW Mark of the Year, while Brisbane's Courtney Hodder won the 2021 rebel Goal of the Year.

Ponter soared against the Western Bulldogs in round eight, jumping over Ash Guest and Rachele Martin to take her grab.

All three finalists took their mark against the Bulldogs, with Tayla Harris (Carlton, round two) and Ellie McKenzie (Richmond, round nine) also nominated.

Hodder's scintillating run down the flank against Melbourne in round nine at Casey Fields saw her outrun another speedster in Shelley Heath. After soccering the ball forward and picking up the resulting bounce cleanly, Hodder finished neatly with a drop punt from close to the boundary.

Her fellow finalists were Jess Fitzgerald (Western Bulldogs, round three) and Chloe Molloy (Collingwood, round six) after the AFLW Awards panel determined the overall winner for both awards, while selections made by fans were considered as a single vote in the panel's voting.

Both Hodder and Ponter won \$10,000 for their efforts, courtesy of rebel and Four'N Twenty respectively.

## All-Australian team

Six debutants were named as the next generation of stars were unveiled in the 2021 AFL Women's All-Australian team.

Collingwood led the way with four players named, including Brittany Bonnici and Ruby Schleicher who each received their first All-Australian nod.

Twelve teams were represented in the 2021 side. Collingwood co-captain Brianna Davey - who received her second All-Australian selection - was named captain, while Fremantle midfielder Kiara Bowers was named vice-captain.

Seven players retained their spots from the 2020 team - Sarah Allan (Adelaide Crows), Kate Lutkins (Brisbane Lions), Emma Kearney (North Melbourne), Kiara Bowers (Fremantle), Jasmine Garner (North Melbourne), Karen Paxman (Melbourne) and Alyce Parker (GWS Giants).

Kearney and Paxman are the only players to have been named an All-Australian in each season of the competition's five-year history.

## 2021 ALL-AUSTRALIAN TEAM

<b>B</b>	<b>Sarah Allan</b> Adelaide Crows	<b>Meghan McDonald</b> Geelong Cats	
<b>HB</b>	<b>Ruby Schleicher</b> Collingwood	<b>Kate Lutkins</b> Brisbane Lions	<b>Janelle Cuthbertson</b> Fremantle
<b>C</b>	<b>Monique Conti</b> Richmond	<b>Kiara Bowers (vc)</b> Fremantle	<b>Georgia Patrikios</b> St Kilda
<b>HF</b>	<b>Jasmine Garner</b> North Melbourne	<b>Katie Brennan</b> Richmond	<b>Ellie Blackburn</b> Western Bulldogs
<b>F</b>	<b>Erin Phillips</b> Adelaide Crows	<b>Chloe Molloy</b> Collingwood	
<b>R</b>	<b>Breann Moody</b> Carlton	<b>Brianna Davey (c)</b> Collingwood	<b>Alyce Parker</b> GWS Giants
<b>IC</b>	<b>Ebony Marinoff</b> Adelaide Crows	<b>Darcy Vescio</b> Carlton	<b>Brittany Bonnici</b> Collingwood
	<b>Karen Paxman</b> Melbourne	<b>Emma Kearney</b> North Melbourne	
<b>Coach</b>	<b>Craig Starcevich</b> Brisbane Lions		



### Therabody All-Australian Team

Melbourne ruled the roost in 2021 and that was reflected in the make-up of the All-Australian team.

Five members of the Demons' drought-breaking premiership team earned All-Australian blazers, headlined by skipper Max Gawn, who was named captain of the team after being selected for the fifth time.

Steven May, Jake Lever, Clayton Oliver and Christian Petracca were the other Melbourne players to make the team.

May and Lever anchored the Demons' backline throughout the season, while Oliver and Petracca were the midfield dynamos who sparked Melbourne through the middle of the ground and at stoppages.

May and Lever were among 11 first-time All-Australians, with Brisbane's 31-year-old rebounding defender Daniel Rich joining them.

Beaten grand finalists the Western Bulldogs provided three members of the side, including Marcus Bontempelli, who was picked for the fourth time and named vice-captain. Midfielder Jack Macrae and defender Bailey Dale were the other Bulldogs selected.

The key forward berths were taken by Geelong's Tom Hawkins - his fourth selection - and Carlton's Harry McKay, who claimed the Coleman Medal.

Aliir Aliir, one of the great redemption stories of 2021, was also named All-Australian for the first time. The Port Adelaide defender repaid the faith and a whole lot more from coach Ken Hinkley after crossing from the Sydney Swans.

Small forwards were recognised with Tom Papley and Toby Greene being named alongside McKay in the forward line.

It is not every year the selectors go with two genuine ruckmen, but Nic Naitanui was rewarded for an excellent season with a place on the interchange bench.

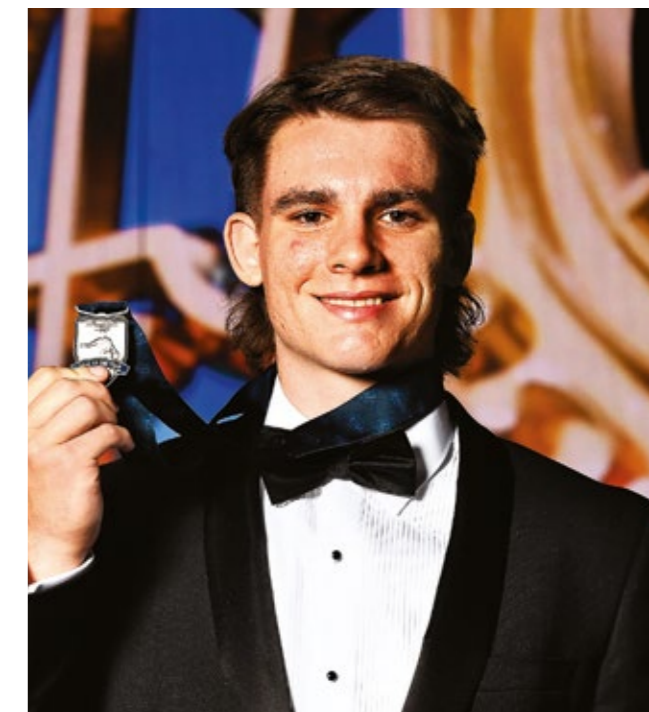
The 2021 All-Australian selection panel was Gillon McLachlan (non-voting chairman), Andrew Dillon, Chris Johnson, Glen Jakovich, Warren Tredrea, Cameron Ling, Jude Bolton, Matthew Richardson, Nick Riewoldt and Kevin Bartlett.



#### THERABODY ALL-AUSTRALIAN TEAM

<b>B</b>	<b>Jake Lever</b> Melbourne	<b>Steven May</b> Melbourne	<b>Tom Stewart</b> Geelong Cats
<b>HB</b>	<b>Bailey Dale</b> Western Bulldogs	<b>Aliir Aliir</b> Port Adelaide	<b>Daniel Rich</b> Brisbane Lions
<b>C</b>	<b>Zach Merrett</b> Essendon	<b>Ollie Wines</b> Port Adelaide	<b>Sam Walsh</b> Carlton
<b>HF</b>	<b>Marcus Bontempelli (vc)</b> Western Bulldogs	<b>Tom Hawkins</b> Geelong Cats	<b>Christian Petracca</b> Melbourne
<b>F</b>	<b>Toby Greene</b> GWS Giants	<b>Harry McKay</b> Carlton	<b>Tom Papley</b> Sydney Swans
<b>R</b>	<b>Max Gawn (c)</b> Melbourne	<b>Jack Macrae</b> Western Bulldogs	<b>Clayton Oliver</b> Melbourne
<b>IC</b>	<b>Darcy Parish</b> Essendon	<b>Nic Naitanui</b> West Coast Eagles	<b>Touk Miller</b> Gold Coast Suns
			<b>Jack Steele</b> St Kilda
<b>Coach</b>	<b>Simon Goodwin</b> Melbourne		
<b>Umpire</b>	<b>Matt Stevic</b>		

△ Melbourne premiership skipper Max Gawn celebrated his fifth All-Australian selection by being named captain, while Essendon's Zach Merrett was named an All Australian for the second time in 2021.



### Mark and Goal of the Year

Two of the most exciting prospects in the AFL took out the 2021 Goal and Mark of the Year.

Fremantle's Caleb Serong won the 2021 rebel Goal of the Year while Richmond high-flyer Jai Bolton was awarded the Four'N Twenty Mark of the Year.

Serong kicked the rebel Goal of the Year from a tight angle in the round 22 clash with West Coast. He was presented the Phil Manassa Medal and his prize of \$10,000 at the Brownlow Medal count.

Bolton took the Four'N Twenty Mark of the Year with a spectacular leap in the goalsquare against Geelong in round eight. He was presented the Alex Jesaulenko Medal and a prize of \$10,000, thanks to Four'N Twenty.

After each round of the season, fans voted for the favourite weekly goals and marks from a selection of three nominated by the AFL Game Analysis Committee.

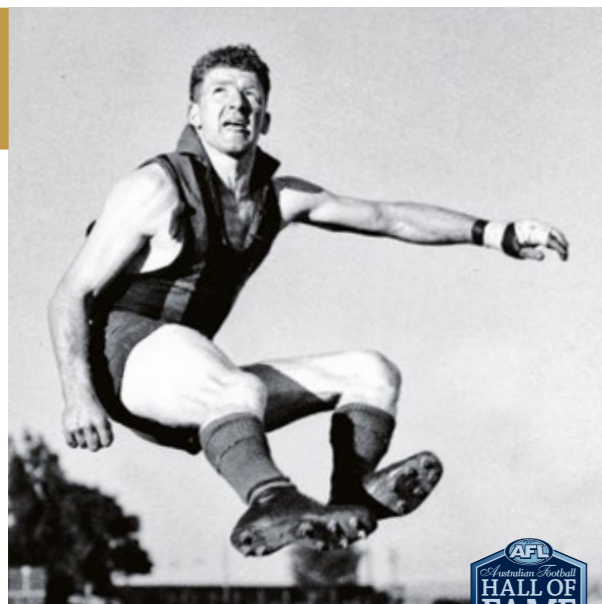
The All-Australian selection committee voted for their top three marks and goals across the season, for a final decision in both categories. The selectors were Gillon McLachlan (chair), Kevin Bartlett, Andrew Dillon, Jude Bolton, Glen Jakovich, Chris Johnson, Cameron Ling, Matthew Richardson, Nick Riewoldt and Warren Tredrea.



△ Shai Bolton (left) and Caleb Serong with their Mark and Goal of the Year awards, and (right), Bolton's spectacular leap against Geelong in round eight.

## HALL OF FAME

LEGEND



MERV MCINTOSH

**Born:** November 25, 1922  
**Died:** May 3, 2010  
**Playing career:** 1939-41 and 1946-55  
**Games:** 217  
**Goals:** 79

An inaugural member of the Hall of Fame in 1996, the 198cm ruckman was a giant of West Australian football. Renowned for his strength and determination, he boasted exquisite skills and a brilliant football brain. McIntosh won Perth's best and fairest on seven occasions and played a key role in the club's drought-breaking 1955 premiership. As well as winning three Sandover Medals and three Simpson Medals, he represented WA 24 times, earning All-Australian selection and winning the Tassie Medal at the 1953 interstate carnival.



JACK OATEY

**Born:** August 29, 1920  
**Died:** February 26, 1994  
**Coaching record:** Norwood 1945-56, premierships 1946, 1948, 1950. West Adelaide 1957-60. Sturt 1962-82, premierships 1966, 1967, 1968, 1969, 1970, 1974, 1976.  
**Playing career:** Norwood 1940-52, South Melbourne 1944  
**Games:** 186 (Nor 181, SM 5)  
**Goals:** 237 (Nor 233, SM 4)

In a brilliant coaching career spanning 38 years, Oatey won 10 premierships, sharing the SANFL record with John Cahill for the most as a coach. The tough, skilful rover, whose career was interrupted by World War II, was a four-time best and fairest winner for Norwood and played in five premiership teams. As a coach he is credited with the development of elite hand and foot skills in his running-based teams. An inaugural member of the Hall of Fame in 1996, the best player medal for the SANFL Grand Final is named in his honour.

LEGEND

### AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL HALL OF FAME

Four new inductees were included in the Australian Football Hall of Fame in 2021, while champion West Australian ruckman Merv McIntosh and South Australian coaching great Jack Oatey were made Legends of the Game. The inductees were Debbie Lee (VFLW great), Chris Judd (dual Brownlow medallist for West Coast Eagles and Carlton), Nathan Burke (St Kilda champion) and Robert Wiley (star rover for Perth, Richmond and West Coast Eagles). The Hall of Fame was established in 1996 with 136 inductees and serves to recognise

players, coaches, umpires, administrators and media representatives who have made an outstanding contribution to Australian football. Since 1996, the addition of another 169 inductees has increased the Hall of Fame to 312. Among this number are 31 Australian Football Hall of Fame Legends (elevated every two years). In 2013, the AFL Commission endorsed a recommendation from the Hall of Fame selectors that a 'Pioneers' category should recognise those who had pivotal roles in the establishment of the game in its earliest days. Four pioneers were inducted

in 2014 and another three in 2017. The 2021 Australian Football Hall of Fame selection committee was Richard Goyder (chair), Tania Armstrong, Graham Cornes, Ross Glendinning, Karen Lyon, Paul Marsh, Bruce McAvaney, Michael O'Loughlin, David Parkin, Mark Genge (stats/history consultant) and Patrick Keane (secretary).



INDUCTEE



DEBBIE LEE

**Born:** January 31, 1974  
**Playing career:** 1990-2014  
**Games:** 302

Lee, the first woman to be inducted, is regarded as one of the VFLW's greatest players. A five-time Helen Lambert medallist as the competition's best and fairest, she won seven club best and fairest awards. A dual Lisa Hardeman medallist for best on ground in a Grand Final, she played in three premiership teams, was a six-time All-Australian, captained Victoria on six occasions and played 16 games for the state. Served as VWFL president between 2004-12 and has been involved in administration at AFLW clubs Melbourne and the Western Bulldogs.

INDUCTEE



NATHAN BURKE

**Born:** February 6, 1970  
**Playing career:** 1987-2003  
**Games:** 323  
**Goals:** 124

The hard-working, prolific Burke was renowned for his courage and ferocity as a competitor. He started at St Kilda as a winger, then played in the back pocket before graduating to the midfield where he excelled for many seasons. Burke captained the Saints between 1996-2000 and is a member of the club's Team of the Century. A four-time All-Australian, he won St Kilda's best and fairest award on three occasions and represented Victoria 11 times. Burke coaches the Western Bulldogs in the AFLW.

INDUCTEE



CHRIS JUDD

**Born:** September 8, 1983  
**Playing career:** 2002-15  
**Games:** 279 (WCE 134, Carl 145)  
**Goals:** 228 (WCE 138, Carl 90)

Judd was a champion midfielder who left a huge legacy at his two clubs, West Coast Eagles and Carlton. Starting his AFL career with the Eagles, he was a key component of their powerful midfield with his scintillating speed and sublime skills. He skipped them to the 2006 premiership, winning a Brownlow Medal, Norm Smith Medal and two best and fairest awards along the way. He returned to his home state at the end of 2007 and joined Carlton. Judd was installed immediately as captain and helped lift the Blues, winning three consecutive best and fairest awards and adding a second Brownlow.

INDUCTEE



ROBERT WILEY

**Born:** March 24, 1955  
**Playing career:** 1974-88  
**Games:** 292 (Perth 179, Richmond 95, WCE 18)  
**Goals:** 566 (Perth 415, Richmond 127, WCE 24)

Wiley was a skilful, tireless rover who was dangerous around goal. In his first five years with Perth, he won the best and fairest award every season and was a key member of the club's WAFL premiership teams in 1976-77. Came to Victoria in 1979 and joined Richmond, playing in the Tigers' 1980 flag. He returned home to WA to win three more best and fairests with Perth and played for the West Coast Eagles in their debut year of 1987. A two-time All-Australian, he represented WA 14 times and played two games for Victoria. Wiley will coach the WAFL Eagles in 2022.

## LIFE MEMBERS



### Luke Beveridge

After playing with three clubs, Beveridge has gone on to become one of the AFL's most respected coaches. He was coach of the Bulldogs' drought-breaking 2016 premiership and led them into another Grand Final in 2021. He has coached the Dogs for the past seven seasons, amassing 160 premiership and nine pre-season games. A handy rover with excellent

goal-sense and a good user of the ball, Beveridge started his playing career with Melbourne, playing 42 games. He later played 31 games with the Bulldogs before finishing at St Kilda (45 games). Also played 16 pre-season games with the three clubs.



### Grant Birchall

Recruited from the Tassie Mariners, Birchall found his niche as a composed running half-back who possessed pinpoint disposal with his trusty left boot. Enjoyed plenty of success in Hawthorn's golden era under Alastair Clarkson, playing in four premiership teams. An All-Australian in 2012, he was second in the Hawks' best and fairest award in 2014 and third

in 2011-12. Played his final two seasons with the Brisbane Lions before retiring at the end of 2021 after 287 premiership games, 17 pre-season games and two International Rules games.



### Stuart Dew

The long-kicking left-footer won a premiership with each of his two clubs, playing a total of 206 premiership games and 23 pre-season games between 1997-2009. He was a member of Port Adelaide's original AFL squad and played in the Power's first premiership team in 2004. Went to Hawthorn and was an instant success, playing a key role in the Hawks' 2008 flag. Dew

has coached the Gold Coast Suns in 83 premiership games in the past four seasons.



### Patrick Dangerfield

The powerful midfielder with explosive speed has developed into one of the AFL's best players. He began his League career with the Adelaide Crows before returning to his home state to play the past six seasons with Geelong. The 2016 Brownlow medallist has won four best and fairest awards and won All-Australian selection on eight occasions, including being

named captain in 2020. At the end of 2021, Dangerfield had played 285 premiership games, 19 pre-season games, six International Rules games and one State of Origin game.



### Shane Edwards

Since being drafted to Richmond from South Australia, Edwards has developed into one of the Tigers' best midfielders. His use of the ball is elite and he has thrived on the big stage, playing a pivotal role in Richmond's three premierships in four seasons. An All-Australian in 2018 and second in the club's best and fairest award in 2019, he has amassed 281 premiership games,

22 pre-season games and one State of Origin game.



### Robert Findlay

Originally from the Southern Umpires Association, he joined the VFL in 2001 and umpired the 2008 VFL Grand Final at Marvel Stadium. The field umpire was appointed to the AFL list in 2009 and made his debut in round four. Officiated in three finals in 2021, taking his tally to 279 premiership games, 20 pre-season games and one AFLW game.



### Phil Gallagher

Gallagher was a star winger for Norwood and has gone on to become one of the SANFL's most respected administrators. A four-time premiership player, he represented the Redlegs in 292 games and kicked 216 goals. Captained the club for two seasons, represented SA eight times and is a Hall of Fame member of Norwood and the SANFL.

The longest-serving non-executive commissioner in SANFL history, he was Norwood chairman between 1996-99 and developed the original financial modelling for the move by the Adelaide and Port Adelaide football clubs from West Lakes to Adelaide Oval.



### Peter Gordon

Gordon served two terms as Western Bulldogs president (1989-96 and 2012-20) and helped save the club from a merger with Fitzroy in 1989 with the Fightback campaign. Has been a key figure in the development of the national league with his advocacy for all clubs. His achievements have included premierships in the AFL, AFLW and VFL, the return of a Footscray

team to the VFL playing at VU Whitten Oval and a partnership with the City of Ballarat to bring AFL football to that city. Served on numerous AFL steering committees and key groups.



### Josh Kennedy

A member of a famous football family - his grandfather John snr is a Hawthorn legend and father John jnr played in four Hawks premiership teams - Kennedy was drafted to Hawthorn as a father-son selection. But after only two seasons he was traded to the Sydney Swans and has become one of their favourite sons. A three-time All-Australian and best and fairest winner, he

played in the 2012 premiership and captained the club from 2017-21. He has played 279 premiership games and 24 pre-season games for both clubs.



### Jacob Mollison

Hailing from Albury/Wodonga, he umpired the Ovens and Murray Grand Finals in 2002, 2003 and 2004 and the 2004 Australian Country Championship Grand Final. Umpired the 2006 and 2007 VFL Grand Finals before making his AFL debut in round six, 2008. The field umpire officiated in his first AFL Grand Final in 2021, taking him to 282 premiership games,

20 pre-season games and one AFLW game.



### Stephen Wells

Wells has been with Geelong since February 1984 and developed a reputation of being one of the AFL's best recruiting/list managers. With his astute selection of players, he has been a key figure behind the Cats' success for almost three decades, building a list that won three premierships. The Geelong life member has also served on multiple AFL committees.

An accomplished footballer, Wells played in a QAFL premiership with Southport in 1983 and was a member of representative teams for the VFA, VAFA and VCFL.

## JACK TITUS AWARD



### Paul Briggs

The 2021 winner of the Jack Titus Award has been a tireless advocate for First Nations people in Australian Football.

As a Yorta Yorta Elder, Briggs has been committed to improving life outcomes for First Nations people through sport.

Having played about 500 games of football in regional Victoria, Briggs played a major role in helping form the Rumbalara football and netball clubs in 1983-84.

Initially fielding four football and nine netball teams, Rumbalara has provided many opportunities for First Nations people and families to participate and engage in the experience of competitive team sport and in an environment that is culturally safe and respectful.

Rumbalara has won 22 grand finals and pennants in various football and netball divisions. There are also five club members on the cusp of completing their PhDs.

Since the club's inception, Briggs was involved in key roles at Rumbalara as either president or secretary before standing down recently.

As testament to his leadership and vision, Briggs became the inaugural chair of the AFL's Indigenous Advisory committee in 2015.

His other achievements include the Kaiela Institute executive chair, member of the Victorian Aboriginal treaty working group and executive member of the Gana Burrai committee.

In 2006, Briggs received an OAM for his contribution to the community and the nation.

## RETIREEES



▷ Four-time premiership star Shaun Burgoyne was just the fifth player in history to reach the 400-game milestone.

Two of Australian Football's Indigenous greats, Shaun Burgoyne and Eddie Betts, headlined an outstanding list of stars who left the game at the end of the 2021 Toyota AFL Premiership Season.

Burgoyne finished his career at No. 3 on the list of most games played in AFL/VFL history after becoming only the fifth player to reach the 400-game milestone earlier in the year.

Nicknamed 'Silk', the 2006 All-Australian played in 35 finals during his 20 seasons.

Burgoyne played in Port Adelaide's first AFL premiership team in 2004 before adding another three flags with Hawthorn (2013-15).

Betts played his 350th and last game in the final round, finishing with 640 goals.

Universally loved and respected across the competition, the brilliant small forward was a four-time winner of the AFL Goal of the Year award.

The three-time All-Australian was Carlton's leading goalkicker twice and headed Adelaide's goalkicking on four occasions.

Nathan Jones and Marc Murphy, both loyal servants and former captains of their clubs, reached the 300-game milestone before finishing up.

Jones, a determined warrior in the midfield, won Melbourne's best and fairest award on three occasions and captained the Demons for six seasons.

Murphy was Carlton skipper for six years and won two best and fairest awards with the Blues. His best season was in 2011 when he earned All-Australian honours and won the AFL Coaches Association's Player of the Year award.

Another 15 who played more than 200 games graced an AFL ground for the final time - Grant Birchall, Jarrod Harbrow, David Mackay, Chris Mayne, James Frawley, Shaun Atley, Bachar Houli, David Zaharakis, Cale Hooker, Stephen Hill, Shane Mumford, Brad Sheppard, Tom Rockliff, Lachie Henderson and Daniel Talia.

Player	Club/s	Games
Shaun Burgoyne	Port Adelaide/Hawthorn	407
Eddie Betts	Carlton/Adelaide	350
Nathan Jones	Melbourne	302
Marc Murphy	Carlton	300
Grant Birchall	Hawthorn/Brisbane Lions	287
Jarrod Harbrow	Western Bulldogs/Gold Coast	262
David Mackay	Adelaide	248
Chris Mayne	Fremantle/Collingwood	248
James Frawley	Melbourne/Hawthorn/St Kilda	241
Shaun Atley	North Melbourne	234
Bachar Houli	Essendon/Richmond	232
David Zaharakis	Essendon	226
Cale Hooker	Essendon	219
Stephen Hill	Fremantle	218
Shane Mumford	Geelong/Sydney Swans/GWS Giants	216
Brad Sheppard	West Coast	216
Tom Rockliff	Brisbane Lions/Port Adelaide	208
Lachie Henderson	Brisbane Lions/Carlton/Geelong	206
Daniel Talia	Adelaide	200
Hamish Hartlett	Port Adelaide	193
Easton Wood	Western Bulldogs	188
Tom Scully	Melbourne/GWS Giants/Hawthorn	187

▷ Brilliant small forward Eddie Betts was one of most loved and respected players in the competition in his 350-game career with Carlton and Adelaide.





## OBITUARIES

### Murray Weideman

One of the most loved and admired players to represent Collingwood, Weideman died on February 17, 2021, a day after his 85th birthday. Affectionately known as 'The Weed', he was a tough, uncompromising key forward who built a reputation as an enforcer. In a successful playing career between 1953-63, he played 180 games for the Magpies and kicked 262 goals. Played in two Collingwood premierships - the first in 1953 as a 17-year-old in only his fifth senior game and in 1958 as the club's acting captain in the biggest Grand Final boilover in AFL/VFL history. Won three Copeland Trophies and won the club goalkicking on three occasions. Was captain-coach of West Adelaide before returning to Collingwood for a two-year stint as coach in the 1970s. The centre half-forward in the Magpies' Team of the Century, Weideman was inducted into the Australian Football Hall of Fame in 2007. His son Mark played for Collingwood and grandson Sam is a key forward for Melbourne.

### Michael Gudinski

Renowned as the godfather of the Australian music industry, Gudinski died in Melbourne on March 2, 2021, aged 68. The chairman of the Mushroom Group was pivotal to the organisation of Grand Final entertainment for many years. He was a lifelong St Kilda supporter and a former Saints director and vice-president.

### Tom Davis

A dual premiership ruckman for Perth, Davis died on March 6, 2021, aged 87. He was the only player from Perth's two-point victory in the 1955 Grand Final to also taste the ultimate success in the club's next premiership side in 1966, retiring after that game. Recruited from Pemberton, Davis was hard working, tough and strong in the air with an excellent leap. Played 220 games and kicked 129 goals for Perth, as well as representing WA on four occasions, including the 1956 interstate carnival.

### Allan Montgomery

A versatile, strongly built and athletic player who was an excellent overhead mark, Montgomery died on March 16, 2021, aged 62. Started his career in the WAFL with Perth before being lured to Victoria to play with Carlton. Played 33 games with the Blues between 1982-85 before returning to Perth. In two stints with the WAFL club (1979-81, 1986-88), he played 89 games and kicked 96 goals.

### Ian Shelton

Regarded as one of the game's toughest defenders, Shelton died after a long battle with illness on March 17, 2021, aged 81. After joining Essendon from country club Avenel in 1959, 'Bluey' played in two premiership teams, in 1962 and '65. He missed the 1964 season after suffering a serious eye injury on the family farm. Doctors feared Shelton could lose his sight, but he recovered to play a major role in the 1965 premiership. He was second in Essendon's best and fairest in 1962 and third in 1961 and 1963. Represented Victoria twice in 1962. The '65 Grand Final was his 91st and last game for the Bombers before retiring from the VFL at only 25 to become captain-coach of Seymour. He later finished his career with Avenel. After being awarded life membership at Essendon in 2005, he was inducted into the club's Hall of Fame in 2019.

### Ray Button

One of the most spectacular footballers in Glenelg's history, Button died on March 18, 2021, aged 77. Blessed with a great leap, he played 135 games and kicked 245 goals for the Tigers between 1963-72. The half-forward flanker was given freedom to roam in attack and booted 11 goals in a match against Woodville in 1967. A popular clubman and teammate, he was the club's leading goalkicker in 1965 (61), 1966 (37) and 1967 (45).

### Brian Faehse

A loyal servant of West Adelaide on and off the field, Faehse died after a short illness on March 21, 2021, aged 96. Made his senior debut in 1944 and went on to play a then club-record 222 games and kick 60 goals until 1956. After playing his early football in the ruck, he developed into a star centre half-back, where he lined up in the 1947 premiership team against Norwood as well as in most of his 19 games for South Australia. Captained West Adelaide for six seasons (1951-56) and won successive best and fairest awards in 1950-51. An inaugural inductee to the SA Football Hall of Fame in 2002, he was awarded West Adelaide life membership in 1949 and his name adorns the main grandstand at what is known as Hisense Stadium. Was on the SANFL Tribunal Commission between 1964-78.

### Reg Poole

A member of Hawthorn's first VFL premiership team in 1961, Poole died on March 23, 2021, aged 79. Recruited from Kew YCW, he was a talented back pocket renowned for his toughness and competitive spirit. 'Muddy' played 62 games for the Hawks between 1961-68, taking a break in the 1962 season to concentrate on his studies. His daughter, Katie Hudson, is a director on Hawthorn's board.

### Gordon Schwartz

A leading South Australian football journalist for many years, Schwartz died on March 27, 2021, aged 98. Schwartz grew up in Port Pirie where he made a name for himself as a footballer, cricketer and tennis player before settling in Adelaide, playing briefly for Norwood and West Torrens. By the time he retired in 1987, he was renowned as SA's leading football writer, having covered more than 1000 SANFL matches. Beyond newspapers, he had an extensive radio career with 5DN and 5AD and appeared on TV as the host of Channel Seven's *World of Sport* for 17 years. After retiring from full-time journalism, he continued to be a contributor to *The Advertiser* and the *SANFL Football Budget*, and was a regular on 5DN and 5AN talkback programs. In 2002, he was an inaugural inductee into the SA Football Hall of Fame as a journalist. Awarded an Order of Australia Medal for services to journalism and sport in SA in 2005 and was one of seven inaugural inductees to Adelaide Oval's Media Hall of Fame in 2016.

### Dick Fenton-Smith

A dual premiership ruckman/defender in Melbourne's golden era, Fenton-Smith died on April 11, 2021, aged 89. Starred in the 1957 Grand Final win against Essendon and his 50th and final game for the Demons was in the victorious 1959 Grand Final. Recruited from Ormond Amateurs, he made his debut in round two, 1957, against Collingwood at the MCG, going on to play 18 games and kick 18 goals in his first season. Played for SANFL side Sturt after leaving Melbourne and later served on the Demons' committee.

### Graeme Lee

A legend of Tasmanian football, Lee died on April 14, 2021, aged 81. A superbly-built player who was a great leader, 'Gypsy' is best remembered as a winger, but he could play in various positions including half-forward and full-forward. Speedy, clever and a superb drop kick, he started his senior career in Tasmania with Wynyard, playing 43 games between 1957-59 before crossing Bass Strait to play three seasons with St Kilda. Played four senior games with the Saints in 1961 as a forward and had a strong season in 1962, playing 14 games on a wing. Returned to Tasmania in 1963 and joined Launceston as captain-coach. After 90 games for Launceston, Lee transferred to East Devonport in 1968 as captain-coach and was immediately successful in steering the club to its first flag in 20 years. Represented Tasmania on 11 occasions between 1965-69 and captained the state in the 1966 interstate carnival in Hobart, making the All-Australian side and finishing equal third in the Tassie Medal. Inducted into the Tasmanian Football Hall of Fame in 2005.

### Don Dixon

A four-time premiership player for South Fremantle, Dixon died on April 16, 2021, aged 92. The sound, resolute defender with a good leap and safe pair of hands played 134 games for the Bulldogs between 1948-57, highlighted by the flags in 1950, 1952, 1953 and 1954. Inducted into the club's Hall of Fame in 2015, his father Norm and son Don jnr also played for South Fremantle.

### Ken Greenwood

A member of Carlton's Grand Final team which lost to Essendon in 1962, Greenwood died on April 18, 2021, after a long illness, aged 79. Recruited from South Bendigo, Greenwood played 55 games and kicked 19 goals for the Blues between 1962-66. As there was an abundance of ruckmen at Carlton, he struggled to gain regular selection and crossed to Footscray for more opportunities. In his first season with the Bulldogs in 1967, he was runner-up in the club's best and fairest award. Played 73 games with Footscray until leaving the club at the end of 1972. Finished his playing career as captain-coach of VFA club Preston.

### Frank Costa

Costa, who played a major role in Geelong's success as president during this century, died after a battle with cancer on May 2, 2021, aged 83. Joined the Cats' board in the late 1990s and became president in late 1998, remaining in the role until the end of 2010 when he retired from the board. He then went on to become the club's patron. A life member of Geelong, he became the club's 26th legend shortly before his death, the first non-player to receive legend status. An iconic figure in the Geelong region with his family's produce business, Costa was a community leader. He was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in 1997 and appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia in 2015.

### Brendan Edwards

The best afield in Hawthorn's first Grand Final win in 1961, Edwards died on May 10, 2021, aged 85. A passionate advocate for health and fitness, he pioneered the Hawks' circuit training model that helped drive the club towards the '61 flag. In the premiership decider, the brilliant centremen amassed 33 disposals in the comfortable victory over Footscray. Retired briefly in 1962 to concentrate on building his physical fitness business but was persuaded to make a comeback in 1963 before a dislocated knee mid-season ended his career. Recruited from Sandhurst in the Bendigo Football League, he played 109 games and kicked 29 goals between 1956-63. Finished second in the Brownlow Medal in 1958, won Hawthorn's best and fairest in 1960, was second in 1957, 1958 and 1959 and third in 1961. A wingman for Hawthorn's Team of the Century, an inductee in the Hawks' Hall of Fame and a life member of the club, he represented Victoria on four occasions.

### Fred Buttsworth

The 1951 Sandover medallist and West Australian Football Hall of Fame member died on May 13, 2021, aged 93. A dashing centre half-back and centre half-forward renowned for his long drop kicks, Buttsworth played 182 games and kicked 246 goals for West Perth between 1942-53, including the 1942, 1949 and 1951 premierships. He won the club's best and fairest award twice, in 1944 and 1951. He had a brief stint with Essendon, playing eight games in 1945 before returning to WA. His best season was in 1951 when he won the Sandover Medal and Simpson Medal, one of his 14 appearances for WA. Represented WA in Sheffield Shield cricket. His brother Wally was a two-time premiership defender with Essendon.

## Harold Lambert

Lambert was Essendon's oldest-living premiership player until he died on May 22, 2021, aged 99. Played 99 games, including 21 finals, and kicked two goals between 1940-51, but his career was interrupted by World War II, serving in the army in Papua New Guinea and throughout the Pacific from 1942-45. Playing mainly at half-back after starting his career as a centreman, the right-footer was rarely beaten and was a fierce, fearless, fair competitor. The Bombers' best first-year player in 1940, he was an important contributor in three premierships (1946, 1949, 1950) and played in seven Grand Finals, his last game being in the 1951 premiership decider. Named as the 25th Champion of Essendon in 2002.

## Les Reed

A reserve in Geelong's 1951 premiership team who came on in the last quarter to replace the injured Bernie Smith, Reed died on May 25, 2021, aged 88. Recruited from Euroa, he played 25 games and kicked three goals for the Cats, with his last match being the 1953 Grand Final. The tough, hard-working utility, nicknamed 'Punchy', was also a talented cricketer.

## Ian Marsh

A speedy wingman from North Launceston, Marsh died on May 28, 2021, aged 65, after a long battle with cancer. Blessed with skill and well balanced, he played 68 games and kicked 16 goals in five seasons with Essendon. Before joining the Bombers, Marsh played in North Launceston's premiership team in 1975, winning the NTFA best and fairest and club best and fairest awards in that year. Won NTFA's best first-year player award in 1974 and represented the NTFA in 1974-75. Had open heart surgery in 1981 and was eventually forced to retire. An inductee of the Tasmanian Football Hall of Fame, he represented Victoria once in 1978 and played four State of Origin games for Tasmania in 1979-80.

## Bill Mose

The first East Perth player to kick 100 goals in a season and a dual premiership winner, Mose died on May 30, 2021, aged 87. Made his debut for the Royals in 1952 and started his career as a tough defender before switching into attack. Was a member of East Perth's flag-winning team in 1956 and had an even better season two years later, playing in his second premiership side and kicking 115 goals at full-forward. Played 123 games for the Royals between 1952-59 and represented WA four times. Later transferred to Bunbury in the police force, becoming a prominent footballer and coach as well as helping revamp the junior structure in WA's south-west region.

## Allen Lynch

The former Fitzroy defender died on June 6, 2021, aged 82. Recruited from Launceston, Lynch was renowned for his long kicking and played in the ruck as well as defence. Nicknamed 'Sarg', the former policeman finished second in the Lions' best and fairest in 1963, playing 106 games and kicking 17 goals between 1959-66.

## Wally Price

One of Western Australia's finest small defenders who played in a golden era for West Perth, Price died on June 17, 2021, aged 95. He was so effective at restricting the star rovers of his day that he won a best and fairest award in 1952, represented WA 12 times and was a vital player in three premiership teams (1942, 1949 and 1951). The tough, tenacious back pocket read the play well, had pace and was renowned for his long drop kicks. Played 256 games between 1942-54 before coaching at Griffith in NSW. Returned to WA to coach West Perth's reserves team and later was a WAFL umpire. Inducted into the West Australian Football Hall of Fame in 2010, he was a member of West Perth's Team of the Century.

## Mike Delanty

Collingwood's centre half-back in its famous 1958 premiership died on July 6, 2021, aged 84. The tough, versatile and reliable defender was powerfully built, quick and strong in the air. Recruited to Collingwood after impressing for a Northern Tasmanian Football Association team in 1956 when the Magpies were on an end-of-season trip to Tasmania. The left-footer joined Collingwood the following year, playing 87 games and kicking 19 goals in six seasons, including the 1958 flag. Crossed to North Melbourne in 1963, playing 54 games in four seasons with the Kangaroos. Delanty was a Hall of Fame member at Collingwood and in Tasmania.

## Sergio Silvagni

The patriarch of one of football's greatest families died on July 15, 2021, aged 83. The strongly-built Silvagni developed into a tough, fair ruck-rover. Although not blessed with great pace, he was a strong mark, long kick and read the game superbly. Made his senior debut in round seven, 1958, and went on to play 239 games and kick 136 goals for Carlton until his retirement in 1971. Was a member of the Blues' 1968 and 1970 premiership teams, club leading goalkicker in 1959 and captain in 1964. Won two best and fairest awards (1962, 1968) and was second in 1963 and 1965 and third in 1961 and 1967. Represented Victoria twice in 1962 and 1963. Ruck-rover in Carlton's Team of the Century, he was elevated to club legend status in 2016. Coached the Blues briefly in 1978 and was a long-time committeeman and selector. Father of Carlton great Stephen and grandfather of current Blue Jack.

## John Lord

The four-time premiership Demon died on July 30, 2021, aged 84. A strong mark, he was effective as a key player at both ends of the ground. Recruited from Echuca, Lord made his debut for Melbourne in the opening round of 1957 and starred at centre half-back in the winning Grand Final team that season. Was a member of the 1959, 1960 and 1964 premiership combinations, playing 132 games and kicking 80 goals before his last game in 1965. A life member of the club, he was heavily involved with Melbourne's Past and Present Players and Officials Association.

## Michael Gaudion

One of the finest wingers in his era, Gaudion died on August 10, 2021, aged 83. Recruited from Elsternwick, he played 152 games and kicked 44 goals for North Melbourne between 1957-67. Renowned for his pace, courage, determination and superb kicking, he started as a rover and half-forward before finding his niche on a wing. Was second in the Kangaroos' best and fairest in 1961 and equal third in 1966 and represented Victoria on four occasions. His father Charlie played 140 games for Footscray and North Melbourne between 1926-37 and was his first coach at the Kangaroos. His brother Barry was a field umpire.

## Helen Lambert

The women's football pioneer died after a long battle with cancer on August 15, 2021, aged 64. Played a key role in the formation of the Victorian Women's Football League in 1981 as the first captain of the Broadmeadows Scorpions, leading them to a premiership that season. In 1983, she became VWFL president, was subsequently awarded life membership and served as president until 1986. Her contribution continues to be recognised by the Lambert-Pearce Medal, awarded to the best and fairest player in the premier division of the VFL women's competition.

## Barry Norsworthy

One of the best rovers in the SANFL during his era, Norsworthy died on September 17, 2021, aged 69. Originally from Tea Tree Gully, he played 158 games and kicked 178 goals in two stints with Central District (1969-76 and 1979-80). Courageous, skilful and well balanced, he was the club's leading goalkicker in his debut season. Won successive best and fairest awards for Central District (1975-76) and was runner-up in the Magarey Medal in 1976 before heading to Victoria to join Melbourne. Played 21 games and kicked 18 goals in three seasons with the Demons between 1977-79. Represented SA on two occasions.

## Peter Amaranti

A brilliant centreman capable of dominating games, Amaranti died on September 20, 2021, aged 88. After failing to establish himself in three seasons with South Fremantle between 1952-54 (12 games, three goals), Amaranti thrived after moving to Subiaco. Played 169 games and kicked 32 goals for Subiaco between 1955-63, winning the Lions' fairest and best award in 1955. After retiring as a player, he coached Subiaco's reserves and was made a club life member in 1973.

## John Elliott

Carlton's longest-serving president died on September 23, 2021, aged 79. Played amateur football with Old Carey before leading the Blues through a record 20-year presidency, overseeing a significant period of success on and off the field, including premierships in 1987 and 1995. Maintained a deep passion for Carlton throughout his life and was loved by many Blues players and supporters, but was a polarising figure. The former federal president of the Liberal Party and once touted as a future Australian Prime Minister, the one-time head of Elders and the Foster's Group was the unmistakable face of Carlton during his tenure and one of the country's greatest characters.

## Greg Parke

A strong-marking key forward with three VFL clubs and one SANFL club, Parke died after a long illness on September 25, 2021, aged 73. Recruited from Bentleigh, he started his career with Melbourne, playing 119 games and kicking 169 goals until 1973. Won the best first-year player award in 1968 and polled a team-high 11 votes in the Brownlow Medal. Was second in the Demons' best and fairest in 1969 and led the club's goalkicking with 63 in 1972. Played two seasons with Footscray in 1974-75 (37 games, 56 goals, including his only final in 1974) and in his last VFL season played 15 games and kicked 17 goals with Fitzroy in 1977. Played a season with SANFL club Norwood in 1976 (18 games, 32 goals).

## Albert Mantello

A tough, versatile player who later became a key administrator, Mantello died on September 26, 2021, aged 87. Came through the ranks at North Melbourne and made his senior debut in 1954, playing 107 games and kicking 25 goals until he retired in 1962. Strong and courageous, he was renowned for his long drop kicks and had plenty of pace for a big man. Played mainly as a half-back, but was used in the centre and key forward on occasions. Was third in the Kangaroos' best and fairest in 1956 and captained the club in 1960. Represented Victoria in 1959 and was inducted into North Melbourne's Hall of Fame in 2009. A key figure in the Kangaroos' rise to the top in the 1970s, he helped lure Ron Barassi to the club as coach. Served as the Roos' vice-president between 1968-79 and was president in 1980. Was an AFL Commissioner between 1988-92.

## John McIntosh

Once touted as the best ruckman to come from Western Australia since Graham 'Polly' Farmer, McIntosh died on October 16, 2021, after a long battle with leukemia, aged 77. Hailing from Beverley, he rose to prominence with WAFL club Claremont, playing 146 games and winning two best and fairest awards. In the 1966 Interstate Carnival, he was third in the Tassie Medal, won the Simpson Medal as WA's best player and earned All-Australian honours, a feat he achieved again in 1969. The following year he joined St Kilda and made an immediate impact as a versatile big man, finishing equal fifth in the Brownlow Medal. The next season he was equal runner-up in the Brownlow and third in the Saints' best and fairest award before a knee injury cut his VFL career short in 1972, finishing with 51 games and 29 goals. Represented WA on 18 occasions, Victoria once and was inducted into the WA Football Hall of Fame in 2004. His son Ashley became a magnificent defender for West Coast, amassing 242 games and playing in the 1992 and 1994 premiership teams.

## Ray Allsopp

A former Richmond rover who became a pioneer in the promotion of junior football, Allsopp died on October 20, 2021, aged 87. Recruited from Collegians, he was courageous and read the play well. Made his debut for the Tigers in 1955, playing 54 games and kicking 69 goals in five seasons. Was runner-up in Richmond's best and fairest in 1957 and represented Victoria in three games that year. Was also an excellent District cricketer for Richmond and University. Worked as an investment adviser and schoolteacher before becoming the first full-time administrator in the VFL and developed Vickick, the first junior football program and the forerunner of the national Auskick program, in which 200,000 are involved today. The Victorian Australian Football Coaches Association (AFCA) annually recognises his contribution to junior football with the Ray Allsopp Auskick Coach of the Year award. Awarded AFL life membership in 2009 and a Medal of the Order of Australia for his service to sport, particularly for schoolchildren.

## Dave Guzens

A determined defender who won successive best and fairest awards for Richmond in 1958-59, Guzens died on October 22, 2021, aged 88. Born in Perth, he established a reputation as a fine player in Kalgoorlie before joining the Tigers. Played 69 games predominantly as a full-back and kicked three goals in five seasons at Punt Rd between 1957-61. Was Richmond's vice-captain in 1960-61. Represented Victoria on four occasions in 1959-60. Returned to WA as captain-coach of Subiaco, playing 13 games in 1962 before carrying on in a non-playing capacity in 1963. Made a brief comeback with East Perth in 1964, playing five games before retiring. Was a strong swimmer who competed in masters events.

## Jim Malone

Malone was the last surviving member of North Melbourne's 1950 Grand Final team until he died on October 23, 2021, aged 95. Recruited from Flemington CYMS, he played 102 games and kicked 24 goals for the Kangaroos between 1945-52. After starting out as a winger, he developed into a highly proficient rover who held his own against the game's best small men. Finished his career with VFA club Coburg, playing 25 games.

## Paul Harradine

A long-kicking defender who had occasional stints on the ball, Harradine died on October 26, 2021, aged 64. Recruited from Seacombe Heights, he started his career in 1977 with South Adelaide, playing 90 games in two stints with the Panthers. In 1982-83, he played 31 games for Woodville before finishing his SANFL career with his original club.

## Russell Ebert

One of South Australia's greatest footballers, Ebert died on November 5, 2021, after a battle with leukemia, aged 72. Born and raised in SA's Riverland, he began his career with Port Adelaide in 1968 and went on to play a club-record 392 games. A scrupulously fair, skilful and tough midfielder, he was a four-time Magarey medallist and six-time best and fairest winner. Captained Port Adelaide to its 1977 premiership and then returned to the Magpies after a one-year stint at North Melbourne in 1979 to win consecutive flags in 1980 and 1981, when he was the first winner of the Jack Oatey Medal for best-on-ground in a Grand Final. Was Port's captain-coach from 1983 until he retired as a player in 1985, then became non-playing coach in 1986-87 before coaching Woodville from 1988-90. Represented SA 29 times, was an inaugural member of the Australian Football Hall of Fame in 1996 and was inducted into the Port Adelaide and SANFL Halls of Fame. Worked for many years in the SA community, supporting leading charities and key social causes, particularly combating domestic violence and helping children with serious illness.

## Arthur Wilson

Widely known as 'Mr Fitzroy', Wilson died on November 12, 2021, aged 90. A proud and passionate Fitzroy man, he was the club's official junior mascot for the Lions' last VFL premiership team in 1944. Later began working in an official capacity with Fitzroy, developing a reputation as an astute administrator and undertaking various roles from football manager to national recruiting manager. Was a driving force behind the Fitzroy-Brisbane Lions Historical Society, responsible for acquiring, restoring and maintaining Fitzroy's memorabilia, and was chairman for 25 years until his death. A life member of Fitzroy and the Brisbane Lions, he was inducted into the club's Hall of Fame in 2016.

## Darcy Cox

A dual premiership player with North Adelaide, Cox died on November 23, 2021, aged 96. Came through the Roosters' junior ranks and made his senior debut in 1946. Played 115 games and kicked 98 goals as a tenacious winger/half-forward/rover until his last appearance in the 1952 SANFL Grand Final, in which he kicked three goals. He also booted three goals in the 1949 Grand Final win over West Torrens and was regarded by many as North's best player. Was involved in SA's Southern League for many years.

## John Devaney

An expansive writer on all levels of the game who founded the website *australiafootball.com* (formerly *fullpointsooty*) as a valuable historical resource on leagues, players and match results, Devaney died on November 28, 2021, aged 65. Born in England, he lived in SA for seven years as a child before returning to England, where he devoted a lifetime to chronicling the game's history from afar. Crafted thousands of player biographies from the material he gathered from around the country, covering senior state leagues as well as suburban and regional competitions, recording stories and matches that might otherwise have been forgotten.



▶ Four-time Magarey medallist Russell Ebert, who passed away on November 5 aged 72, was one of South Australia's greatest footballers.

## Percy Johnson

An influential figure in West Australian football as a player and coach who went on to be a prominent media commentator, Johnson died after a battle with cancer on December 4, 2021, aged 88. Born in Kalgoorlie, he started his WAFL career in 1951 and was part of a golden era for WA ruckmen, playing with and against Graham 'Polly' Farmer, Jack Clarke and Merv McIntosh. Played most of his football with East Fremantle and achieved premiership success in 1957, appearing in 180 games and kicking 217 goals for Old Easts between 1951-58 and 1962. Was Swan Districts captain-coach in 1959 (21 games, 19 goals) and had two seasons with Claremont in 1960-61. Played 27 games and kicked 45 goals for the Tigers, leading the club goalkicking in 1960. An inductee in the WA Football Hall of Fame, he represented WA in 13 games. Coached South Fremantle in 1977 and West Perth in 1978-79. After his retirement from football, Johnson worked for Channel 7 and had a segment known as 'Percy's Point of View'.

## Ian Cooper

Recognised as the best afield in the memorable 1966 Grand Final, St Kilda's only premiership, Cooper died on December 14, 2021, after a long battle with cancer, aged 75. Recruited from East Sandringham, he made his senior debut in the opening round of 1964, playing 69 games and kicking 31 goals until 1969 before his VFL career was cut short by rheumatic fever. The lightly built half-forward was a big-game performer, had a great football brain and was a superb aerialist. Played in the 1965 Grand Final loss to Essendon and starred in the premiership decider the following year, subsequently judged by a panel of experts as being best on ground. Later went to WA and was a century goalkicker for VFA club Sandringham.

# FINANCIAL REPORT

▶ **TRAVIS AULD**  
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER



The AFL reported an underlying operating loss of \$43.0 million in 2021, compared with an underlying operating loss of \$22.7 million in 2020. This result includes the AFL's controlled state subsidiaries, Marvel Stadium and Champion Data.

The AFL's revenue increased by \$63.3 million to \$738.1 million due to a return to a 23-round AFL men's season and improved commercial returns from key areas such as broadcasting, sponsorship and the 2021 Finals Series.

Revenue for 2021 is \$55.8 million less than 2019 (\$793.9 million) due to the ongoing impacts of COVID-19.

The AFL's revenue was used to fund the following investments:

- ▶ \$301.0 million to AFL clubs;
- ▶ \$29.5 million on the administration of the 2021 men's and women's season, including travel costs to relocate clubs impacted by state border restrictions and administer COVID-19 testing protocols;
- ▶ \$53.0 million to Game Development; an increase of \$21.0 million in line with increased activity at community level nationally through 2021;
- ▶ \$18.5 million in running the AFLW competition;
- ▶ \$60.2 million to the AFLPA;
- ▶ \$23.0 million to infrastructure comprising of elite and community facilities and contributions for stadia redevelopments; and
- ▶ \$1.0 million to corporate and social responsibility initiatives.

After adding back non-operating items, the AFL's statutory loss was \$29.5 million.

▶ AFLW fans were in full voice during the 2021 season.





## AFL clubs' financial results

The AFL operates a Club Funding Model, which provides a base distribution and, subject to meeting certain qualifying criteria, a variable distribution.

Variable distributions are designed to provide support to clubs that require additional financial support to fund and maintain their football program (playing and non-playing resources) to a competitive level.

Variable funding distributions are determined based on an estimation of revenue-generating disadvantages that may be caused by, among other things, different supporter base sizes, differing commercial arrangements with stadiums, the financial impact of the fixture and access to income from non-football related businesses.

Variable funding was reintroduced for the 2021 financial year after being discontinued from April 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## AFL's Industry Response to the COVID-19 pandemic

The AFL put the following measures in place to manage the ongoing financial risk of the COVID-19 pandemic:

- ▶ Maintained reductions in the industry's operating cost base to mitigate revenue loss;
- ▶ Maintained a centralised treasury function to co-ordinate and assist in the management of the AFL Group's and clubs' liquidity positions;
- ▶ Provided letters of financial support to all clubs to underpin total industry solvency.

In 2020, the AFL secured \$660 million in additional borrowing facilities with NAB and ANZ to support industry liquidity; due to continued cost management and the above measures in place, these facilities were no longer required and were closed in 2021.

◀ St Kilda's Max King was one of the bright young stars to emerge in 2021.

## Distributions to AFL clubs

The AFL makes a number of distributions to AFL clubs. These distributions totalled \$301.0 million, an increase of \$70.2 million compared with 2020, and included the following:

- ▶ A base distribution to all clubs which totalled \$188.0 million;
- ▶ Variable distributions which totalled \$58.1 million; and
- ▶ Other commercial distributions which totalled \$54.9 million.

### 2021 CLUB DISTRIBUTIONS

Club	Total (\$'000)
Adelaide	13,157
Brisbane Lions	21,574
Carlton	15,660
Collingwood	15,019
Essendon	13,319
Fremantle	13,334
Geelong Cats	13,714
Gold Coast Suns	26,317
GWS Giants	23,590
Hawthorn	12,274
Melbourne	18,957
North Melbourne	17,441
Port Adelaide	14,889
Richmond	14,192
St Kilda	21,446
Sydney Swans	14,621
West Coast Eagles	12,678
Western Bulldogs	18,808
<b>Total</b>	<b>300,990</b>

Included in the above are the following other distributions to the clubs throughout the 2021 season, including, but not limited to AFLW, travel subsidies, prizemoney, AFL membership-related distributions, AFL commercial partner payments, AFL-facilitated stadium payments and licensing distributions.

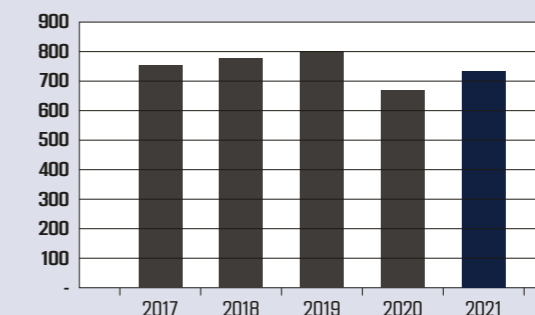
## THE AFL GROUP 2012-2021

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
<b>Profit &amp; Loss (\$ mill)</b>										
Revenue	471.177	502.699	528.230	558.674	569.856	752.622	778.596	793.939	674.816	738.137
Operating Expenses	167.427	181.978	203.853	214.311	225.985	261.064	322.293	329.934	368.402	345.937
Net Financing Income/(Expense)	0.518	(0.042)	0.596	0.564	0.378	(5.468)	(4.091)	(5.842)	(19.098)	(8.988)
<b>Operating Surplus</b>	<b>304.268</b>	<b>320.679</b>	<b>324.973</b>	<b>344.927</b>	<b>344.249</b>	<b>486.090</b>	<b>452.212</b>	<b>458.163</b>	<b>287.316</b>	<b>383.212</b>
Payments to Clubs	200.251	209.152	218.309	245.151	272.407	304.590	307.216	314.607	230.803	300.990
Payments to AFLPA	21.986	21.692	22.680	30.547	22.270	36.120	36.599	37.687	18.902	60.156
Game Development	43.838	46.543	45.017	44.925	53.111	59.464	56.116	58.801	31.964	27.593
Ground Improvements	6.025	6.071	6.389	6.851	7.031	20.510	9.675	11.872	9.101	16.131
AFL Foundation	0.150	0.329	0.842	1.272	1.277	1.517	1.245	1.350	2.106	0.933
Facilities Development	7.731	5.890	7.307	5.308	3.608	3.545	15.647	5.988	2.818	6.896
Strategic Partnership	1.602	1.224	1.225	0.525	-	-	-	-	-	-
New Markets	14.633	11.549	9.884	6.700	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Net Profit/(Loss) before Transfers (to)/from Reserves</b>	<b>8.052</b>	<b>18.229</b>	<b>13.320</b>	<b>3.648</b>	<b>(15.455)</b>	<b>60.344</b>	<b>25.714</b>	<b>27.858</b>	<b>(8.378)</b>	<b>(29.487)</b>
Facilities Development Reserve	1.731	0.190	0.990	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Strategic Partnership Reserve	-	-	-	0.525	-	-	-	-	-	-
Capital Reserve	-	-	-	-	-	(20.000)	(20.000)	(20.000)	60.000	-
Future Fund Reserve	-	-	-	-	-	89.359	-	-	-	-
<b>Movement in Retained Earnings</b>	<b>9.783</b>	<b>18.419</b>	<b>14.310</b>	<b>4.173</b>	<b>(15.455)</b>	<b>129.703</b>	<b>5.714</b>	<b>7.858</b>	<b>51.622</b>	<b>(29.487)</b>
<b>Balance Sheet (\$ mill)</b>										
Total Assets	151.726	174.648	186.191	206.260	203.678	476.649	536.090	487.487	628.097	658.707
Total Liabilities	46.717	51.410	49.633	66.054	78.927	291.554	325.121	248.660	397.648	457.745
Net Assets	105.009	123.238	136.558	140.206	124.751	185.095	210.969	238.827	230.449	200.962
<b>TPP &amp; Club Distribution Statistics (\$ mill)</b>										
Total Player Payments (TPP)	158.173	164.500	173.383	181.284	186.642	224.011	226.699	229.646	163.015	217.271
TPP per Club	8.787	9.139	9.632	10.071	10.369	12.445	12.594	12.758	9.056	12.071
<b>Attendance Statistics (mill)</b>										
Home & Away Season Attendance	6.239	6.368	6.385	6.352	6.306	6.733	6.895	6.951	0.820	3.794
Finals Series Attendance	0.540	0.558	0.570	0.519	0.558	0.554	0.700	0.564	0.207	0.273
Total Premiership Season Attendance	6.779	6.926	6.955	6.871	6.865	7.287	7.595	7.515	1.027	4.067
<b>Membership Statistics</b>										
Total of Club Members	707,621	756,717	804,480	836,136	875,197	907,561	1,008,494	1,057,572	992,854	1,113,441
No. of Clubs in the AFL	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18
Average No. of Members per Club	39,312	42,040	44,693	46,452	48,622	50,420	56,027	58,754	52,060	61,858
Total AFL Members	56,595	56,513	56,510	54,983	54,808	55,557	56,797	58,021	55,766	56,568

## Revenue

**UP 9%**

to \$738.1 million

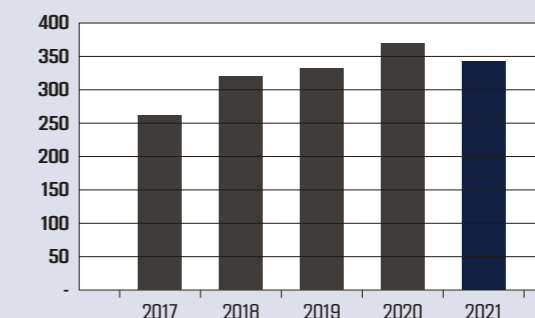


Revenue increased by \$63.3 million to \$738.1 million due to the return to a 23-round AFL men's season and improved commercial returns in key areas such as broadcasting, sponsorship and the 2021 men's Finals Series.

## Expenditure

**DOWN 6%**

to \$345.9 million

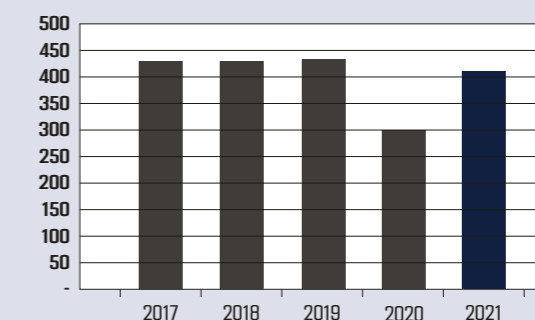


Expenditure decreased by \$22.5 million in 2021 compared with 2020. The AFL's operating cost base compared with 2019 includes additional costs due to the expansion of AFLW and additional COVID-19 related costs incurred in completing the 2021 seasons; the AFL reduced its operating cost base in 2020 and these levels have been maintained.

## Distributions

**UP 40%**

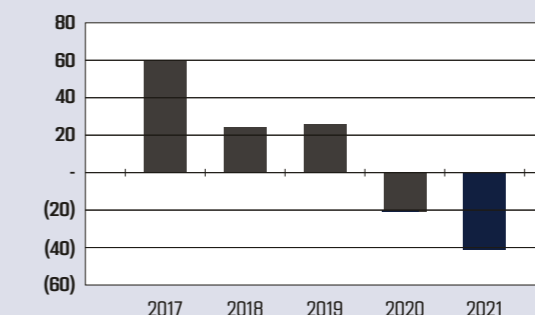
to \$412.7 million



Distributions increased by \$117.0 million to \$412.7 million.

## Underlying Operating Loss

**OF \$43M**



The AFL's Consolidated result decreased by \$20.3 million from 2020 to 2021.

# CONCISE FINANCIAL REPORT

31 OCTOBER 2021

## Directors' Report

The Directors present their report together with the financial report of the Australian Football League ("the Company") and Consolidated Entity, being the Company and its controlled entities, for the year ended 31 October 2021 and the auditor's report thereon.

## Directors

The Directors of the Company at any time during or since the end of the financial year are:

### Mr R J Goyder, AO

**Chairman** – Appointed Commissioner 21st November 2011

Chairman from March 2017

Chairman of Remuneration Committee

Member of Audit and Risk Committee

**Qualifications:** Bachelor of Commerce (The University of Western Australia)

**Experience:** Chair, Woodside

Chair, Qantas Airways

Chair, Channel 7 Telethon Trust

Chair, West Australian Symphony Orchestra

Former Director, Wesfarmers Ltd

Former Director, Fremantle Football Club

### Mr G A McLachlan

**Chief Executive Officer** – Appointed 5th June 2014

**Qualifications:** Bachelor of Laws (Hons.)

(The University of Melbourne)

Bachelor of Commerce (The University of Adelaide)

**Experience:** AFL Deputy CEO 2012-2014

AFL Chief Operating Officer 2008-2012

AFL General Manager Broadcasting & Major Projects 2006-2008

AFL General Manager Commercial Operations 2003-2006

Patron, Children's Cancer Foundation

### Mr P M Bassat

**Non-Executive Commissioner** – Appointed 20th February 2012

Member of Remuneration Committee

**Qualifications:** Bachelor of Laws (The University of Melbourne)

Bachelor of Commerce (The University of Melbourne)

**Experience:** Co-founder and former CEO, SEEK Ltd 1997-2011

Director, Square Peg Capital Pty Ltd

Director, Peter MacCallum Cancer Foundation

Director, Zeller Holdings Pty Ltd

Advisory Board Member, Evans & Partners Global Disruption Fund

Member, Mount Scopus College Foundation

Director, Athena Financial Pty Ltd

Alternate Director, ROKT Pte Ltd

Director, HealthMatch Holdings Pty Ltd

Director, Retrain.ai Inc.

### Mr K L Williams, AM

**Non-Executive Commissioner** – Appointed 4th March 2014

until 10th March 2021

**Qualifications:** Bachelor of Music (The University of Sydney)

Honorary Doctorate of Letters (Macquarie University)

**Experience:** Chair, Thomson Reuters Founders Share Company

Chair, The Copyright Agency

Chair, Vidcorp

Co-Chair, NSW State Library Foundation

Director, Myer Family Investments

Director, Australian Music Foundation

Director, Executive Channel International

Board Member, University of Western Sydney Foundation

Director, Australian Schools Plus

### Mr J A Ball

**Non-Executive Commissioner** – Appointed 25th March 2015,

until 10th March 2021

Member of Remuneration Committee

Member of Community Relief Fund Governance Committee

Member, AFL Competition Committee

Chair, AFLW Competition Committee

**Qualifications:** Graduate, Australian Institute of Company Directors

**Experience:** Senior Relationship Manager, Ord Minnett Ltd

Senior Relationship Manager, Macquarie Group 2000-2018

Director, Sydney Swans Football Club 2007-2015

Player, Sydney Swans Football Club 2000-2005

Player, West Coast Eagles Football Club 1992-1999

### Ms S L Wilkie, AO

**Non-Executive Commissioner** – Appointed 25th March 2015

Member of Remuneration Committee

Member of Community Relief Fund Governance Committee

Chair, AFLW Competition Committee

Member, AFL Competition Committee

**Qualifications:** Bachelor of Human Resource Management

(University of New England)

Graduate Diploma of Telecommunications Systems Management

(Swinburne University of Technology)

Graduate Diploma of Strategic Studies (Deakin University)

Master of Defence Studies (University of Canberra)

Advanced Management Program (Harvard Business School)

**Experience:** 35 years service in the Army

Director, AFL SportsReady

Member of the Defence Honours and Awards Tribunal

Director, The Beaufort Group

Senior Advisor, Boston Consulting Group

### Mr P A Newbold

**Non-Executive Commissioner** – Appointed 17th March 2016

Chairman of Audit and Risk Committee

**Qualifications:** Bachelor of Laws (Monash University)

Bachelor of Economics (Monash University)

**Experience:** Chairman, Golf Australia Limited

Director, Supra Capital Limited

Chairman, Althea Group Holdings Limited

President, Hawthorn Football Club 2012-2016

Life Member, Hawthorn Football Club

### Ms G M Trainor, AO

**Non-Executive Commissioner** – Appointed 17th March 2016

**Qualifications:** Bachelor of Laws (The University of Melbourne)

Master of Arts in Cultural & Creative Practice

(Western Sydney University)

Fellow, Australian Institute of Company Directors

**Experience:** Board Member,

Major Transport Infrastructure Authority (VIC)

Director, Built

Member Advisory Board, Gadens

Director, Zurich Australia Ltd: One Path Life & General Insurance

Director, WAM Global Ltd

Director, Western Parkland City Authority

Member, ACT City Renewal Authority

Chair, Construction Industry Culture Taskforce

Member, Advisory Board, Sydney Review of Books

Member, National Sports Tribunal Panel Selection Committee

Trustee, The Charlie Perkins Trust

Director, Whitlam Institute

Ambassador, Business Events Sydney

Director, Western Sydney University Foundation

Member, Dean's Advisory Board, School of Design, Architecture &

Building, UTS

Member, Executive Committee, Committee for Sydney

Member, Monash Commission 2020

### Mr R M Bishop

**Non-Executive Commissioner** – Appointed 21st April 2017

Member of Audit and Risk Committee

Member of Remuneration Committee

**Qualifications:** Bachelor of Laws (Hons.) (The University of Melbourne)

Bachelor of Commerce (The University of Melbourne)

Bachelor of Arts (The University of Melbourne)

**Experience:** Managing Partner and Founder, BGH Capital

Non-Executive Director, Burnet Institute

Member, Takeovers Panel

### Prof H M Milroy

**Non-Executive Commissioner** – Appointed 14th March 2019

**Qualifications:** Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery

(The University of Western Australia)

FRANZCP: CATCAP

**Experience:** Stan Perron Professor Child Psychiatry,

Perth Children's Hospital and University of Western Australia

Honourary Research Fellow, Telethon Kids Institute

Board Member, Beyond Blue

## Directors' Meetings

The number of Directors' meetings (including meetings of committees of Directors) and number of meetings attended by each of the Directors of the Company during the financial year were:

Director	Directors' Meetings		Audit and Risk Committee Meetings		Remuneration Committee Meetings	
	No. of meetings attended	No. of meetings held*	No. of meetings attended	No. of meetings held*	No. of meetings attended	No. of meetings held*
Mr R J Goyder, AO	8	8	3	3	1	1
Mr G A McLachlan	8	8	3	3	1	1
Mr P M Bassat	8	8	-	-	1	1
Mr K L Williams, AM	3	3	-	-	-	-
Mr J A Ball	3	3	1	1	-	-
Ms S L Wilkie, AO	8	8	-	-	1	1
Mr P A Newbold	8	8	3	3	-	-
Ms G M Trainor, AO	8	8	-	-	-	-
Mr R M Bishop	8	8	3	3	1	1
Prof H M Milroy	8	8	-	-	-	-

\* Reflects the number of meetings held during the time the Director held office during the year.

The role of the Audit and Risk Committee is to give the Commission assurance regarding the preparation and integrity of financial reports, internal controls, policies and procedures that are used to identify and manage business risks and compliance with legal and regulatory requirements. The AFL's Integrity and Security function also reports to the Audit and Risk Committee on a periodic basis.

The role of the Remuneration Committee is to review the remuneration packages and policies applicable to Senior Executives of the Company.

As well as the above meetings, the Directors also attended numerous other meetings including meetings with the Presidents of all Australian Football League (AFL) clubs.

## Principal activities

The principal activities of the Consolidated Entity during the course of the financial year have been to promote, control, manage and encourage Australian Football.

The activities of the Consolidated Entity were significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in the year ended 31 October 2021. Both the AFL and AFLW seasons were completed with teams periodically on the road due to state border restrictions. Community football was also impacted, with shortened seasons and suspended programs in Victoria and New South Wales.

## Objectives

While the impacts of COVID-19 have been significant, the major objectives of the Company remain unchanged, and include the following:

- To manage competitions at all levels to ensure that they remain the most exciting in Australian sport.
- To build a stronger relationship with the supporters at all levels of the game.
- To progress the game to be accessible and inclusive to all.
- To help ensure that AFL clubs are financially secure and competitive.
- To provide the best possible benefits for AFL players and to drive the next generation of elite athletes to choose our game.

## Strategy and performance

The Company's strategy is to promote the AFL brand throughout Australia and to a limited extent outside Australia. Key Performance Indicators such as attendances at AFL games, television ratings, digital consumption and participant numbers are used to measure the Company's performance against this strategy.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a sudden and major financial disruption to all levels of football, resulting in the relocation of AFL and AFLW teams, restrictions on crowds and cancellation of some community and school football competitions.

The Company made several key decisions that have ensured financial stability, including a cost reduction plan to significantly reduce the financial exposure of the Consolidated Entity in 2020, which was maintained in 2021. The AFL also secured \$660 million in additional borrowing facilities with NAB and ANZ to support industry liquidity. These facilities have since been extinguished.

## Review and results of operations

The Consolidated Entity recorded an underlying operating loss of \$43.0 million, compared with an underlying operating loss of \$22.7 million in 2020. The 2021 result was impacted by grant income from the Victorian State Government for the redevelopment of Marvel Stadium and the surrounding precinct.

	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
Underlying operating profit/(loss)	(43,001)	(22,748)
Add back: government grants for the redevelopment of Marvel Stadium	13,514	14,370
<b>Statutory operating profit/(loss)</b>	<b>(29,487)</b>	<b>(8,378)</b>

The result includes a loss of \$13.2 million by AFL Stadia Pty Ltd upon consolidation (2020: loss of \$18.0 million).

## State of affairs

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic were significant and have been disclosed throughout this report and the consolidated financial statements. Other than the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, in the opinion of the Directors any other significant changes in the state of affairs of the Consolidated Entity that occurred during the financial year under review have been disclosed in this report or the consolidated financial statements.

## Events subsequent to balance date

The Directors note that the impacts of COVID-19 are ongoing. The risk of further outbreaks, new strains and Government restrictions may have a significant impact on the 2022 financial year as it did in 2020 and 2021.

Other than the above, there has not arisen in the interval between the end of the financial year and the date of this report any item, transaction, or event of a material and unusual nature likely, in the opinion of the Directors of the Company, to affect significantly the operations of the Consolidated Entity, the results of those operations, or the state of affairs of the Consolidated Entity in future financial years.

## Likely developments

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have been significant and are disclosed throughout this report and the consolidated financial statements. The Consolidated Entity has executed its objectives while navigating through the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on the delivery of football at both the elite and community levels. The Consolidated Entity will leverage its learnings from the last two years as vaccination rates increase and State Government restrictions change to continue to provide a safe and inclusive environment for players, staff, volunteers and fans of football at all levels.

Other than the above, the Directors do not anticipate any major changes in the basis of operations of the Consolidated Entity and the future results of those operations in subsequent financial years.

## Insurance premiums

Since the end of the previous financial year the Company has paid insurance premiums on insurance contracts in respect of Directors' and Officers' liability and legal expenses, which include cover for current officers, including Executive Officers of the Company. The insurance premiums in respect of the officers of the Company relate to:

- costs and expenses that may be incurred by the relevant officers in defending proceedings, whether civil or criminal and whatever their outcome; and
- other liabilities that may arise from their position, with the exception of conduct involving a wilful breach of duty or improper use of information or position to gain a personal advantage.

## Directors' benefit

Since the end of the previous financial year no Director of the Company has received or become entitled to receive any benefit (other than the fixed salary of a full time employee of the Company or of a related body corporate) by reason of a contract made by the Company, its controlled entities, or a related body corporate with a Director or with a firm of which a Director is a member, or with an entity in which a Director has a substantial interest other than as disclosed in Notes 17 and 19 of the annual financial report.

## Lead Auditor's Independence Declaration under Section 307C of The Corporations Act 2001

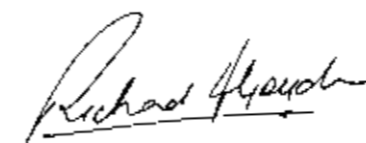
The Lead Auditor's Independence Declaration is set out below and forms part of the Directors' report for the year ended 31 October 2021.

### Rounding off

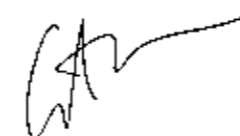
The Company is of a kind referred to in ASIC Corporations (Rounding in Financial/Directors' Reports) Instrument 2016/191 and in accordance with that Instrument, amounts in the financial report and Directors' report have been rounded off to the nearest thousand dollars, unless otherwise stated.

Dated at Melbourne this 7th day of February 2022.

Signed in accordance with a resolution of the Directors:



Mr R J Goyder, AO  
Chairman

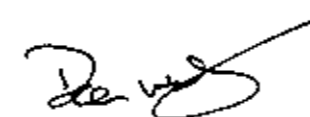


Mr G A McLachlan  
Director

### Lead Auditor's Independence Declaration under Section 307C of the Corporations Act 2001

To the Directors of the Australian Football League I declare that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, in relation to the audit of the Australian Football League for the financial year ended 31 October 2021 there have been:

- no contraventions of the auditor independence requirements as set out in the Corporations Act 2001 in relation to the audit; and
- no contraventions of any applicable code of professional conduct in relation to the audit.

Dean Waters  
Partner  
Melbourne  
7 February 2022

## Statements of Profit & Loss and Other Comprehensive Income

For The Year Ended 31 October 2021

	Consolidated	
	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
Revenue	738,137	674,816
Net financing expense	(757,318)	(19,098)
Expenses from operating activities	(8,988)	(663,517)
<b>Profit from operating activities before related income tax expense</b>	<b>(28,169)</b>	<b>(7,799)</b>
Income tax expense relating to operating activities	(1,318)	(579)
<b>Profit for the year</b>	<b>(29,487)</b>	<b>(8,378)</b>
Other comprehensive income for the year	-	-
<b>Total comprehensive income for the year</b>	<b>(29,487)</b>	<b>(8,378)</b>
<b>Profit attributable to:</b>		
Owners of the Company	(31,010)	(8,711)
Non-controlling interests	1,523	333
<b>Profit for the year</b>	<b>(29,487)</b>	<b>(8,378)</b>
<b>Total comprehensive income attributable to:</b>		
Owners of the Company	(31,010)	(8,711)
Non-controlling interests	1,523	333
<b>Total comprehensive income for the year</b>	<b>(29,487)</b>	<b>(8,378)</b>

The Statement of Profit & Loss and Other Comprehensive Income is to be read in conjunction with the notes to the financial statements set out on pages 162 to 163.



### Discussion and Analysis of the Consolidated Statement of Profit and Loss and Other Comprehensive Income

The underlying operating loss in 2021 was \$43.0 million which compared with a loss of \$22.7 million in 2020. The variance between the underlying operating loss of \$43.0 million and the statutory loss of \$29.5 million is due to recognition of Government grant revenue of \$13.5 million toward the redevelopment of Marvel Stadium and the surrounding precinct.

Revenue increased by \$63.3 million to \$738.1 million largely due to the return to a 23-round AFL Men's season and commercial returns from the 2021 Finals series. The main areas of revenue which contributed to this movement were:

- ▶ an increase in commercial operations revenue totalling \$57.6 million;
- ▶ an increase in broadcasting and AFL media revenue totalling \$14.0 million.
- ▶ Net financing costs decreased by \$10.1 million to \$9.0 million.

The AFL secured \$660 million in additional borrowing facilities with NAB and ANZ to support industry liquidity which have all been cancelled as at October 2021. The decrease in net financing costs year-on-year reflects the cancellation of these facilities.

Expenditure increased by \$93.8 million to \$757.3 million. The main areas of expenditure which contributed to this movement were:

- ▶ an increase in distributions to the AFL clubs and AFL Players Association totalling \$111.4 million, due to the increase in the AFL Players Collective Bargaining Agreement in 2021 compared with 2020;
- ▶ an increase in commercial operations expenses totalling \$22.6 million in line with increases in commercial operations revenue;
- ▶ an increase in game development costs totalling \$21.6 million. This is due to the suspension of community football around the country in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and although the pandemic still impacted community football in 2021, we saw this activity increase year-on-year. These increases are offset by:
- ▶ a decrease in football operations expenses totalling \$44.5 million. The AFL covered the majority of match-day costs for the 2020 Home & Away season. In 2021 match-day arrangements reverted to existing stadium agreements whereby clubs would incur related costs; and
- ▶ a decrease in finance and administration costs totalling \$12.5 million.

## Statements of Financial Position

As at 31 October 2021

	Consolidated	
	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
<b>Assets</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	249,313	209,101
Cash held in suspense	43,586	14,368
Trade and other receivables	46,339	76,895
Other assets	10,343	4,158
<b>Total current assets</b>	<b>349,581</b>	<b>304,522</b>
Trade and other receivables	28,567	30,115
Property, plant and equipment	258,053	266,150
Intangible assets	15,450	20,420
Other assets	7,056	6,890
<b>Total non-current assets</b>	<b>309,126</b>	<b>323,575</b>
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>658,707</b>	<b>628,097</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
Trade and other payables	121,727	72,255
Deferred income	98,615	53,300
Fair value of derivatives	-	6,734
Provisions	27,562	17,304
Interest-bearing loans and borrowings	5,216	7,252
<b>Total current liabilities</b>	<b>253,120</b>	<b>156,845</b>
Trade and other payables	-	25,920
Deferred income	22,072	14,862
Provisions	17,766	8,118
Interest-bearing loans and borrowings	164,787	191,903
<b>Total non-current liabilities</b>	<b>204,625</b>	<b>240,803</b>
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>457,745</b>	<b>397,648</b>
<b>Net assets</b>	<b>200,962</b>	<b>230,449</b>
<b>Equity</b>		
Member Contributions	-	21
Retained earnings	192,388	223,377
<b>Total equity attributable to equity holders of the Company</b>	<b>192,388</b>	<b>223,398</b>
Non-controlling interest	8,574	7,051
<b>Total equity</b>	<b>200,962</b>	<b>230,449</b>

The Statement of Financial Position is to be read in conjunction with the notes to the financial statements set out on pages 162 to 163.

### Discussion and Analysis of the Statements of Financial Position

The consolidated entity's total assets increased by \$30.6 million to \$658.7 million.

The movement in total assets principally comprised:

- ▶ an increase in available cash and cash equivalents totalling \$40.2 million. This is due to favourable working capital movements from improved debt collection;
- ▶ an increase in cash held in suspense totalling \$29.2 million due to receipt of funds from the Victorian State Government to be spent on the upgrade of Marvel Stadium; partially offset by
- ▶ a decrease in trade and other receivables totalling \$32.1 million.

The consolidated entity's total liabilities increased by \$60.1 million to \$457.7 million.

The movement in total liabilities principally comprised:

- ▶ an increase in deferred income totalling \$52.5 million, largely due to the receipt of funds from the Victorian State Government to be spent on the upgrade of Marvel Stadium;
- ▶ an increase in trade and other payables totalling \$23.6 million; partially offset by
- ▶ a decrease in interest-bearing loans and borrowings of \$29.2 million primarily due to the repayment of external borrowings.

## Statements of Changes in Equity

As at 31 October 2021

	Consolidated	
	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
<b>Total equity at the beginning of the year</b>	230,449	238,827
Total comprehensive loss for the year	(29,487)	(8,378)
<b>Total equity at the end of the year</b>	<b>200,962</b>	<b>230,449</b>
<b>Equity attributable to:</b>		
Owners of the Company	192,388	223,398
Non-controlling interests	8,574	7,051
<b>Total equity at the end of the year</b>	<b>200,962</b>	<b>230,449</b>

The Statement of Changes in Equity is to be read in conjunction with the notes to the financial statements set out on pages 162 to 163.

## Statements of Cash Flows

For the year ended 31 October 2021

	Consolidated	
	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>		
Cash receipts in the course of operations	878,188	704,309
Cash payments in the course of operations	(738,286)	(642,591)
<b>Net cash from operating activities</b>	<b>139,902</b>	<b>61,718</b>
<b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>		
Interest received	1,256	2,450
Payments for property, plant and equipment	(27,346)	(21,954)
<b>Net cash used in investing activities</b>	<b>(26,090)</b>	<b>(19,504)</b>
<b>Cash flows from financing activities</b>		
Interest paid	(10,244)	(21,548)
Drawdown of external borrowings	90,000	18,090
Repayments of external borrowings	(116,800)	-
Payment of finance lease liabilities	(7,338)	(8)
<b>Net cash used in financing activities</b>	<b>(44,382)</b>	<b>(3,466)</b>
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents	69,430	38,748
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the financial year	223,469	184,721
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the financial year</b>	<b>292,899</b>	<b>223,469</b>

The Statement of Cash Flows is to be read in conjunction with the notes to the financial statements set out on pages 162 to 163.

### Discussion and Analysis of the Statements of Cash Flows

There was a net increase in cash holdings of the consolidated entity during the year totalling \$69.4 million.

The major movements in cash during the year included the following:

- ▶ funds provided by the operating activities for the year totalling \$139.9 million. The variance between this and the group's underlying operating loss of \$43.0 million is due to the favourable working capital movements through receipt of upfront funds from the Victorian State Government, lower trade and other receivables and higher trade payables;
- ▶ purchases of property, plant and equipment totalling \$27.3 million;
- ▶ drawdowns of external borrowings of \$90.0m; and
- ▶ repayment of external borrowings of \$116.8m.

## Notes to the Financial Statements

For the year ended 31 October 2021

### 1. Basis of Preparation of the Concise Financial Report

The concise financial report has been prepared in accordance with the Corporations Act 2001 and Accounting Standard AASB 1039 Concise Financial Reports. The financial statements and specific disclosures required by AASB 1039 have been derived from the consolidated entity's full financial report for the financial year. Other information included in the concise financial report is consistent with the consolidated entity's full financial report. The concise financial report does not, and cannot be expected to, provide as full an understanding of the financial performance, financial position and financing and investing activities of the consolidated entity as the full financial report, which is available upon request.

It has been prepared on the basis of historical costs and except where stated, does not take into account changing money values or fair values of non-current assets.

The accounting policies have been consistently applied by each entity in the consolidated entity and, except where there is a change in accounting policy (refer Note 3 for Revenue), are consistent with those of the previous year.

A full description of the accounting policies adopted by the consolidated entity may be found in the consolidated entity's full financial report.

The concise financial report is presented in Australian dollars.

### 2. Revenue

	Consolidated	
	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
<b>Revenue from operating activities</b>		
Broadcasting and AFL media	366,647	352,670
Commercial operations	252,036	194,481
Football operations	15,041	15,793
Game development	35,121	22,282
Other revenue	43,945	39,826
Revenue from JobKeeper Payment scheme	9,347	33,764
Contra advertising revenue	16,000	16,000
	<b>738,137</b>	<b>674,816</b>

### 3. Parent entity disclosures

As at, and throughout, the financial year ended 31 October 2021 the parent entity of the group was Australian Football League.

	Consolidated	
	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
<b>Result of the parent entity</b>		
Revenue for the period	655,217	599,755
Net financing expense	(3,611)	(14,377)
Expenses from operating activities	(655,355)	(562,439)
Profit/(loss) for the period	(3,749)	22,939
Other comprehensive income	-	-
<b>Total comprehensive income/ (loss)</b>	<b>(3,749)</b>	<b>22,939</b>
<b>Financial position of the parent entity at year end</b>		
Current assets	304,389	259,355
Total assets	674,047	635,397
Current liabilities	206,662	113,869
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>398,911</b>	<b>356,531</b>
<b>Total equity of the parent entity</b>		
Retained earnings	275,136	278,866
<b>Parent entity contingent liabilities</b>		
Refer to Note 4 for a full list of contingent liabilities held by the parent entity.		

### 4. Contingent liabilities

The Company has entered into an agreement with the AFL Players' Association Inc. for a period of six years commencing on 1 November 2016 whereby the Company has an obligation to assume liability for all amounts due to players of a club where the club has lost its licence to compete in the AFL Competition and is suspended from or loses its right to representation in the League. The amounts payable in these circumstances will be offset by any amounts payable to the players in respect of future employment as a player.

Borrower	Bank	Amount	Expiry
Essendon Football Club	NAB	\$4.0m	30 Nov 2022
Port Adelaide Football Club	Bank SA	\$5.0m	6 Dec 2022
GCFC Limited	NAB	\$1.19m	30 April 2022
Western Sydney Football Club Limited	NAB	\$1.53m	30 April 2022
Sydney Swans Ltd	NAB	\$1.705m	30 April 2022
Carlton Football Club	Westpac	\$5.0m	31 Jan 2023
Melbourne Football Club	Westpac	\$3.5m	31 Jan 2023
North Melbourne Football Club	Westpac	\$3.0m	31 Jan 2023
St Kilda Football Club	Westpac	\$6.75m	31 Jan 2023
Footscray Football Club	Westpac	\$4.55m	31 Jan 2023
Brisbane Bears-Fitzroy Football Club	Westpac	\$8.0m	31 Jan 2023

### 5. Events subsequent to balance date

The Directors note that the impacts of COVID-19 are ongoing. The risk of further outbreaks, new strains and Government restrictions may have a significant impact on the 2022 financial year as it did in 2020 and 2021.

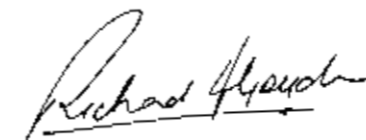
Other than the above, there has not arisen in the interval between the end of the financial year and the date of this report any item, transaction, or event of a material and unusual nature likely, in the opinion of the Directors of the Company, to affect significantly the operations of the Consolidated Entity, the results of those operations, or the state of affairs of the Consolidated Entity in future financial years.

## Directors' Declaration

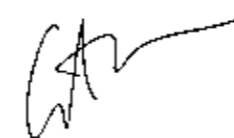
- In the opinion of the Directors of the Australian Football League:
  - The Consolidated Entity's financial statements and notes, set out on pages 159 to 162 are drawn up in accordance with the Corporations Act 2001, including:
    - giving a true and fair view of the Company's and Consolidated Entity's financial position as at 31 October 2021 and of their performance, for the financial year ended on that date; and
    - complying with Australian Accounting Standards and the Corporations Regulations 2001;
  - there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Company and the Consolidated Entities will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable.

Dated at Melbourne this 7th day of February 2022.

Signed in accordance with a resolution of the Directors:



Mr R J Goyder, AO  
Chairman



Mr G A McLachlan  
Director

## Independent Auditor's Report to the members of the Australian Football League

### Report on the audit of the Concise Financial Report

#### Opinion

We have audited the Concise Financial Report of the Australian Football League (the Company) and its controlled entities (the Consolidated Entity) as at 31 October 2021 and for the year ended on that date. The financial statements and related notes in the Concise Financial Report are derived from the audited financial report of the Consolidated Entity as at and for the year ended 31 October 2021 (the Audited Financial Report).

In our opinion, the accompanying Concise Financial Report, including the discussion and analysis of the Company, complies with Australian Accounting Standard 1039 Concise Financial Reports. The Concise Financial Report comprises:

- ▶ Consolidated statement of financial position as at 31 October 2021
- ▶ Consolidated statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income, Consolidated statement of changes in equity, and Consolidated statement of cash flows for the year then ended
- ▶ Discussion and analysis
- ▶ Related notes.

The Consolidated Entity consists of the Company and the entities it controlled at the year-end or from time to time during the financial year.

#### Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the Concise Financial Report section of our report.

We are independent of the Consolidated Entity in accordance with the Corporations Act 2001 and the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (including Independence Standards) (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the Concise Financial Report in Australia. We have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

#### Scope of the Concise Financial Report

The Concise Financial Report does not contain all the disclosures required by Australian Accounting Standards in the preparation of the Audited Financial Report. Reading the Concise Financial Report and this Auditor's Report thereon, therefore, is not a substitute for reading the Audited Financial Report and our auditor's report thereon.

#### The Audited Financial Report and our auditor's report thereon

We expressed an unmodified audit opinion on the Audited Financial Report in our auditor's report dated 7 February 2022.

#### Other Information

Other Information is financial and non-financial information in the Australian Football League's Annual Report which is provided in addition to the Concise Financial Report and this Auditor's Report. The Directors are responsible for the Other Information.

Our opinion on the Concise Financial Report does not cover the Other Information and, accordingly, we do not express an audit opinion or any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the Concise Financial Report, our responsibility is to read the Other Information. In doing so, we consider whether the Other Information is materially inconsistent with the Financial Report or our knowledge obtained in the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.

We are required to report if we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this Other Information, and based on the work we have performed on the Other Information that we obtained prior to the date of this Auditor's Report we have nothing to report.

#### Responsibilities of the Directors for the Concise Financial Report

The Directors are responsible for:

- ▶ preparing the Concise Financial Report in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards AASB 1039 Concise Financial Reports and the Corporations Act 2001
- ▶ implementing necessary internal control to enable the preparation of the Concise Financial Report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

#### Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the Concise Financial Report

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on whether the Concise Financial Report, including the discussion and analysis, in all material respects, complies with Australian Accounting Standards AASB 1039 Concise Financial Reports based on our procedures, which were conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standard ASA 810 Engagements to Report on Summary Financial Statements.



KPMG



Dean Waters

Partner

Melbourne

7 February 2022

## AFL Committees

#### AFL All-Australian and NAB AFL Rising Star Selectors

Gillon McLachlan (chair), Kevin Bartlett, Jude Bolton, Glen Jakovich, Chris Johnson, Cameron Ling, Matthew Richardson, Nick Riewoldt, Kevin Sheehan (NAB AFL Rising Star only), Warren Tredrea.

#### AFLW All-Australian and NAB AFLW Rising Star selectors

Steve Hocking (chair), Sarah Black, Courtney Cramey, Tim Harrington, Mel Hickey, Nicole Livingstone, Sharelle McMahan, Kelli Underwood, Josh Vanderloo, Shelley Ware.

#### AFL Audit and Risk Committee

Andrew Newbold (chair), Robin Bishop, Richard Goyder AO.

#### Australian Football Hall of Fame Selection Committee

Richard Goyder AO (chair), Tania Armstrong, Graham Cornes, Ross Glendinning, Karen Lyon, Paul Marsh, Alister Nicholson, Michael O'Loughlin, David Parkin, Mark Genge (statistics/history consultant), Patrick Keane (secretary).

#### AFL Competition Committee

Andrew Dillon (chair), Stephen Coniglio, Patrick Dangerfield, Chris Davies, Chris Fagan, Simon Garlick, Andrew Ireland, Laura Kane, Rob Kerr, Nicole Livingstone, Josh Mahoney, Brett Murphy, Peggy O'Neal, Brett Ratten, Justin Reeves, Alan Richardson, Kylie Rogers, Brett Rosebury, Brad Scott, Kylie Watson-Wheeler, Jacob Weitering, Simone Wilkie.

#### AFLW Competition Committee

Simone Wilkie (chair), Breanna Brock, Jess Burger, Trent Cooper, Michelle Cowan, Andrew Dillon, Alicia Eva, Brendon Gale, Bec Goddard, Laura Kane, Nicole Livingstone, Brett Murphy, Kate Roffey, Diana Taylor.

#### AFL Indigenous Advisory Council

Paul Briggs (co-chair), Helen Milroy (co-chair), Shaun Burgoyne, Xavier Clarke, Jason Glanville, Tanya Hosch, Gabrielle Trainor AO, Paul Vandenberg. Patrick Keane (secretary).

#### AFL Life Members' Nominations Committee

Gillon McLachlan (chair), Glenn McFarlane, David Parkin, Patrick Keane (secretary).

#### AFL Medical Director

Dr Michael Makdissi

#### AFL Remuneration Committee

Richard Goyder, Paul Bassat, Robin Bishop, Sarah Fair, Gillon McLachlan, Simone Wilkie.

#### AFL SportsReady Ltd Board

The Hon Justin Madden AM (chair), James Montgomery (CEO), Josh Cubillo, Steve Drummy, Rod Jackson, Madeline Penny, Colin Pidd, Ben Smith, Sandra Sweeney, Duean White, Simone Wilkie AO.

#### AFL Tribunal/Appeals Board

- ▶ **Tribunal/Appeal Board Chairs:** David Jones, Ross Howie, Geoff Giudice AO, Murray Kellam QC.
- ▶ **Tribunal Jury Members:** Wayne Henwood, Jason Johnson, Stephen Jurica, Richard Loveridge, Stewart Loewe, Peter Matera, David Neitz, David Pittman, Paul Williams, Shane Wakelin.
- ▶ **Appeal Board Panel Members:** David Jones, Ross Howie, Geoff Giudice AO, Murray Kellam QC, Wayne Henwood, Stephen Jurica, Richard Loveridge.
- ▶ **AFL Tribunal Counsel:** Jeff Gleeson QC, Nick Pane QC, Renee Enbom SC, Andrew Woods.
- ▶ **Secretary:** Tom Gastin
- ▶ **Match Review Officer:** Michael Christian
- ▶ **Grievance Tribunal:** Geoff Giudice AO (chair), Murray Kellam AO QC (deputy chair), David Maddocks, Michael Moncrieff, Kevin Power.

#### Jim Stynes Community Award Selection Panel

Sam Ludbey-Stynes, Luke Darcy, Andrew Dillon, Jude Donnelly, Sarah Fair, Neil Mitchell, Brett Murphy, Jennifer Watt.



▶ **CHRISTIAN PETRACCA**  
**MELBOURNE**  
2021 PREMIERSHIP & NORM SMITH MEDALLIST



**KATE LUTKINS**  
**BRISBANE LIONS**  
2021 PREMIERSHIP & BEST ON GROUND



**THIS IS** *US*

