



**WOMEN PARTICIPATING
AND LEADING IN SPORT**

ANNUAL REPORT 2020 - 2021



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WSA PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It gives me great pleasure to present the Women Sport Australia (WSA) 2020-2021 Annual Report.

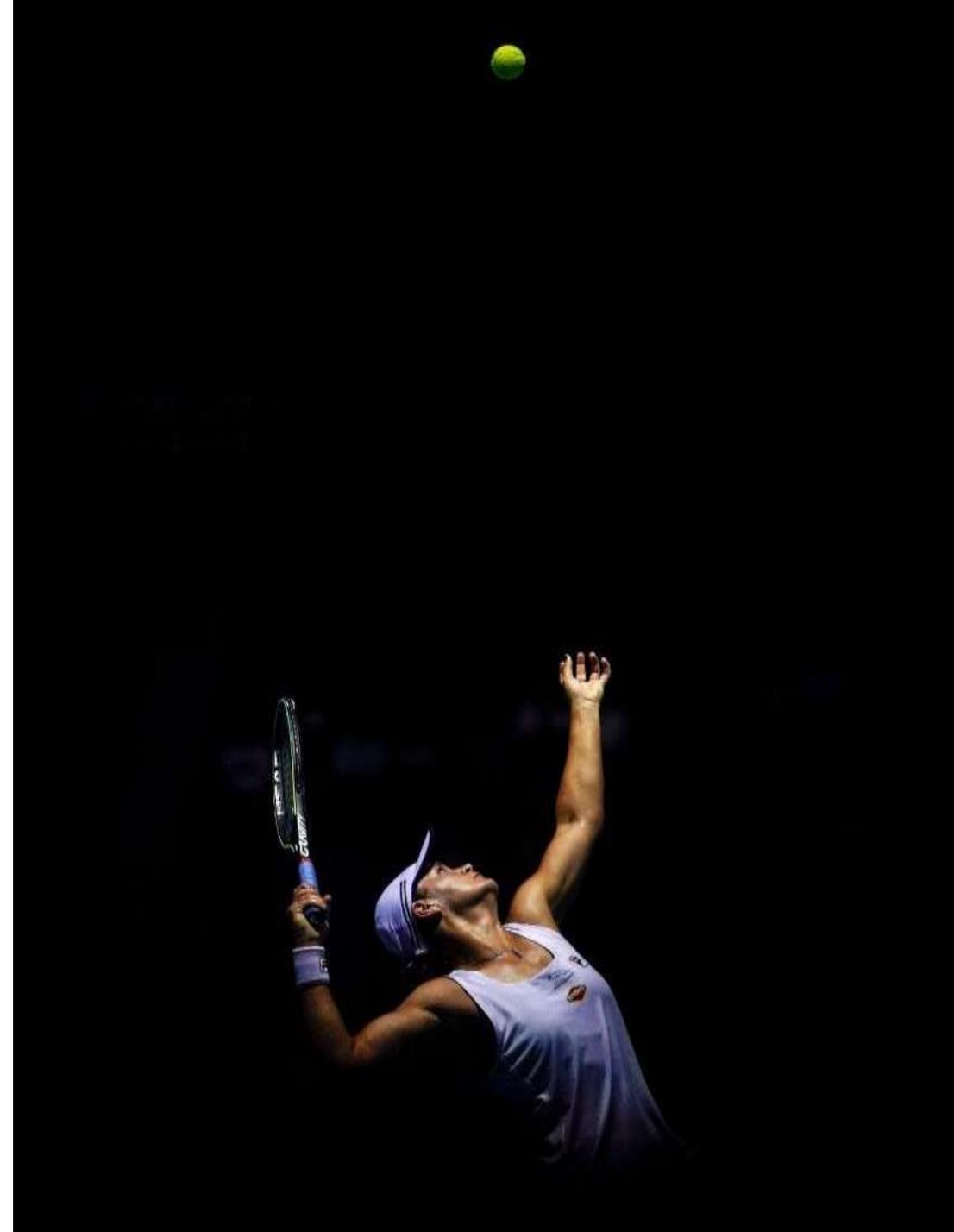
I assumed the role of WSA President on Wednesday 30 September 2020 following in the very capable footsteps of Carol Fox and her five-year tenure at the helm of the Board.

I want to thank Carol for not only the enormous contribution she has made to WSA over the years, but also for her mentorship and encouragement which has seen me grow from a WSA Mentee to WSA President.

Upon taking the reins of the Board, it was important to review our strategy and ensure all Board Directors were on the same page with what we were working towards.

We held two half-day strategy sessions via Zoom; the first session focused on the bigger picture of what we want to work to achieve in the next five years and the second session looked at what we wanted to achieve in the next 12 months.

Our overarching vision is to be the peak independent body for women and girls in sport in Australia, dedicated to making sport equitable for all.





The key strategic pillars that will enable us to bring this vision to life are:

ADVOCACY & RELATIONSHIPS

- We are connected and engage with the decision-makers to help influence change.
- We have a strong and connected community of members who value our programs and services.

PROGRAMS & EVENTS

- Our tailored programs and events have an enduring impact for sport and those involved.

PROFILE

- We strive to ensure women in sport are celebrated and promoted, regardless of the sport.
- We are aligned with partners who champion gender equality.

ORGANISATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

- We are a financially sustainable organisation, underpinned by good governance.

Over the last 12 months we have made significant strides in each of these areas which will ensure we move closer to our vision.

In **ADVOCACY & RELATIONSHIPS** work has been undertaken to review the membership model and a new Gender Equity Pledge strategy has been established for individuals and organisations.

In **PROGRAMS & EVENTS** the Women in Sport Photo Action Awards (#WISPAA) competition was held for a third year and the Women in Sport Mentoring Program moved online and was made more affordable thanks to the support of Australian fashion brand Shona Joy.

In **PROFILE** our media and social media presence has continued to grow and we have established key strategic and corporate partnerships.

We have also ensured that all we do is underpinned by **ORGANISATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY** by taking steps to conduct a governance review and update the constitution.

I would like to thank our board for all their dedication:

Rebecca Read – Deputy Chair
Tamatha Harding – Secretary
David Bond – Treasurer
Iain Roy – Board Director
Isaak Dury – Board Director
Samantha Culbert – Board Director
Cherie Nicholl – Board Director
Jessica Ivers – Board Director
Hanna Heptinstall – Board Director
Ruth Holdaway – Board Director

Being a part of a volunteer working Board is a huge commitment which is juggled by all directors in amongst full-time jobs, families, partners and other obligations. I am truly thankful for the time and effort put in by each WSA Board Director as we work together to ensure sport is equitable for all Australian women and girls.

I would also like to thank those who have stepped off the Board over the past 12 months:

Carol Fox – Former President
Alison Buxton – Former Secretary and Board Member
Stefan Grun – Former Board Member

It's my pleasure to propose to the Board that Carol Fox be voted in as a Life Member at our upcoming AGM. This Life Membership will recognise Carol's dedication and commitment to the board during her five years as President, most notably leading a rebrand from Australian Womensport and Recreation Australia to Women Sport Australia.

I look forward to continuing to build on the great work that has been achieved over the last 12 months as we take action to create equity for girls and women in sport so we can reach the point where it is a given rather than a goal.

Gen Simmons



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Advocacy and Relationships: The WSA Equity Pledge

The WSA Equity Pledge was borne out of a review of our membership program. WSA realises it needs more hands if we want to impact participation, policy, representation, and leadership in sports in sustainable and measurable ways.

The WSA vision is clear: create meaningful change so that all girls and women have equitable access to physical activity and sport, to unlock limitless possibilities in their lives.

Why now?

In 1987, the Women and Sport unit was developed to increase participation and community awareness of the importance of physical activity to females. In 1993 only 5 percent of televised sports news covered women's sports. This was virtually the same percentage as in 1989.

In 1996 statistics compiled by the Australian Sports Commission indicated that 'women have only had access to an average of 25 per cent of events and that they have comprised an average of 23 per cent of Australian teams'. While the 2000 Sydney Olympics was deemed a new moment for women's sport in Australia, crowned with Cathy Freeman's lighting of the cauldron and gold medal, it was seemingly short-lived.



WSA was established in 2005 as a result of these moments. While financial support is critical for our organisation, there is an easier way to support us, it's by supporting our mission via the pledge.

The pledge also brings together several other organisations that are operating in the women in sport space to unite and amplify the work that is being done.

Progress

We launched the pledge in late August 2021 and within 1 week of launch, the number of pledges already has outnumbered WSA member numbers. The pledge dovetails into our broader strategy of helping unite the various organisations all pushing in the same direction for women's sport in Australia and while we have only just begun it's exciting to know we have such great support behind us.



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Advocacy and Relationships: Partnerships



As an independent non for profit organisation Women Sport Australia relies upon the generosity of individuals, communities and corporations to help support us to run and grow our programs, continue our work in advocating for women in sport and assist WSA in reaching its goal to make sport available and equitable for all.

During the last year we welcomed Shona Joy as a new corporate partner. Off the back of the launch of their new SJ Sport collection they committed an ongoing donation of \$5 for every garment sold. This campaign was an enormous success, with a total donation of \$20,308,50 received by WSA so far.

The funds from this partnership were used to promote and grow the Women in Sport Mentoring Program. Part of the funds went to lowering the course costs for the 2021 sessions, and the rest enabled us to offer The Shona Joy Scholarship, a fully paid mentoring program package for one female working in sport in each State and Territory.

WSA welcomed its first official media partner, News Corp Australia, in April 2021, as part of the annual WISPAA program, now in its 3rd year. Their support has already enabled us to reach a broader audience and raise awareness of WISPAA, as well as the profile of WSA. Combined with the ongoing sponsorship from ISPT we have been able to increase the number of entries and raise the profile of women's sport in the media and beyond. We are beyond grateful for their ongoing support and commitment to WSA and WISPAA.

WSA would like to acknowledge and thank all the individuals who continue to support Women Sport Australia. These individual donations enable us to continue our work and grow as an association and influencer of change.

PROGRAMS & EVENTS: WOMEN IN SPORT PHOTO ACTION AWARDS #WISPAA

#WISPAA, in its third year in 2021, has again been a flagpole initiative highlighting the skill, strength and athleticism of Australia's sportswomen in action.

The WSA Board anticipated a drop in entries because the eligibility period through which images could be captured for entry had multiple COVID-19 lockdowns resulting in cancellation of, or inability for photographers to attend sporting events.

Entries were down on the prior year. 2021 saw 313 images submitted by 88 photographers across the Amateur and Professional categories.



News Corp came onboard as our official media partner for 2021 and this provided an incredible boost to the exposure that the competition garnered with editorial support both in print and online across the metro mastheads, The Advertiser, The Herald Sun, The Daily Telegraph, and the Brisbane Courier Mail.

Stories ran across these publications to support the launch of #WISPAA, the launch of the People's Choice Award, which appeared exclusively on the News Corp masthead digital platforms and coverage of the winning images. Many of these stories were picked up by non-News Corp media, including The Guardian, ensuring our reach in 2021 was the greatest thus far.

Our partnership with ISPT which provides the opportunity for an in-person event to celebrate the winners at Foys has been maintained. The project team was optimistic that the in-person event would be possible, however over the course of the multiple lockdowns this has not yet been possible in 2021. An event is still in consideration pending lockdown status through to the end of the year..

The team of Directors that worked on the 2021 #WISPAA included new Directors and the work of the previous two years provided an ideal template to enable delivery of the 2021 competition which can also be built upon into the future.

#WISPAA 2021 was privileged to have the support Lisa Alexander as the #WISPAA Ambassador and an expert panel of judges who gave their time to review and judge the entries. (Federal Minister for Sport, the Hon. Richard Colbeck, multi-award-winning journalist Samantha Lane, Cassie Trotter, Director of Photography at Getty Images and Selina Steele, Women's Sport Editor at News Corp.

PROGRAMS & EVENTS: WOMEN IN SPORT PHOTO ACTION AWARDS #WISPAA

2021 WISPAA Winners and Runners Up

Professional Winner – ‘The Leaning Tower of Tayla – Image by Michael Willson - Tayla Harris takes a towering mark over (L-R) Eleanor Brown, Naomi Ferres, Georgia Gee, Ellyse Gamble, Katie Loynes (AFL)

Professional Runner Up - ‘Grace and Grunt’ - Image by John Rohloff – Noemie Fox (C1)

Professional Runner Up - ‘Caught in the Webb - Image by Jason McCawley – Courtney Webb (BBL)

Amateur Winner – ‘Tokyo – Let’s go! – Image by Casey Sims – Liz Clay (Track & Field)

Amateur Runner Up – ‘Fingertip Control – Image by Stephen Tremain – Bella Nasser (OAN Uni 7s Rugby Union)

Amateur Runner Up – ‘Don’t Look – Image by Fred Etter – Nina Kennedy (Pole Vault)

2020 WISPAA Webinar

Given the challenges caused by COVID-19 in trying to replicate the hugely successful physical exhibition program for WISPAA in 2019, WSA was lucky to be supported by our exhibition partner ISPT to stage a highly successful online webinar.

The webinar, held on Wednesday 16 September 2020, presented the 30 finalist images to over 100 interested WSA members and other event participants. Guests were treated to a free virtual showcase of these images, expertly hosted by award-winning journalist Sam Lane. Sam was joined by 2020 #WISPAA Professional winner Michael Willson and 2020 #WISPAA Amateur winner Casey Sims, who discussed aspects of their winning images as well as their broader views on the images and competition. We were also fortunate to have leading Getty Images photographer Ryan Pierse provide technical commentary of many of the images and WSA President, Gen Simmons, give an overview of the impact of the WISPAA competition since its inception.





PROGRAMS & EVENTS: WOMEN IN SPORT MENTORING PROGRAM

The WSA Mentoring Program Workshop is facilitated by Bron Parry, Dynamix Australia, and former WSA President Carol Fox, Carol Fox & Co.

Mentees attend a half-day professional workshop focusing on being a confident leader, the art of networking, the role of boards and committees and career pathways.

Following the workshop, mentees usually attend a networking event to practice their newfound skills. The networking events bring together prominent leaders in sport in the various states where workshops are held.

Mentees are matched with highly experienced, well regarded sports industry mentors whose specialisation and skills are aligned with the mentees aspirations and goals for follow-up one-on-one sessions.

Past and present mentees and mentors have gained significant career benefits and rewarding experiences from participating in WSA's Mentoring Program.

Due to the continued impacts of COVID-19 this year, the program was facilitated online and networking events were unable to be progressed. We look forward to being able to run face to face sessions again when it is safe to do so.



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Support from Shona Joy

This year we were delighted to have Shona Joy partner with WSA to assist in supporting women working in sport or aspiring to work in sport. Thanks to Shona Joy, the WSA Mentoring Program was able to be provided at a reduced cost, making career development opportunities for women more readily available.

WSA and Shona Joy also launched the inaugural WSA Shona Joy Scholarship which fully subsidised the seven recipients to participate in the WSA Mentoring Program.

A motorsport driver, a sports tech startup CEO, a rowing coach, a football match official, a sports podcast founder, a basketball club treasurer and a remote sports administrator were the inaugural recipients of the WSA Shona Joy Scholarship.

Program Snapshot

Whilst COVID-19 continued to challenge the ability to gather in person, WSA is proud to have facilitated the following programs online:

- Thursday 19 November 2020, 6 participants
- Friday 4 December 2020, 14 participants
- Friday 14 May 2021, 7 participants
- Thursday 22 July 2021, 13 participants

Next Up

Planning is underway to continue to run WSA Mentoring Programs across the country with the hope to connect again in person soon.



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PROFILE: TRADITIONAL MEDIA

Our traditional media exposure continued to grow in 2021 with WSA being approached as a voice of authority for comment about Women in Sport issues at several events, within the media and via podcasts.

A key highlight over the last 12 months has been a partnership with News Corp for the Women in Sport Photo Action Awards resulting in mainstream media coverage for the competition.

This coverage featured pieces on the competition launch, the #WISPAA finalists and the #WISPAA winners shared across News Corp publications including the Herald Sun, the Daily Telegraph and news.com.au.



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THEGUARDIAN.COM

The Guardian
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PROFILE: SOCIAL MEDIA



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Social Media continues to be used by WSA to increase the visibility and strengthen our programs by connecting, engaging and building relations online with WSA's wide audience.

During the ongoing pandemic, remaining connected virtually has been ever more important than ever, especially as sport began to return in Australia and around the world.

There's been great growth on our four social media channels - Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram, with followers increasing to over 23,000 across the platforms. All channels saw a steady increase of follower growth and engagement. Facebook engagement averaged over 50,000 and Instagram reach averaged almost 25,000 over the past 12 months.

#WISPAA continued to be the highest engaging content with over 130,000 impressions on content over the entry and judging period. The competition also saw increased engagement and conversation with the photographers and athletes involved. Social media posts garnered over 700 organic click-throughs to the website.

In addition to our social media platforms WSA continued the partnership with WiSP Sports with the Beyond Balls podcast series. Created and produced by Ella Smith and Georgina Mellon there are now 18 episodes available featuring discussions with the likes of Chyloe Kurdas, Danielle Warby and Belle Brockhoff.

Soon, we'll look at engaging a social media intern to assist with creating more content, and reaching more people everyday.