

Netball Strengthens Focus on Player Retention Through National Research and Action Plan.



Player retention has been identified as a key strategic and participation priority for Netball Australia, with new national research providing important insights into why players stay involved in the sport, why they leave, and what the netball community can do to encourage lifelong participation.

As Australia's largest participation sport for women and girls, netball continues to provide significant physical, social and wellbeing benefits for hundreds of thousands of Australians each year. However, like many sports, participation declines during adolescence and early adulthood, highlighting the need for an evidence-based and coordinated approach to retaining participants throughout their netball journey.

To better understand these participation patterns, Netball Australia commissioned a comprehensive national research project examining participation, retention, dropout and re-engagement. The research conducted player registration analysis, surveys of more than 4,600 current and former players, interviews with participants who had left the sport, and discussions with clubs achieving high player retention rates.

The findings reinforce that retaining players is about far more than simply providing opportunities to play. Positive experiences, strong social connections, quality coaching, welcoming club environments and flexible participation options all play a critical role in encouraging people to remain involved in netball, it is the people that matter the most.

The research identified four key ingredients that consistently influence long-term participation:

- Friends – strong social connections and positive team environments.
- Fun – enjoyable and quality experiences.
- Flexibility – participation options that fit changing lifestyles and commitments.
- Belonging – environments where participants feel welcomed, valued and included.

These findings reinforce that player retention is a shared responsibility across every level of the netball system and requires a holistic, whole of sport approach.

Netball Strengthens Focus on Player Retention Through National Research and Action Plan.



In response, Netball Australia has developed a national Player Retention Project Plan that outlines a phased implementation approach focused on six strategic priorities:

- Strengthening governance
- Monitoring and rewarding retention performance
- Enhancing coach development
- Creating club environments that foster belonging
- Developing flexible participation pathways
- Strengthening family engagement

Together, these initiatives will support Member Organisations, Associations and Clubs to deliver consistently positive participant experiences while building stronger, more inclusive and sustainable netball communities.

Player retention has now been identified as a key participation priority that will inform future planning, investment and resource development across the sport. By embedding player retention into strategic decision-making and supporting clubs with practical tools and evidence-based approaches, Netball Australia aims to create environments where more participants choose to stay involved in the sport throughout their lives.

This work aligns with Netball Australia's commitment to growing participation and ensuring netball remains a sport where everyone feels welcome, connected and able to participate in a way that suits their goals and stage of life.

The accompanying Player Retention Research Fact Sheet provides a summary of the research findings and outlines practical actions that can be taken across the netball community to improve retention and support lifelong participation.

Together, we can create positive experiences that keep more people playing, connected and thriving in netball for life.