

Media Statement

Outer East Football Netball

Outer East Football Netball is aware of an article published in *The Age* which raised concerns about the culture and safety of women's football within community sport, including references to clubs within our competition.

We acknowledge that conversations about inclusion, cultural safety and the lived experiences of women in sport are both important and necessary. We respect the voices of women who have shared their perspectives and recognise that ongoing reflection and improvement are essential to ensuring community sport remains welcoming and safe for everyone.

Outer East Football Netball has a long-standing commitment to women's participation and leadership across football and netball. Of the 20 senior clubs in our competitions, 14 currently field women's football teams. Our league also includes 99 netball teams and 34 junior girls' football teams, reflecting strong and growing female participation across the region.

We are proud to be a Women & Girls Chartered League, comprising 18 AFL Victoria Women & Girls Chartered clubs. Gender equity and inclusion are embedded priorities within our governance, planning and day-to-day operations.

Our *Women of the Outer East* (WOTOE) Advisory Group plays an important role in guiding initiatives that support and celebrate women across our football and netball communities. This includes delivering our annual WOTOE Networking and Leadership Lunch in partnership with Yarra Valley Water and Eastern Health.

Our Gender Equity and Inclusion Plan is reviewed regularly to ensure it remains relevant and responsive. In 2026, we will further this work through the introduction of a Women's Forum, designed to gather feedback directly from women across our clubs and communities and ensure their voices continue to inform future direction.

Thornton Eildon Football Club, which was referenced in the article, has a positive and collaborative relationship with Outer East Football Netball, including our support in securing recent Federal Government funding for facility upgrades that will benefit all participants.

As noted in the article, cultural change takes time, patience and ongoing conversation. Outer East Football Netball remains committed to listening, learning and working collaboratively with clubs, players and stakeholders to ensure our competitions continue to evolve in a positive and inclusive way.