



2026 - 2032 NATIONAL PARTICIPATION PLAN



**FENCING FOR
EVERYONE**





ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

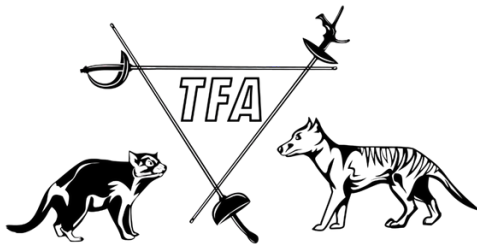
The Australian Fencing Federation (AFF) acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the Custodians of the lands on which we live, train, and compete.

We recognise their continuing connection to Country - to lands, waters and skies - and to culture, community and kinship, and we pay our respects to Elders past and present.

We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have cared for and maintained enduring connections to Country for tens of thousands of years, and acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded. We value and celebrate the significant contributions Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples make to Australian communities and to sport, and we are committed to supporting a fencing community in which First Nations peoples are welcomed, respected, and able to participate and belong.

INTRODUCTION

With the support of the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) and in collaboration with representatives from each Member State and Territory organisation, the Australian Fencing Federation has developed a whole-of-sport participation plan for 2026 - 2032.



The plan aligns with the 2025 to 2028 Australian Fencing Federation Strategic Plan, as well as the Australian Sport Participation Strategy, PlayWell.

This plan outlines a structured approach to overcoming participation challenges, leveraging existing strengths, and embedding long-term sustainability to ensure fencing thrives nationally.



Australian Government
Australian Sports Commission

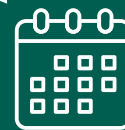
**PLAY
WELL**

National club support framework
Club Community of Practice
Volunteer micro-credentials and digital badges



Club
Capacity &
Sustainability
Reform

National calendar framework
State coordination protocol
Participation-focused event models



Calendar &
Competition
Reform

Redesign of national coaching framework
Coaching Community of Practice (CoP)
Workforce sustainability strategy



Coaching
Pathway
Reform

Intersectional inclusion strategy
Neurodivergent participation positioning
National para fencing program



Participation
& Inclusion
Expansion

ONE PAGE NATIONAL PARTICIPATION STRATEGY

National beginner conversion model
U10 / U12 engagement model
Cadets to 18+ transition strategy



Recruitment
to Retention
Funnel
Overhaul

Adult &
40+ Growth
Strategy

National "Fencing for Life" campaign
Veterans & masters programs



Regional
Equity &
Network
Development



Regional cluster model
Hybrid competition access

Digital
Education &
Systems
Simplification



National digital learning hub
Microcourses for coaching, refereeing, armoury and more
Systems simplification review

THE AUSTRALIAN SPORT'S COMMISSION'S PARTICIPATION STRATEGY

PLAYWELL

Our vision: Everyone has a place in sport.

Our mission: We will create safe, welcoming, inclusive and fun sporting experiences.

We will achieve this through six priority areas

1.	Empowering people and organisations	Building the capability of people and organisations to meet the needs of everyone involved in sport.
2.	Driving lifelong involvement	Foster a sporting environment that enables positive lifelong involvement in sport.
3.	Activating places and spaces	Creating, improving, activating and better managing places and spaces to ensure everyone can have safe and enjoyable sporting experiences.
4.	Building connections	Creating a connected and collaborative sport ecosystem that supports all organisations to provide quality sporting experiences.
5.	Equitable access	Prioritising equity and choice to ensure all Australians can access sport.
6.	Transforming culture	Transforming the culture of sport in Australia to create an environment where everyone can access safe, inclusive, welcoming and fun experiences.

These priority areas will be pursued across each of the key elements of the sport ecosystem

 <p>People The people that participate in, facilitate and deliver sporting experiences.</p>	 <p>Places The places where sporting experiences take place.</p>	 <p>Partners The organisations which do, or can, support the delivery of quality sporting experiences.</p>	 <p>Programs The activities that make up sporting experiences.</p>
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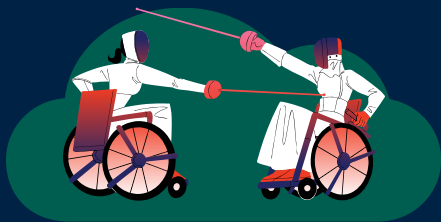
All enabled by

 <p>Diversity and inclusion Ensuring diversity and inclusion are central to the delivery of each activity.</p>	 <p>Technology and digital Embracing technology and a digital first philosophy.</p>	 <p>Yarning Listening to the community and taking a proactive approach to advocating for sport.</p>	 <p>Data and measurement Developing data and measurement approaches and practices.</p>
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Delivered through a deliberately collaborative approach to implementation, supported by annual planning and review.

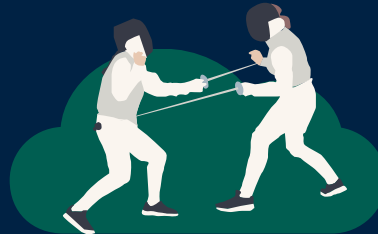
OUR ALIGNMENT WITH THE PLAYWELL STRATEGY

The Australian Fencing Federation's 2026-2032 Participation Plan is directly aligned with the **Australian Sports Commission's Play Well Strategy** and its vision of increasing the number and diversity of Australians participating in sport. This plan supports Play Well by prioritising:



Inclusive participation

Expanding access for underrepresented groups, including women and girls, culturally diverse communities, people with disability, LGBTQIA+SB participants, neurodivergent participants, regional communities, and older adults.



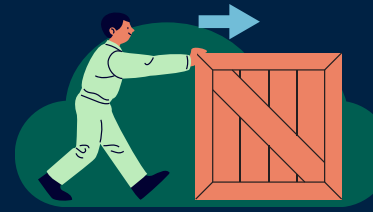
Quality experiences

Strengthening club capability, coaching development, and safeguarding practices to ensure positive, welcoming, and safe environments.



Workforce sustainability

Supporting volunteers, coaches, and officials through education, clearer pathways, and reduced administrative burden.



Reducing barriers to participation

Addressing affordability, venue access, equipment costs, and calendar coordination to make fencing more accessible.



Lifelong engagement

Developing flexible pathways that support entry, retention, and re-engagement across all life stages.

Through a whole-of-sport approach, this plan shifts fencing toward a balanced model that values participation alongside performance, ensuring sustainable growth and community impact.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE AUSTRALIAN FENCING FEDERATION 2025 to 2028 STRATEGIC PLAN

The 2026-2032 National Participation Plan directly advances the priorities outlined in the Australian Fencing Federation Strategic Plan 2025 - 2028. It operationalises the Federation's vision through a participation-led, whole-of-sport approach that strengthens clubs, supports workforce sustainability and expands inclusive growth. This plan supports each of the AFF's Strategic Pillars:



Fencing for Everyone

The Participation Plan expands inclusive entry points, strengthens beginner-to-member pathways, grows adult and veteran engagement, develops para-fencing nationally, and embeds intersectional inclusion strategies. It reinforces lifelong participation and welcoming club environments across Australia.



Excellence in Governance and Safe Sport

By supporting clubs to better engage with national systems, strengthening safeguarding education, and improving transparency and communication, the plan contributes to stronger governance practices and safer environments at community level.



Growth Through Development and Innovation

The plan complements the development of clear pathways for athletes, coaches and officials by reforming coaching frameworks, introducing digital education resources, supporting workforce pipelines and exploring new competition and delivery models that enhance sustainability.



Connection to Community and Country

Through regional support networks, school engagement, culturally inclusive practices, para-fencing development and alignment with reconciliation commitments, the plan strengthens fencing's contribution to communities across metropolitan and regional Australia.

THE CURRENT STATE OF PARTICIPATION IN FENCING IN AUSTRALIA

31.5% of participants identify as female

The Australian fencing community comprises approximately 3,000 connected participants (coaches, officials, and athletes) across seven member organisations - Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria, the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Queensland, and Tasmania.

The AFF has begun establishing a coordinated national para fencing pathway, connecting emerging state-based programs and identifying key development opportunities to support growth.

39% of participants are aged seventeen or under

The AFF transitioned to using a new member management system - JustFence - from the beginning of the 2026 (Jan-Dec) membership cycle. The AFF has included optional questions for members to indicate their diversity characteristics. The questions were worded in line with the ASC's **Data Charter**.

- Not all member organisations use JustFence, with some organisations remaining with Revolutionise Sport, Tidy HQ, and Assemble for now.
- When member organisations were asked to provide their diversity characteristics in late 2025:
 - Five did not provide an option during the registration process for members to identify as LGBTQIA+SB or CALD
 - Three did not provide an option during the registration process for members to identify as living with disability or Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

9% of participants are Veterans (aged forty or over)

CHALLENGES FOR PARTICIPATION



Venue & Operational Constraints

- A lack of affordable, consistent venues
- Limited piste space
- Armoury access and storage
- Small coaching teams
- Volunteer burnout
- Admin load falling on 1 - 2 people



Recruitment to Retention Funnel Gaps

- Effective promotion of classes
- Converting trials into memberships
- Keeping people engaged past weeks 3 - 6
- Junior drop-off into 18+



Limited Training Frequency

- 1 - 3 evenings per week for many clubs
- Minimal daytime programming
- Limited flexibility for delivery



Systems & Governance Engagement

Uptake challenges around:

- JustFence (membership system)
- Game Plan (governance diagnostics)
- Some clubs feel under-supported in using systems.
- Clubs report feeling that the requirements of using national systems outweigh the benefits.



Participation & Inclusion Barriers

Recurring concerns around:

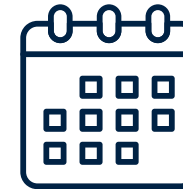
- Cost of equipment and travel
- Transport (especially regional)
- Veterans perceived as less important
- Cultural inclusion and gender diversity
- Disability access
- Neurodivergent support
- Psychological safety



Regional Isolation

Especially outside metro centres:

- Harder to access competitions
- Harder to access coaching development
- Limited peer networks
- Travel cost barrier



Competition Calendar Frustration

- Late announcement of national tournament dates
- States waiting on nationals before releasing their own calendars
- Impacts planning, affordability, and participation

FENCING'S POINT OF DIFFERENCE

Combines physical activity with strategic and tactical thinking

Adaptable to a wide range of fitness levels, body types and abilities

Inclusive entry points across ages and life stages

Builds confidence, focus, resilience and problem-solving skills

Individual participation within supportive club communities

Offers lifelong participation, from junior programs to veterans fencing

Clear and flexible pathways for social, recreational and competitive involvement



OPPORTUNITIES AND STRATEGIC PROGRAMS (2026-2032)

The 2026-2032 opportunity is to:

Rebalance from performance-dominant culture to a whole-of-sport ecosystem

Move from volunteer strain to structured support

Move from fragmented state initiatives to connected national systems

Move from teen-heavy participation to lifelong fencing

Club Capacity & Sustainability Reform

Impact: Reduces admin load falling on 1 - 2 people and addresses burnout.

National Club Support Framework

- Develop a Club Sustainability Toolkit (venues, budgeting, volunteer load mapping)
- Templates for timetables, beginner funnels, membership conversion
- Shared resource library (policies, marketing assets, sponsorship packs)

Club Community of Practice (CoP)

- Quarterly national online forums
- Regional cluster groups (metro + regional pairing)
- Topic-based sessions: volunteer burnout, armoury, beginner funnels
- Peer mentoring between established and emerging clubs

Volunteer Micro-Credentials

Short digital modules in:

- Club admin basics
- Tournament management
- Social media & promotion
- Armoury 101

Recognised digital badges



OPPORTUNITIES AND STRATEGIC PROGRAMS (2026-2032)

Recruitment to Retention Funnel

Overhaul

Impact: Strengthens weak points in Weeks 3 - 6 and post-junior drop-off.

National Beginner Conversion Model

- Standardised 6 - week intro structure
- Week 3 retention intervention resources
- “First Competition Experience” playbook
- Implement ‘buddy system’ for first time competitors
- Conversion scripts and follow-up templates

Cadets to 18+ Transition Strategy

- Youth leadership pathways
- Social fencing leagues
- Uni club partnerships
- Flexible membership categories

U10 / U12

Engagement Model

- Modified competition formats
- National U10/U12 event framework (age-appropriate, fun-focused)
- Parent education resources
- School-to-club bridge strategy
- AusFence program included in Sporting Schools

Adult & 40+ Growth Strategy

Impact: Diversifies membership beyond the teenage peak.

National “Fencing for Life” Campaign

Target 25 - 45 and 40+ markets

Position fencing as:

- Strategic
- Brain-engaging
- Physically adaptable
- Social

Veterans & Masters Programming

- Dedicated Masters events
- Social leagues
- Flexible training formats
- Recognition pathways



OPPORTUNITIES AND STRATEGIC PROGRAMS (2026-2032)

Regional Equity & Network Development

Impact: Addresses isolation, travel costs, and limited pathways.



Regional Cluster Model

- Regional competition circuits
- Shared coaching visits
- Equipment pooling models
- Online peer networks

Hybrid Competition Access

- Livestream and digital referee education
- Shared officiating development
- Travel subsidy advocacy framework

Participation & Inclusion Expansion

Impact: Aligns directly with Play Well inclusion principles.

Intersectional Inclusion Strategy

- Gender diversity guidance
- Gender Policy
- Disability inclusion framework
- Cultural inclusion toolkit
- Psychological safety training

National Parafencing Program

- Formalise pathway
- Connect state initiatives
- Equipment access plan
- Coach education for adaptive delivery

Neurodivergent Participation Positioning

- Position fencing as:
 - Pattern-based
 - Strategic
 - Focus-oriented
 - Self-paced learning
- Sensory-friendly training guidelines
- Coach education modules

OPPORTUNITIES AND STRATEGIC PROGRAMS (2026-2032)

Coaching Pathway Reform

Impact: Responds to QoE coach dissatisfaction and cultural HP imbalance.

Review & Redesign of National Coaching Framework

Clear multi-tier pathway:

- Community coach
- Development coach
- Performance coach

Reduced barriers to entry

Modular digital learning

Coaching CoP

- National coaching roundtables
- Mentoring networks
- Themed workshops (neurodivergent, para inclusion, beginner retention)

Workforce Sustainability Strategy

- Recruitment campaigns
- Coach retention surveys
- Clear progression map

Digital Education & Systems

Simplification

Impact: Addresses overwhelm and “requirements outweigh benefits” sentiment.

National Digital Learning Hub

Micro-courses for:

- Coaching
- Refereeing
- Armoury
- Tournament management
- Club administration
- Marketing & media
- Inclusion & safeguarding

Systems Simplification Review

- Improve JustFence usability if community continues to face use challenges
- Support clubs with Game Plan utilisation
- Create “Why this matters” guidance
- Reduce compliance burden where possible

Calendar & Competition Reform

Impact: Reduces affordability and planning barriers.

National Calendar Framework

- Earlier publication targets
- Locked annual windows
- Multi-year indicative calendar

State Coordination Protocol

- Nationals published in advance
- States release calendars within 4 weeks

Participation-Focused Event Models

- Social tournaments
- Short-format competitions
- Regional circuits



HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS

The National Play Well Plan will be monitored through a combination of participation data, workforce indicators, quality-of-experience measures and system engagement metrics. Success will be measured not only by growth in numbers, but by the strength, sustainability and inclusivity of fencing across Australia.

Workforce Sustainability	Club & System Capability	Participation & Growth	Inclusion & Access	Recruitment & Retention
Growth in accredited coaches, referees and volunteers	Increased uptake and use of national systems	Year-on-year growth in total registered members	Development and implementation of the national para-fencing pathway	Improved trial/course-to-member conversion rates
Increased participation in digital education modules	Participation in Communities of Practice	Growth in adult and 40+ participation	Increased diversity representation across clubs	Reduced drop-off between Weeks 3 - 6 of beginner programs
Improved coach and official experience scores (ASC benchmarking)	Improved governance engagement through Game Plan and integrity frameworks	Increased female and gender-diverse participation	Positive psychological safety and belonging indicators	Increased retention from junior to adult categories
Reduced volunteer burnout indicators (survey feedback)	Earlier publication and improved coordination of competition calendars	Growth in regional participation	Progress against inclusion and reconciliation commitments	Re-engagement of lapsed members
		Expansion of school and U10/U12 engagement programs		

Delivering the National Play Well Plan is a whole-of-sport effort. Success depends on collaboration across the fencing community, national leadership, and strategic partnerships.

The Fencing Community

Participants, parents, veterans, para-athletes, and supporters will shape the evolution of this plan through:

- Community surveys and feedback forums
- Participation in national programs and pilots
- Peer mentoring and shared learning networks
- Advocacy for inclusive and accessible environments

This plan is designed with the community, not simply for the community.

Member States, Clubs, and Coaches

Clubs and coaches are central to participation growth. They create the environments where people experience fencing. They will:

- Deliver welcoming and inclusive participation programs
 - Implement improved beginner and retention pathways
 - Engage with Communities of Practice and education resources
 - Provide feedback to strengthen national systems
 - Champion safe, respectful, and inclusive cultures
- Volunteer leaders, coaches, referees, armourers, and administrators will play a vital role in building sustainable club environments.

WHO WILL BE INVOLVED

The AFF will provide national leadership, coordination, and accountability for the delivery of this plan. This includes:

- Setting national participation priorities
- Developing frameworks, toolkits, and education resources
- Strengthening governance, integrity, and safeguarding systems
- Improving national coordination and system alignment
- Monitoring progress and reporting outcomes

The AFF will work closely with member organisations to ensure national initiatives are practical, scalable and responsive to local needs.

The AFF

The AFF will continue to work in partnership with:

- The ASC to align with the Play Well Strategy
- SIA to maintain safe environments
- Education providers, schools, and universities to strengthen entry pathways
- Community and inclusion partners to expand accessibility.
- Organisations with similar cohorts to promote cross-participation

These partnerships will ensure fencing remains aligned with national standards and benefits from broader sector expertise.

Strategic Partners

HOW WE WILL COMMUNICATE THIS TO THE COMMUNITY

The National Play Well Plan will be communicated clearly, consistently, and transparently across the Australian fencing community. Our approach will prioritise accessibility, engagement, and ongoing dialogue.

Partner and Stakeholder Alignment

We will ensure alignment and shared messaging with:

- Member State and Territory organisations
- The Australian Sports Commission
- Key strategic partners

This approach ensures consistent communication across all levels of the sport.

Clear and Consistent Messaging

We will:

- Publish the plan on the AFF website in an accessible format
- Share a concise summary document and visual overview
- Present the plan through webinars and online briefings
- Provide tailored summaries for clubs, coaches, and volunteers

Digital and Multi-Channel Delivery

We will utilise:

- Email communications
- Website updates and FAQs
- Social media platforms
- Video explainers and short-form content
- State association networks and club channels

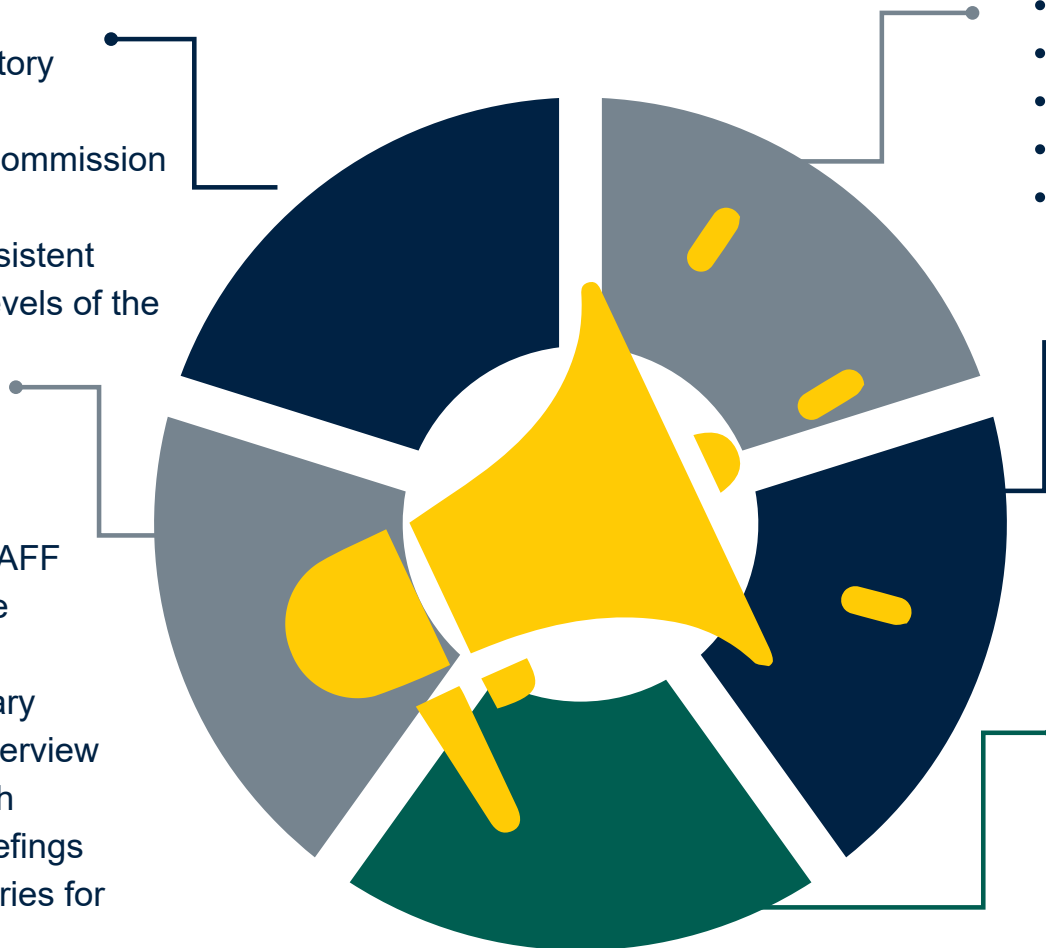
Ongoing Community Engagement

Communication will not be a one-off announcement. We will:

- Include regular updates in national newsletters
- Share progress and early wins
- Host annual townhall-style forums
- Integrate feedback mechanisms through surveys and consultations

Transparent Reporting

Progress against the plan will be reported annually, including measurable outcomes and areas for refinement. We will communicate openly about challenges, successes and adjustments as the plan evolves.



OUR COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

As we move forward with our 2026 - 2032 National Participation Plan, we are united in our commitment to deepen the connection between fencing and communities across Australia.

Our sport must reflect the contemporary nation we serve - diverse, inclusive, and forward-thinking in both outlook and action.

We want every Australian to recognise themselves in fencing and feel that there is a genuine place for them within it.

By embracing this vision, we believe we can grow participation at all levels and broaden the pathways that support both lifelong engagement and high performance success.

The Australian Fencing Federation will lead this work with intention, continuing to foster a culture that is welcoming, accessible, and representative of modern Australia.



OUR COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

The Australian Fencing Federation is committed to upholding the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and creating environments where children and young people are safe, respected and supported to thrive.

We promote inclusion, equity, and participation, ensure our people are appropriately screened and trained, encourage the reporting of concerns, and apply a Sport Integrity Australia-compliant National Integrity Framework consistently across all levels of fencing.

