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New Talent Program to address leadership diversity in sport

Sport Australia and the AIS are today launching a new initiative to address what Sport Australia CEO Kate Palmer labels a “gross under-representation” of female sport executives and high performance coaches.

The AIS Talent Program is open for applications now to female sport executives and high performance coaches, which the AIS has identified as key positions requiring more diversity in the Australian sport sector. Palmer says Sport Australia and the AIS are committed to gender diversity across the organisation, sport and society more broadly.

“Sport Australia and the AIS have a suite of programs to enhance diversity in sport, but the AIS Talent Program has been created to specifically address what remains a gross under-representation of women in high performance coaching and executive positions,” Palmer said.

“In executive positions, women represent 22 per cent of Board Chairs and just 13 per cent of CEOs across more than 60 national sporting organisations that are funded by Sport Australia and the AIS.

“The picture is no better for female high performance coaches, who represent less than 15 per cent of coaches across Australia’s high performance system. Looking at Olympic sports as an example, only 15 of the 160 accredited coaches at the 2016 Rio Olympics were female – just nine per cent. That’s a declining trend when you consider it was 12 per cent at the 2012 London Olympics.

“The rise in profile of women’s professional leagues has been fantastic for the progress of female athletes, but that hasn’t translated into the same opportunities for female coaches and leaders. We need to address any systemic biases preventing females taking up these opportunities.

“These statistics are not acceptable and we need to initiate systemic change now. The AIS Talent Program will be designed to deliver transformational skills for women in sport who are ready to progress to these leadership positions. It will help identify, develop, retain and progress talent that can challenge the status quo and increase diversity in sport.”

Candidates can [follow this link](#) to apply for the Talent Program, with positions available for 16 executive and 16 high performance coaches. The 12-month program will be fully-funded by the AIS and Office for Women.

Palmer will launch the AIS Talent Program this morning, the final day of the World Class to World Best Conference at the AIS, Canberra. Palmer and Swimming Australia CEO Leigh Russell will hold session on talent and diversity in high performance sport at 9am, with interview opportunities available from 9.30am.

Background

Sport Australia and the AIS have been a major supporter of women in sport for many years through a range of programs and initiatives. Some of these include:

- In 2013, Sport Australia introduced **Mandatory Governance Principles** for its top-funded sports which aimed for a 40 per cent representation of females on Boards. In that time, the percentage of females on sporting boards of the top-23 sports has risen from 27 per cent to 39.5 per cent.
- The **Women Leaders in Sport** program was established in 2002 to provide grants and workshops to female administrators, coaches and officials in sport. It has supported more than 24,000 women over that time.
- **Change the Game** is an annual peer learning program for 10 elite female athletes and 10 business executives. It is run in partnership with Bluescope.
- Sport Australia is an active member of the **Male Champions of Change** program, a leadership strategy to advance gender equality across the sport sector.

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