

# Runs on the board

Since 2016, the number of women in governance positions across cricket's major association has quintupled as part of a major push to make the game more inclusive.

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In 2016, cricket had girl trouble. The proportion of women playing, umpiring and leading in the sport was in decline and the statistics uncovered in the Women and Cricket report were sobering:

Only 10% of those participating in cricket were female.

A 40% decline in secondary schools girls' participating in cricket over the past decade.

90% of clubs don't have a girls-only team.

Fewer than 10% of coaches were female.

It was not what the game's administrators had hoped for when the New Zealand Women's Cricket Council and New Zealand Cricket amalgamated in 1992 – a unification considered a trailblazing model for the world at the time. So the Cricket NZ board set out to uncover what had gone wrong and how to fix it.

"The report was an eye opener," says board member Liz Dawson. "It was pretty obvious that things were not looking good. We knew that the participation of females in our game was not as strong as it had been in previous years and we wanted to investigate why."

**"...Māori women, Pasifika women, women with South-East Asian ethnicity, religious diversity... so it has actually brought diversity other than gender diversity."**

The Women and Cricket report made a series of recommendations on governance and leadership within the cricket family (see The governance and leadership recommendations sidebar). These included significantly increasing the proportion of female players in cricket governance – and quickly.

"It was clear around the boards in New Zealand cricket, the major associations and district associations, that there were very few women involved in leadership," says Dawson.

So Cricket NZ embarked on its Women and Governance Project, a slightly different proposition to other diversity projects. While keen to increase the number of women in governance, NZ Cricket was not simply seeking a better balance – it was trying to fix a clear problem.

"Women and Governance is a two-year project that comes to its phase one fruition around our AGM this year in November. That project has goals in terms of the number of women on boards. For major associations we aimed to have at least two women on boards. For district associations to have at least two women on their boards as well," Dawson notes.

While the effects of the project are still to be fully felt, Dawson says the initial results are encouraging. As of July 2018 the NZ Cricket board moved from 11% to 44% women, major associations have moved from 4% to 28%, and district associations from 7% to 14%.

As of October, the number of women in cricket governance positions has quintupled.

"We went from ten women on any of those boards, we have now got 50. I am really pleased with that," Dawson says.

## WHAT GOVERNANCE DIVERSITY LOOKS LIKE

"It has brought different conversations to the board tables," Dawson says. "I was sitting on a board appointments panel for central districts cricket last week [October] one of the questions we asked the applicants and the nominees for those various positions [was] 'what do you think having females on those boards has brought?' Without a doubt every person who was interviewed talked about the difference it has made to conversations and business as usual, to thinking much more broadly than just about the men's team, or men's cricket.

"Probably the greatest learning for me was that it has brought true diversity. [In looking at those women] we have doctors, lawyers, coroners, women with sub-continent Asian ethnicity, Māori women, Pasifika women, women with South-East Asian ethnicity, religious diversity...so it has actually brought diversity other than gender diversity."

The ultimate aim is to ensure that the women's game gets the attention at board level that it needs to thrive, Dawson says. Alongside the governance push, NZ Cricket has created a full-time position for a female engagement manager, who will create strategies for improving engagement at the grassroots and community levels, right through to the national pathways. "That's the longer-term play."

But, like many cultural changes, the lead has to come from the top. And Dawson says the earlier evidence is that having more women in governance will pay dividends in terms of women's engagement at all levels.

"In getting more women on boards, we have seen a greater focus on ensuring women and girls have equal opportunity to be involved in the game." >>

## THE GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP RECOMMENDATIONS

- A** Significantly and quickly increase the proportion of females in cricket governance.
- B** Ensure all national and regional cricket associations have leadership role(s) accountable for driving improved cricket outcomes for females.
- C** Positively influence the media awareness and portrayal of females' success and legacy in cricket.
- D** Gradually increase female presence in coaching and umpiring positions.
- E** Target the engagement or re-engagement of females who know and love cricket in ways that fit their life stage and availability.

Source: *Women and Cricket*, 2016.



01



02

## CHALLENGES

Effecting change in the make-up of boards throughout New Zealand presented particular challenges to NZ Cricket. Some boards had to change their constitutions to allow for board appointments rather than finding members through elections at district association and club level. "That required either a special general meeting or to go through the AGM cycle," Dawson says.

NZ Cricket has in part encouraged this through financial incentives. "We are in a position where we can use levers such as, if you meet targets there are funding levers that can be pulled. Bonuses for meeting targets."

Many boards have had to reconsider the way in which they engage with the people in their area, Dawson says. "It's been a change in thinking: actually, we have a very successful men's team and men's pathway. What else do we need?"

Having more women on those boards is one route to making sure women's cricket is considered, she says. "How do you think about your women's pathway if you don't have that voice around the board table?"

But the new female directors have not been left to fend for themselves. Dawson says there is much governance research that shows one woman can be reduced to a "lone voice" in the boardroom, where two to three women can make change. So goal targets that we set were to have a minimum of two women on the board.

NZ Cricket has also put in place support for these new directors, to ensure they can deliver effectively in their roles. "We actually have a network for those women. We have an annual forum. We have been encouraging the IoD to get involved and assist. We have membership of DiversityWorks training," Dawson notes.

## TONE FROM THE TOP


"The NZ Cricket board is walking the talk," says Dawson. "We have three women on our board, plus a female president. We have senior leaders who are female. We are very much leading and showing the way that in creating diversity and creating inclusion on boards leads to better outcomes and better culture."

"You can't do this without the full board being behind it. You can't do this without the management team being behind it, understanding it and advocating it as well."

She has special praise for Sir Richard Hadlee who was "a true advocate of diversity" when he was on the board. She also offers thanks to CEO David White and her fellow board members – particularly Geoff Barclay, Martin Sneddon and Geoff Allott. "Of those five men, four are former cricketers who have represented New Zealand. They understand how important this is."

And while it is still too early to say what the long-term effect of the push will be, Dawson believes NZ Cricket has already learned lessons that could be of benefit to other sports codes seeking to improve female representation at a governance level.

"We are encouraged to talk about it because we have some runs on the board. We have shown that the work works... But we have only just scratched the surface and there is a long way to go if we are going to be true to our vision."

"I think there are other codes in New Zealand that look at NZ Cricket and wonder how it is being done in such a short period of time? My strong advice is that it is hard work, you have to change minds, but the results are without doubt so much better for the organisation and so much better for the sport." 

01: Liz Dawson

02: The NZ Cricket Board.

Back row from left: Martin Snedden, Diana Puketapu, Geoff Allott, Ingrid Cronin-Knight

Front row from right: Don Mackinnon, Liz Dawson, Greg Barclay, Neil Craig

