



## Introduction

**vicsport**, with the support of VicHealth, has conducted research into the lack of women currently sitting on boards within the sport and recreation industry. Interviews were conducted with nine women who currently, or had previously, held a board position. The purpose of the interviews was to gather views based on firsthand experience and observations regarding common barriers faced by women, pathways onto board positions and possible strategies to encourage more women to get involved in governance positions of sporting organisations. Board positions held ranged from sporting clubs, State Sporting Associations (SSAs), peak bodies and government agencies.

One of the key themes discussed was pathways onto governing bodies.

## Pathways onto governing boards

There is no specific pathway onto the board of a sporting organisation. There are various governance structures and recruitment / selection processes therefore it is not possible to create a framework which will encompass all possibilities. When **vicsport** asked women how they obtained their positions on the boards of sporting organisations the results confirmed this.

**“You have to be proactive and put your name out there.”**

The answers commonly included natural progression from club committees up through the ranks, being tapped on the shoulder, as well as some who actively sought and applied for positions. Of those who actively sought the role, there was a wide variety of ways in which the directors discovered the vacancy for which they applied. These included an advertisement in the newspaper, word of mouth within the industry and involvement in the sport.

**vicsport** also enquired as to the benefits of being on committees before holding a position on a board. The general consensus amongst the women was that it provides great experience and allows you to understand the skills required however it is not an essential pathway.

## How to gain a board position

- Be prepared to take risks and put yourself out there. One woman interviewed believes that a downfall of women is that too often they take the safe route and do not push themselves or take the risks required to really advance their careers.
- It is vital that you have an interest and passion about the organisation that you are aiming to go onto the board of. Without this passion you will find that you do not fully commit to the position and as a result your work will not be of the highest quality. This can reflect badly on yourself and the organisation.

**“It helps to be on committee’s before on boards but it’s not essential.”**



- Starting on sporting committees can be very beneficial in developing skills and building confidence.
- Let people know that you are seeking a role on a board. If people do not know what you are looking to achieve they cannot help you achieve those goals. As one woman put it “You have to be proactive and put your name out there.”
- Be clear about your reasons for seeking a board position. This will ensure that you are taking on the role for the right reason and have a greater chance of being successful.

**“Let people know that [you]  
want to be on the board”**