

History of Women's Football in Australia

From the Latrobe Ladies to the host nation for the FIFA Women's World Cup.

1903

It is reported that ladies teams were being formed in New South Wales as early as 1903.

1914-1918

During World War One, as women filled many men's jobs, they also took up football, setting up clubs in England and Australia.

1921

The first official women's team in Australia was the Latrobe Ladies in early 1921.

1921

After forming the Queensland Women's Ladies Soccer Football Association in July, they had their first public match on the 24th September when North Brisbane played South Brisbane at the Brisbane Cricket Ground (The Gabba).

1921

The English Football Association banned women from playing on official pitches. Soon after, Australia decided that women should not be playing football.



Image: Dr Karen Menzies, cap # 30, First Indigenous female footballer to play for the Australian National team. Source: Trailblazers

"After the war, many factories closed and women went back into domestic life or retrained in professions such as bus conductors and nurses. At the same time, some people questioned whether football was damaging women's health. Dr Mary Scharlieb of Harley Street for example described it as the "most unsuitable game, too much for a women's physical frame."

Kicking Down Barriers - The story of women's football in England (thefa.com)

1922

Medical reports and articles recommending that football was unsuitable for girls were published.

1930's-1960's

In Australia, women's football lost popularity and went underground. Although women were not officially banned from playing in Australia, social perception of women playing football was not positive and they were encouraged away from the sport. There were still some teams playing and training, but they no longer played public matches.

1971

The English Football Association lifted the ban.

1974

In August, the Australian Women's Soccer Association (AWSA) was formed and the first National Women's Soccer Championships took place in Sydney.

1988

The Australian Women's National Team took part in a FIFA Women's Invitational Tournament in China. This was a trial tournament before the FIFA Women's World Cup was formed.

1993

In September, the International Olympic Committee and FIFA announce that a women's football competition will be added to the Olympic Games in Atlanta 1996. The same week, the IOC also announced that Sydney would host the Olympic Games in Sydney 2000.

1994

On the 20th October the Australian Women's National Team won the OFC Women's Championship. They qualified for the FIFA Women's World Cup to be hosted in Sweden in 1995.

1995

The Australian Women's Soccer Association adopted the name 'Matildas' for the national team after a competition conducted by SBS. The name was used when the team competed in the 2nd FIFA Women's World Cup in Sweden.

1996

In December, 6 teams formed the Ansett Summer Series (later known as the Women's National Soccer League).

1999

The Australian Women's Soccer Association and players in the national team, called the Matildas since 1995, released a controversial nude calendar for the year 2000, to coincide with the Olympic Games in Sydney. The calendar proclaimed the Matildas were 'the new fashion in football' and attracted massive worldwide attention and sales.

2003

The Australian Women's Soccer Association, which had administered and developed the women's game in Australia for almost 30 years, was absorbed into the Australian Soccer Association, which then became Football Federation Australia in 2004.



2007

The Australian Women's National team, reached the quarter finals of the FIFA women's world cup.

2008

The Westfield W-League was formed replacing the Women's National Soccer League (WNSL) as Australia's top women's football competition.

2012

After 108 years of an all-male board, FIFA created identified roles for women and appointed 3 positions, including that held by Australian Moya Dodd, Cap # 7 (right).



2015

Following their quarter-final performance at the World Cup in Canada, women's team went on strike and withdrew from their sold out US tour over pay disputes.

2017

The Australian Women's National team reached their highest ever FIFA ranking of 4th in the world.

2017

It is thought that almost 250,000 women and girls were participating in women's football in Australia.

2018

Football Federation Australia unveiled a unifying brand identity for the Socceroos and Matildas.

Football Federation Australia released the findings and recommendations from a national Congress Review. These included gender equity reforms such as the adoption of a 40-40-20 gender equity principle for the election of directors on Boards and the introduction of a ten person Women's Advisory Council.

At the Annual General Meeting in November, after adopting a gender equity mandate, female representation on the Football Federation Australia Board increased from one to three with Heather Reid, AM (below) being appointed as the first female Deputy Chair.

2019

The Matildas and Socceroos signed a joint Collective Bargaining Agreement for the first time.

2020

In June, FIFA announced that Australia and New Zealand would be co-hosting the FIFA Women's World Cup in 2023.

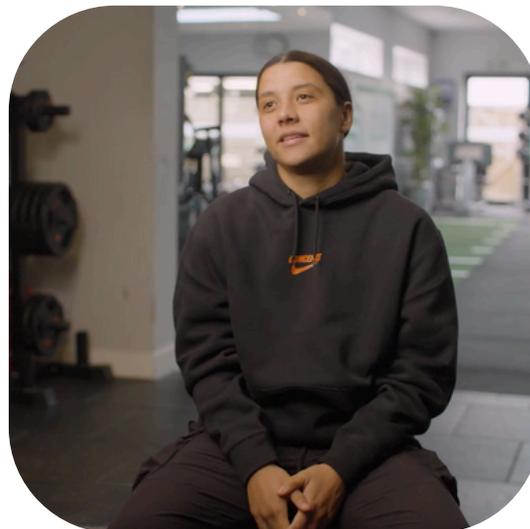


2021

In August, the Australian Women's National team reached the semi finals of the Women's Olympic Football Tournament. This event set record television audiences for women's sport.

2023

Australian and New Zealand co-hosted the FIFA Women's World Cup. 1,978,274 fans attended breaking FIFA's targeted ticket sales of 1.5 million. The Australian team captained by Sam Kerr # 20 (right) made history by reaching the bronze medal play-off against Sweden. They lost to Sweden 2-0. 11.5 million Australians tuned into the game.



2023

“Matildas and Socceroos sign a new four-year Collective Bargaining Agreement which takes the principles of gender equality that were introduced in the 2019 deal to a much more sophisticated level, embedding them even deeper into the structures that both the Matildas and Socceroos are part of.” - [ABC News](#)

2024

The Australian Women's National team qualify for the Paris 2024 Olympics.

Female football registration is up an average of 30% across Australian clubs.

Sources:

- Trailblazers - Savage Films
- [Football Australia - 100 Years of Women's Football](#)
- [SBS News - Forgotten History of Australian Womens Football Discovered](#)
- [The FA - The Story of Women's Football in England](#)
- [Football Australia - Gender Equality Action Plan 2019](#)
- [The Sydney Morning Herald - As it Happened Women's World Cup](#)
- [ABC News - What makes the Matildas' new collective bargaining agreement with the Socceroos so ground-breaking?](#)
- [SportsPro - The 2023 Women's World Cup in numbers](#)
- [The Guardian - Matildas effect drives record football sign-ups but puts clubs under pressure](#)

We would like to extend our gratitude to [Heather Reid, AM](#) for providing review of this History of Women's Football in Australia.

