



and the Play by the Rules Award winner is...

# Gymnastics Victoria

creating sustainable pathways for  
gymnasts with disability

- ▶ **Moving kids off the sidelines and into the main game**
- ▶ **Club provides a haven for kids who just want to be part of a team**
- ▶ **Liability in grass roots sport in Australia**

## Plus

Sport a major player in ending violence against women study and mini-course

New videos for Racism. It Stops with Me campaign

Website update: Diversity and Inclusion in Sport Forum 2017 videos

Resource Profile: Tips for coaches, parents, administrators and officials

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## THE EDITOR

Welcome to the last issue of the Play by the Rules magazine for 2017. It has been a big and great year for Play by the Rules thanks to your support and commitment to safe, fair and inclusive sport.

It's very fitting that for the final issue we focus on the achievements of three outstanding organisations that are making a real difference in grassroots sport. This year the Australian Sports Commission initiated a special Play by the Rules Award as part of their national Participation Awards for 2017. The Play by the Rules Award was for organisations that demonstrated a commitment to safe, fair and inclusive sport. We had an incredible 81 nominations. The winner was Gymnastics Victoria for their outstanding work in collaboration with Special Olympics. We have a feature article on their work in this issue, together with our two other finalists — the GingerCloud Foundation and Coolbinia Bombers Junior Football Club.

But congratulations to all nominations — there is a lot of great work happening across the country. In 2018 we will be developing case studies from many of the nominations, so watch this space!

Have a safe, fair and inclusive holiday break and end to 2017 and see you again in 2018.



Peter Downs  
Manager - Play by the Rules

News:

## Sport a major player in ending violence against women

Sport can help end violence against women according to a new evidence paper released by Our Watch entitled *A team effort: Preventing violence against women through sport*.

'Sport has been identified in numerous policy documents as a key setting to prevent violence against women,' said Our Watch CEO, Mary Barry.

'Sport settings have enormous potential to encourage social change and prevent violence against women by creating inclusive, equitable, healthy and safe environments for men and women, boys and girls,' said Ms Barry. Produced by RMIT University and Our Watch, *A team effort* analyses current initiatives and literature and provides 10 key actions that sporting organisations and communities can take to help prevent violence against women.

'Sporting organisations need to work hard to ensure the notion of a 'level playing field' is a reality for players, staff members, volunteers, fans and anyone connected to the club,' said Ms Barry.

**'It's not the job of sport alone to end violence against women,'** Ms Barry said.

'There is, however, a real opportunity in sport to promote women's participation and opportunities, challenge gender stereotypes and roles, challenge attitudes and behaviours that support or condone violence and disrespect, and encourage respectful and equal relationships,' she added.

'It will be a team effort, but if we all work together, sport can help change the story that ends in violence against women,' Ms Barry said.

Play by the Rules has been working with Our Watch to produce an online mini-course called 'It's a team effort — preventing violence against women'. The course is being piloted now and is due for release in early 2018.

If you or someone you know is impacted by sexual assault, family or domestic violence, call 1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732 or visit [www.1800RESPECT.org.au](http://www.1800RESPECT.org.au). In an emergency, call 000.

To access guides for reporting violence against women and their children, visit [www.ourwatch.org.au](http://www.ourwatch.org.au)

News:

## New videos for Racism. It Stops with Me

The Australian Human Rights Commission recently released two additional videos as part of the Racism. It Stops with Me campaign. They feature conversations about sport, sledging and racism. The message: whatever our differences, together we can stand up to racism. Take a look and share them with #standup



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lchGDQaugVQ>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KxKJvPfGjgg>

Four videos that they have released in the past two months for the campaign have attracted close to 1.5 million views on Facebook and Youtube, a fantastic response and something the Australian Human Rights Commission hopes has started many new conversations about fighting racism.

Feature article:

# Sustainable pathway for gymnasts with disabilities - Gymnastics Victoria wins Play by the Rules Award



Dismissing a piecemeal approach to integrating people with disabilities into their sport in favour of system-wide change has reaped rewards for Gymnastics Victoria.

The sport already had strong credentials in the inclusion space, with more than 9000 people with disabilities participating in gymnastics across Victoria, and a further 57 in leadership positions.

But rather than resting on its laurels, Gymnastics Victoria has now carved out a sustainable pathway for gymnasts to move from recreational participation to Special Olympics competition, and in doing so has tapped into a latent market.

The number of gymnastics clubs offering Special Olympics in the state has more than quadrupled in 12 months.

The success of its new approach made Gymnastics Victoria a standout from 81 nominations for the inaugural Australian Sports Commission Play by the Rules Award recognising outstanding initiatives that contribute to safer, fairer and/or more inclusive sport in 2016–17.

In accepting the award, Gymnastics Victoria's Inclusion and Innovation Manager Kerry Tavrou said he was constantly amazed by the eagerness and commitment of the gymnastics community to be inclusive champions.

'It's through our community's hard work that we have seen an increase in our participation of under-represented groups from 400 participants in 2011 to over 11,000 today.'

The foundation for the sport's new approach was laid in 2015 when Gymnastics Victoria teamed up with national research partner Scope to publish world-first research on the benefits of gymnastics for children with a disability.

With the insights gained from that research, along with Kerry Tavrou's practical experience, Gymnastics Victoria developed a targeted pathway model that was geared for sustainability.

The model took a two-pronged approach.

First, within the sport, administrators set out to break down barriers not just in one area, but across membership, promotion, programming, coaches, and athlete wellbeing.

Second, the sport aimed to forge solid external partnerships including those with occupational therapists, specialist schools and others working in the disability space to spread the word about the physical and social benefits of gymnastics.

Chief among the new relationships was the sport's partnership with Special Olympics Australia to shape the necessary changes that would allow athletes to progress through recreational gymnastics to full competition.

Together the two organisations developed Special Olympics workshops that they delivered to 10 clubs. Such has been the success of the workshops that Gymnastics Australia is now set to adopt and roll out the workshops in other states.

Gymnastics Victoria also developed a joint membership structure for Special Olympics gymnasts.

And the changes were showcased at one of the sport's biggest available platforms — the 2017 Gymnastics World Cup in Melbourne in February, where Special Olympics gymnasts

displayed their skills as a preview of what could be expected when they joined Gymnastics Victoria's men's and women's championships in June.

Those championships featured 15 Special Olympics gymnasts competing in what is now a qualifying event for the Special Olympics national championships and a stepping stone to the Special Olympics World Games.

Yet, as Gymnastics Victoria Acting CEO Alison Lyons says, that would once have been a seemingly unattainable goal for a person with a disability who was enjoying learning to execute their first forward roll at a gymnastics club.

'Administrators don't see this as an additional burden. It is a natural extension of our inclusion programs that clubs and community groups have already adopted and accepted,' she said.

'They've already seen the benefits of diversifying, including more people and promoting that within communities that they're so much a part of and this opens up even more opportunities for them.'

See Kerry talking about the award: <https://www.playbytherules.net.au/resources/videos/gymnastics-victoria>

To get involved go to [www.gymnasticsvictoria.org.au](http://www.gymnasticsvictoria.org.au)

Feature article:

# Moving kids off the sidelines and into the main game

A unique modified rugby union program for children with learning and perceptual disabilities has done more than simply provide a physical and social outlet for those who may otherwise be watching from the sidelines — it's given them and their families a new supportive tribe.

GingerCloud Foundation's Modified Rugby Program (MRP) is a world-first form of modified touch-only rugby where each girl, boy or young adult with a learning or perceptual disability is paired with their own trained teenage or university-aged 'PlayerMentor', providing on-field support.

GingerCloud co-founders, Megan and Anthony Elliott, developed the program in 2013–14 with the support of key rugby organisations in a bid to provide their son Max with a sporting outlet that would appropriately cater for his autism and complex language disability.

Brothers Rugby Club was not far from the family's Brisbane home, and given the complexity of Max's disability, the Elliotts were unable to be part of their local club like the other cheerful children and families attending match days and training sessions.

They could see that Brothers was much more than just rugby, and was a community hub. So, when Max was ready, Megan and Anthony approached Brothers to see how they could become involved.

Their timing was spot on. Queensland Rugby Union had recently signed a charter with Sporting Wheelies and Disabled Association as part of their Sports CONNECT program.

The sport was looking for ways of offering more inclusive programs across the state's clubs, so they understood and supported Megan and Anthony's vision.

'Communities want to be inclusive. They just don't know how to "do inclusion",' Megan said. 'We shared our family's story openly, wanting to make our community better for everyone. We never assumed that any organisation would have all the answers, rather we really wanted to find a solution that would benefit the whole community, not just our child.'

Megan said when the couple approached Brothers, they told club officials that they wanted to find a long-term solution. 'Our approach was "your club lives the values of rugby, we understand our son well, so let's take this journey together",' Megan said.

Having been immersed in the allied health system for the previous seven years, Megan was able to connect with health professionals and other families of children with learning and perceptual disabilities. She brought them to the table with Brothers, Queensland Rugby Union and Rugby Australia to form a working party that would investigate how a modified program could operate.

With a background in strategic marketing, Megan knew the importance of maintaining open lines of stakeholder communication. Meanwhile Anthony, with his expertise in organisational structure and systems analysis, worked with other GingerCloud Foundation directors to assess the club's existing processes and procedures to see how a modified rugby program would best fit.



What emerged was a highly successful program that went from 16 participants in 2014 to more than 180 participants at six clubs in three divisions across south-east Queensland in 2017.

Megan said the program's sustainability can be attributed to a number of elements.

First, rather than creating a stand-alone 'special rugby' format, GingerCloud (named for Max's first independent food request at school — a gingerbread man — and a play on 'blue sky' thinking) created specific allied health, leadership and coaching frameworks, allowing the MRP to be delivered collaboratively with clubs. Coaches are paid to ensure an exceptional quality of coaching while providing consistency for MRP players.

Second, all MRP players are individually matched with their own PlayerMentor, who are teenage or university-age members of the host club and trained on inclusion and leadership through the GingerCloud Leadership program.

Third, the modified MRP laws consider the specific needs of players. The program was a finalist in the recent Play by the Rules Awards. It has previously been nationally recognised with the Nick Farr-Jones Spirit of Rugby Award and has received international recognition as a finalist in the World Rugby Character Awards.

Yet for all the accolades, it is still the simple pleasures that give Megan and Anthony Elliott the greatest joy.

There's the obvious enthusiasm of the children who love their game, and even get dressed and sleep in their uniforms the night before a match.

There's the new capacity for fathers of the children to 'do community' and escape what has previously been coined their 'unconscious exclusion' by connecting with other men on the sidelines, planning family barbecues or arranging to meet for a drink.

And there's the blossoming of the PlayerMentors.

'In week four of the 2014 pilot I realised that where I would normally have to physically be 'there' with Max in any of his activities, for the first time I was able to comfortably be on the sideline knowing he was safe, so I went and got a glass of wine at the club's bar and the mother of one of the PlayerMentors approached me,' Megan said.

'She told me, "I think my son is going to get more out of this than yours. We've already seen a huge change in him as a person".

'The young women and men who are our PlayerMentors are the magic of the MRP. They model behaviour around rules and expectations both on and off the field. Many of our PlayerMentors keep coming back and some have been with us since the 2014 pilot,' Megan said.

All of these elements combined means that the MRP has created a new tribe of people who know and understand each of the children.

'For parents of children with disabilities, we constantly think about what happens to our child 20 or 30 years down the track when we're not around,' Megan said. 'Our family knows now that Max has a place where he feels safe, is understood and belongs for the long term.'

Feature article:

## Club provides a haven for kids who just want to be part of a team

One family has flown more than 1000km a month to get their child to StarKick Australian rules sessions at Coolbinia Bombers Junior Football Club (JFC) in Perth's north. Others have driven 120km each way. But whether families live 15 minutes or 15 hours from the club, all parents agree that the Bombers' headquarters is one of the few places where their children are genuinely welcome.

The club has broken new ground both at a grassroots level and at a national sports level with its Australian-first StarKick program for children with special needs, who by circumstance or choice may be unable to participate in a mainstream football club.

StarKick sessions run concurrently with Auskick sessions — the nationwide program that teaches basic skills of Australian rules football to children aged between five and 12.

Having already integrated players with special needs into mainstream teams, Coolbinia Bombers JFC founded and launched the StarKick program in 2015 to provide a 'bridge' for other children — some with more profound needs — to



also participate in the sport and have the potential to move into the mainstream if appropriate.

Their efforts earned them recognition as a finalist in the 2017 Play by the Rules Awards.

Coolbinia Bombers' Community Engagement Officer Shawn Pearson said StarKick's success came down to developing and embedding it as a community initiative.

'StarKick was about what we could do within our club community to make our club reflect the diversity of the community around us all. A place for children with disabilities to play football was the goal, an improved, welcoming

community has been the outcome,' Shawn said.

'A lot of parents with special needs children don't have the time or energy to bring other siblings to community sport, but running StarKick alongside Auskick meant everyone was catered for.'

Parents also benefit from the club's social aspects. While they are welcome to help as a coach or assistant, there's no obligation, and the club ensures there are enough volunteers around so that parents can just enjoy being parents and cheer their children from the sideline, something that many have rarely been able to do.

Shawn said the Bombers had also initiated 'buddy days' where older club youth members pair up with a StarKick member to help with skills and drills.

'Everyone gets so much out of this and we're also cultivating our 16 and 17-year-old youth players to be champions and lead into the future.'

Now the StarKick program has been taken up by three other junior clubs in the Perth district, and interclub events are providing even more opportunities for more than 100 special needs footballers. Interstate interest is also rising.

'We put time into going and sharing our lessons with other clubs, and if anyone was thinking about starting a similar program in any sport, we'd love to talk with you,' Shawn said, jokingly adding that the Bombers would be happy to lose their 'competitive advantage'.

While the club has enjoyed the local support of the Fremantle Dockers Foundation, the AFL is taking a greater national interest in the program, including studying the Coolbinia model as part of a wider review, in conjunction with Deakin University, to create further opportunities for participation and inclusion.

And already the AFL has modified its rules relating to constraining players to age groups, allowing a small-statured 12-year-old Coolbinia Bombers StarKick member with autism to play in a mainstream team with six and seven-year-old players.

The Bombers' StarKick mantra has always been 'if you want to play, we'll find a way', but the club has also extended that to the broader community with other inclusive programs including cultivating a dedicated girls program; partnering with Clontarf Aboriginal College to provide opportunities for Indigenous boys; and with the Edmund Rice Centre to organise friendly games for new Australians and refugees.

Feature article:

## Liability in grassroots sport in Australia

Australia has a rich history and love of sport which has translated into a wealth of domestic, national and international success — we are a proud sporting nation.

This success has its foundation at a grassroots level in which children and adults of all ages participate and volunteer their time and knowledge to sport in the community.

Sport has a vast range of benefits, including promoting health and wellbeing, building a sense of community and breaking down social barriers.

However, with physical activity of this nature comes legal risks which may be the last thing on the mind of a local footy team as their star player kicks the winning goal in the grand final.

The decision of the Supreme Court of Victoria in *Beaumaris Football Club v Hart & Ors* and *Bayside City Council v Hart & Ors* [2017] VSCA 226 reinforces the need for organisations involved in grassroots sport in Australia to take adequate care and precautions to ensure the safety of their players, to whom a duty of care is held.

### Background

In Beaumaris, Mr Hart was playing at full-forward for the Under-17 Beaumaris Sharks Football Club at Banksia Reserve in 2009. He ran at full pace towards the boundary line and jumped to mark the ball, landing with the spikes of his left boot in the mesh fence which surrounded the Reserve, sustaining a severe left knee injury.

Mr Hart sued the football club, the league and the Council. The club was responsible for marking the boundary line (its president would regularly perform the task) and the Council owned the Reserve.

Mr Hart pleaded that the parties were negligent since the boundary line was too close to the fence, which created a hidden danger for players.

### Trial

Witness testimony at trial provided that Mr Hart was not pushed by another player and was within the boundary line when he jumped to take a mark.

However, the Trial Judge placed significant emphasis on an aerial photograph taken the season after the incident.

It was found that the Defendants breached their duty of care to Mr Hart by failing to ensure that the boundary was marked at least 3 metres away from the fence as prescribed by the Victorian Amateur Football Association.

## Appeal

All three Defendants appealed the decision on the basis that the finding by the Trial Judge in relation to the boundary marking was speculative and based upon insufficient evidence. Whilst the Appeal Judges agreed with the Defendants' position in this regard, the appeal was dismissed.

The former president of the club gave testimony that the boundary line was marked in excess of the 3-metre minimum. Nevertheless, the former and current presidents conceded that the accident could not have occurred unless the fence was too close to the boundary line.

Ultimately, it was found that, on a balance of probabilities, the Defendants had failed to take reasonable care to ensure that the boundary line was marked at least 3 metres from the fence, as a result of which Mr Hart sustained injury.

A defence of contributory negligence was raised but did not succeed and the club and league were held to be jointly liable by 60% and the Council by 40%.

## Impact

The Victorian Court of Appeal's decision emphasises the duty of care owed by owners/occupiers of sporting facilities and sports organisations to members of the public when facilitating amateur sport.

Whilst it is always the intention of sporting clubs and leagues together with local government councils to provide a fun and safe recreational environment, there is the overriding need to be vigilant and to take adequate care and precautions to protect the safety of the participants.



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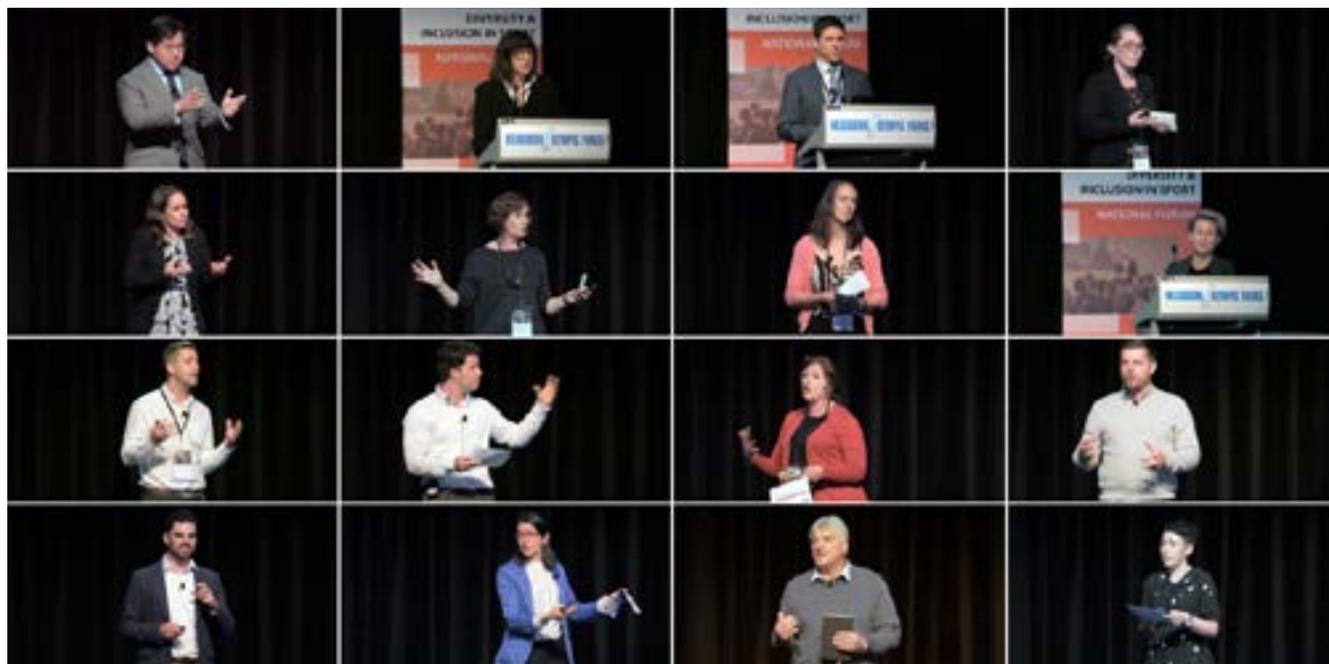
Website Update:

## Diversity and Inclusion Forum 2017 videos

The 2017 Diversity and Inclusion in Sport Forum was held at Melbourne Olympic Park in October. Play by the Rules partnered with the Australian Sports Commission, Centre for Multicultural Youth, Monash University, Victoria University, Oliver and Thompson Consultancy, The Inclusion Club, VicHealth and Sport and Recreation Victoria to host the event that was attended by 180 people from all levels of sport.

The forum featured 15 TEDx-style presentations dealing with a wide range of issues on diversity and inclusion in sport. The presentations were all recorded and can now be viewed at:

<https://www.playbytherules.net.au/got-an-issue/inclusion-and-diversity/inclusion-and-diversity-videos>



Resource Profile:

## Tips for coaches, parents, administrators and officials

ABC sports broadcaster and journalist Paul Kennedy recently completed a series of video 'tips' for Play by the Rules. If you have seen PK on ABC Breakfast at all you'll know how committed he is to junior sport. It's a real passion of his as a coach and parent.

So we were delighted to work with PK on the video tips series. They are short and direct video messages 'from the field' that align with our information and resources under 'conduct and behaviour'.

Simply go to <https://www.playbytherules.net.au/conduct-and-behaviour>



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Come and join the 50,000+ subscribers to Play by the Rules - it's a great way to keep up-to-date with safe, fair and inclusive sport.

## Back Issues

You can access each back issue for this magazine by visiting [this page](#) on the Play by the Rules website. All the feature articles and significant news items are listed here.

## Share and spread the word

One easy way to keep up to date and support safe, fair and inclusive sport is to share Play by the Rules across social media. We post every day on Facebook and Twitter and have audio files on Soundcloud and an extensive collection of videos on YouTube and Vimeo.



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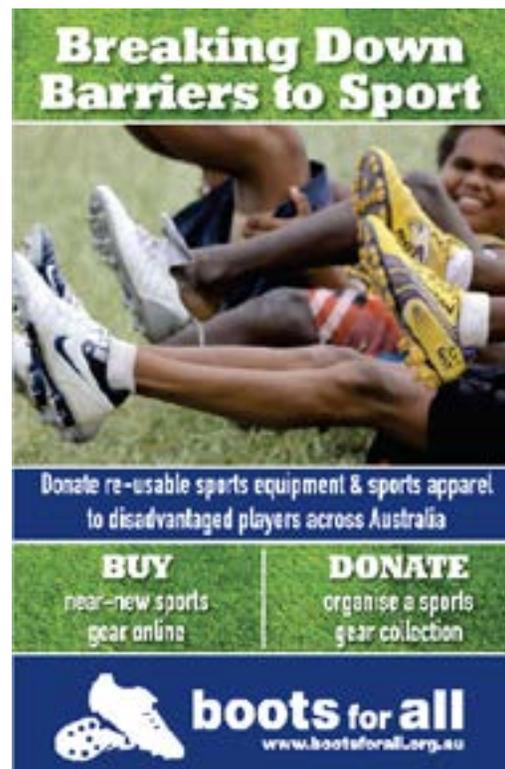
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Did you know that Play by the Rules is one of the best examples of a Collective Impact approach to addressing sport issues in the country? If not the best. Play by the Rules is a collaboration between multiple partners.



## To make Play by the Rules possible, we also work with

