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**Harnessing the Untapped Potential: Female Participation
in Australian Motorsport**



Increasing Female Participation in Australian Motorsport

Introduction

Australian Motorsport Council (“**AMC**”), is the united advocacy body representing Australia’s motorsport Federations with authority and delegated responsibilities to control, regulate and manage mainstream Australian Motorsport from the International Motorsport Federations – **FIA**ⁱ and **FIM**ⁱⁱ.

Motorcycling Australia is recognised by Sport Australia as the National Sporting Organisation (“**NSO**”) for 2-wheel motorsport. Motorsport Australia is recognised by Sport Australia as the NSO for 4-wheel motorsport. Both federations receive funding support from Sport Australia.

Karting Australia, the Australian National Drag Racing Association and Speedway Australia govern the specific divisions of 4-wheel motorsport – Karting, Drag Racing and Speedway under authorisation of the General Assembly of the FIA through formal agreements of delegation of sporting power and general authority to control, regulate, supervise administer and promote their respective division of 4-wheel motorsport from Motorsport Australia.

The five federations are the only motorsport Sporting Organisations recognised by the Federal Governmentⁱⁱⁱ as the “**Authorised Sanctioning Bodies**” of land based motorsport.

The AMC has the core belief that the potential for Australian motorsport to become a global standard-bearer for gender diversity and inclusion is vast. It is high time to shatter the glass ceiling that prevents women from fully participating in motorsport.

By doing so, we will create a more dynamic, inclusive, and competitive sport that benefits everyone involved - from participants to spectators.

Increasing female participation in Australian motorsport is not just about achieving equality; it's also about strengthening the sport and maximising its potential. By drawing on diverse talents, perspectives, and experiences, we can make Australian motorsport more competitive, innovative, and appealing to a broader audience. It is time to accelerate change and drive towards a future where everyone has an equal opportunity to participate in and contribute to the exhilarating world of motorsport.

Attracting female drivers and riders to a more female-friendly, nurturing, motorsport environment will be the transformative catalyst, that will start to steer change and reshaping motorsport's landscape.

The sooner motorsport, both 2-wheel and 4-wheel, finds and develops standout female drivers and riders, the sooner our constituent federations will start to attract more women regularly and increasingly into every facet of motorsport.

About This Position Statement

This position paper advocates for increased female participation across all facets of Australian motorsport, from drivers in circuit racing, karting, rallying, drag racing and speedway to roles such as officials, administrators, volunteers, and engineers.

Recognising the industry's historical gender imbalance, it argues for the importance of diversity, talent maximisation, and role model representation. The economic benefits of diversity, such as increased viewership and sponsorships, are highlighted.

Drawing from successful initiatives in other sports and industries, recommendations include grassroots development, mentoring, equal opportunities, scholarships, and partnerships with educational institutions. The paper asserts the pivotal roles of the AMC's constituent Federations in identifying and implementing the key priorities including robust policy implementation, development programs, funding, promotion, and strategic partnerships.

The paper concludes that gender equality in motorsport not only strengthens the sport but also maximises its potential, calling for an acceleration of change towards a future where everyone can contribute equally.

Background

Motorsport, a traditionally male-dominated industry, has always been a platform for showcasing extraordinary talent, precision, safety and risk management. While Australian motorsport has seen significant progress over the years, it has not yet fully embraced the benefits of diversity, particularly in terms of gender. As we venture into the future, it is paramount to challenge the status quo and promote the active involvement of women in all aspects of motorsport, including as drivers in circuit racing for cars and motorcycles, karting, rallying, drag racing, and speedway, as well as in roles such as officials, administrators, volunteers, and engineers.

The current Australian motorsport landscape does not reflect equal representation between genders. While there has been a steady increase in the number of female participants, women are still underrepresented. The stereotype that motorsport is exclusively a male domain persists, creating barriers for women.

We believe that motorsports should be inclusive and offer equal opportunities for everyone, regardless of, amongst other things, gender. By actively promoting and creating an environment that nurtures female talent, we strive to break down barriers and empower females in the world of motorsport. We aim to attract females to various roles in motorsport, including drivers, rides, race officials, club volunteers, engineers and team managers.

We recognise that the maximum impact point to attract females to motorsport in all roles, lies in attracting females who want to race. Getting more females started in any form of motorsport and encouraging them to participate and race regularly is essential to creating success. To do so will start to close the gender participation gap and will eventually flow on into all higher categories of motorsport.

Until recently, there was little credible research into the barriers that serve to create the gender gap in motorsport. We endorse the work being done by 13-times F1 Grands Prix winner David Coulthard and entrepreneur Karel Komárek, through their **More than Equal initiative ('More Than Equal')**, "to understand the barriers holding women and girls back and finding and supporting the best young talent..."

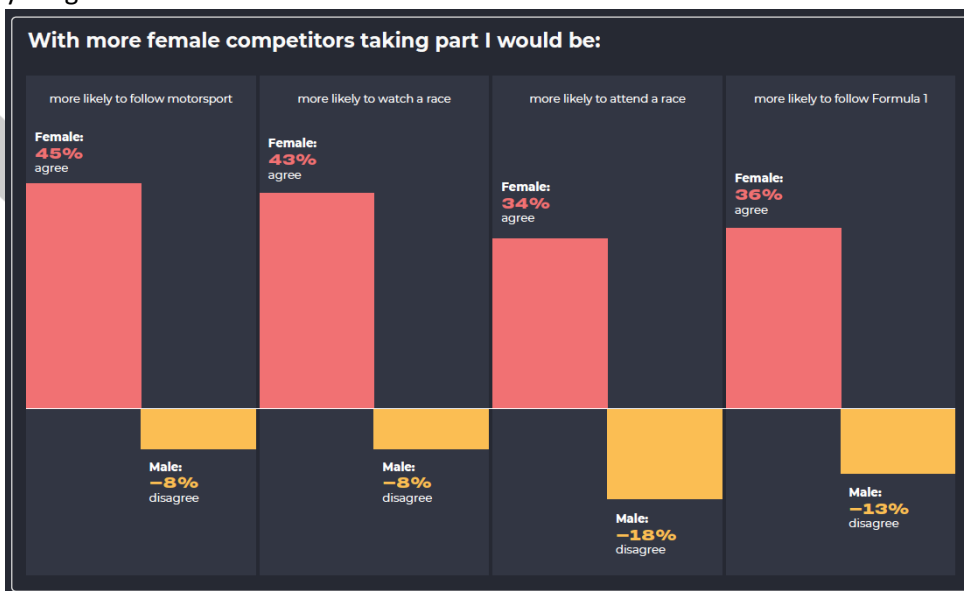
We support the great initiatives that are emerging across the world that are being developed to support female racing talent and intend to play our part so that one day female drivers and riders will be able to enjoy the

same level of support and success of their male counterparts. Understanding the issues is at the core of helping motorsport “provide tangible and meaningful solutions.”

In early 2023, More Than Equal undertook an extensive quantitative and qualitative research program. Their ‘Global Attitude Survey’ of motorsport fans received feedback from more than 13,000 fans from 147 countries. The survey also received data responses from 502 active and 787 former competitors, together with 73 responses from parents of active competitors totalling 1,362 responses^{iv}. They also conducted one-on-one interviews with experts interviewing “a range of motorsport stakeholders, including current and past female drivers and those with experience of working in the sport alongside women... coaches, parents and family members of female drivers, as well as brand and sponsor representatives, influential F1 team members and those working for the organising bodies of various racing series.”^v

Key Findings of the More Than Equal ‘Global Attitude Survey’ of fans and Participants^{vi}

- Based on the research we have done there is no reason why a woman cannot compete. This is one of the beauties of the sport, that a man and woman can compete on equal grounds.
- More women will mean more female fans.
 - This provides a huge opportunity for the sport to continue to grow and sustain the new and younger female fanbase.



- 3 in every 4 fans believe racing would be better with head-to-head competition; this rises to 7 in 8 among female fans.
- Less than 1 in 5 fans think that racing would be better in gender segregated series, declining to only 1 in 10 among female fans.
- There are systemic and cultural barriers holding women back from full involvement and in turn, from reaching elite level, including:
- A lack of inspirational role models at all levels
 - The absence of a pool of female driving talent
 - Stereotyping
 - Unwelcoming or inappropriate environments
 - Sub-standard facilities for female racers
 - A lack of understanding about existing women in motorsport initiatives
- Female competitors cited examples of how they felt unwelcome or were given access to inappropriate facilities while competing, while some were clear that although there have been improvements, many still experience sexist and misogynistic comments.

- Fans overwhelmingly ranked motorsport as performing very poorly on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, when measured against a range of other sports.
- Fans of the sport no longer buy into historic misconceptions and stereotyping about women and girls in motorsport.
- At elite levels of the sport these [stereotypes] are often reinforced, highlighting divergent views between the fanbase and the sport's leadership and its influential personalities.
- There are unfortunately plenty of historical and even recent examples where prominent figures have made public comments that have belittled or dismissed women in motorsport or female fans of the sport.
- The media also has an important role to play. Women feel strongly that it should be doing a much better job at promoting opportunities and championing success, and doing so in a way that does not conform to outdated misconceptions.
- The positive brand impact of sponsoring women's sport is relatively uniform across ages, with all age brackets showing 40%+ net agreement.
- Participation of women and girls in motorsport at all levels is depressingly low.
 - It currently represents on average 7-13% across all categories of competition, with the highest in **karting –that contributes 40% of overall female participation.**
 - Of all motorsport categories, karting has the highest female participation rate, almost double the participation levels seen in other series.
- Australia (at 11%) of new participants is a hotspot of new participation ranking 4th behind United States – 18%, United Kingdom – 16%, Sweden – 14% per capita.
- Female drivers are dropping out far too soon; their careers are much shorter than their male counterparts and they compete in fewer events.
 - Female careers in the sport are on average between one to five years, whereas male careers are more likely to last for 12 years or more.
 - Most drivers (male and female) appear to start between the ages of 10 and 16 but females are almost twice as likely to retire within the first five years.
- If steps are taken to close the gender participation gap so that female talent has an equal chance of reaching the top performance rankings at each stage of their career, then the participation growth required will be much less and more realistic.
 - This is why interventions, such as those being implemented by More than Equal, and others recently introduced such as the F1 Academy, are vital.
 - Interventions that aim at regularly putting a woman/women on the podium in feeder categories will increase momentum, encourage investment and inspire generations of girls who dream one day of holding regularly filling the top step of motorsport podium's.
 - Participation levels at the grassroots level needs to increase substantially in the short and medium term and this is something that can only happen if the sport comes together with imaginative and innovative ideas that result in measurable outcomes.
- Motorsport could:
 - Recognise that change for women and girls requires a multiagency approach
 - Embrace the opportunity to bring stakeholders working in this area to come together to share insight and learning
 - Explore steps to provide financially accessible karting for all.
 - Provide grant funding opportunities for participation initiatives.
 - Set transparent targets for female driver participation growth.
 - Commit to a zero-tolerance approach to sexist and offensive behaviour.
 - Improve facilities for female drivers - providing dedicated female changing and toilet facilities.
 - Commit to better storytelling about progress in gender equality and inclusion.
 - Establish clear and documented pathways for talented young females in motorsport from entry to elite level.

Why the issue is important

The gender gap in sports is not only an issue of fairness and equality but also a missed opportunity for growth and development of the sports industry. When we talk about sports, we talk about talent. And talent doesn't recognise gender. By not providing equal opportunities for female athletes, the sports industry is essentially halving its pool of talent. This can have a long-term impact on the competitiveness and dynamism of the sports industry.

Several other countries and sports have demonstrated the power of diversity.

The significant accomplishments of outstanding women in motorsports globally and Nationally have and continue to show that gender is no barrier if women are given the opportunity to compete at elite level.

Furthermore, other sports have seen enhanced audience engagement, increased sponsorship opportunities, and broader media coverage as a result of promoting gender diversity.

The success of efforts to increase female participation in other traditionally male-dominated sports and industries provides a roadmap for motorsport. For example, initiatives such as the Women's Big Bash League in cricket and the rise of the AFL Women's competition in Australian Football are testament to the potential of women in sport.

The overall importance of increasing female participation in Australian motorsport is summarised as follows:

1. Diversity and Inclusion

Being a diverse sport enhances creativity, problem-solving, and decision-making by introducing different perspectives and experiences. In motorsport, this could translate to innovative engineering solutions, better race strategies, and improved safety measures.

2. Talent Maximisation

Limiting participation to half the population restricts the available talent pool. By encouraging female participation, we increase the probability of discovering exceptional talent, thus improving the competitive nature and standard of the sport.

3. Role Models

Increased visibility of women in motorsport can inspire future generations of female participants. Successful female athletes, engineers, and officials in this field can serve as powerful role models, encouraging more young girls and women to join the sport.

4. Economic Implications

Including more women in the sport can result in significant economic benefits. As seen in other sports, increasing female participation leads to an expansion of the fan base, leading to higher viewership and increased ticket sales. This, in turn, attracts more sponsorship, creating a virtuous cycle of investment and growth.

Moreover, with the global focus on equality and diversity, companies are eager to associate themselves with initiatives that promote these values. By embracing gender diversity, Australian motorsport can position itself as a progressive industry, attracting investment from forward-thinking businesses.

Recommendations

The road towards gender parity in Australian motorsport requires strategic and proactive planning. The AMC has identified the five highest priorities for peak bodies, ranked in order of importance:

1. Policy Implementation

The first and foremost step is to adopt policies that ensure non-discriminatory practices and equal opportunities for all, regardless of gender. This includes clearly defined procedures for dealing with any incidents of bias or discrimination. Policy serves as the foundation on which all other actions are based and is essential to promoting a culture of inclusivity within the sport.

2. Development Programs

As the second priority, the development and implementation of dedicated programs aimed at training, supporting, and retaining women in motorsport are essential. These programs should cover all aspects of the sport and provide women with the opportunities and resources they need to succeed. This might include mentorship programs, technical and leadership training, and networking opportunities.

3. Funding and Sponsorships

Securing adequate funding and sponsorship for female participants is a vital next step. This financial support will enable more women to participate in the sport at a professional level, thereby increasing their visibility and helping to challenge traditional stereotypes.

4. Promotion and Marketing

Actively promoting the achievements of women in motorsport and ensuring equal representation in media coverage is another critical priority. This not only helps to raise the profile of female participants but also serves to inspire the next generation of women to consider a career in motorsport.

5. Partnerships

Finally, forming strategic partnerships with educational institutions, non-profit organisations, and businesses can help to promote motorsport as a viable career option for women and provide pathways into the industry. This also extends to collaborations with other sports bodies who have successfully increased female participation, to learn from their experiences and implement best practices.

Collectively, these priorities create a comprehensive and strategic approach to increasing female participation in motorsport. By addressing these areas, peak bodies can help to drive change and move the sport towards greater diversity and inclusion.

Evidence from other countries, sports, and industries

Audience engagement is significantly improved when there is a more diverse group of athletes participating in a sport. For instance, the WNBA has been steadily growing in popularity over recent years, attracting a diverse audience who appreciate the talent and competitiveness of the women's game. Similarly, the FIFA Women's World Cup in 2023 has now become a landmark event in terms of global audience engagement, breaking numerous viewing records and showing a promising future for women's football.

In terms of sponsorship opportunities, companies are increasingly looking to align their brand with social progress and gender equality. By promoting women's sports and reducing the gender gap, our federations can open up a new avenue of potential sponsors who want to support this movement.

Media coverage also plays a critical role in reducing the gender gap. Increased representation of women in sports can not only inspire more young girls to pursue sports but can also challenge and change societal norms and stereotypes.

Examples from industries like technology and engineering indicate that women can excel in traditionally male-dominated fields when given the right opportunities and resources. Organisations such as 'Girls Who Code' and 'Women in Tech' have successfully fostered a supportive environment for women and have managed to significantly increase female participation. Similarly, initiatives that focus on providing educational opportunities, mentorship, and a supportive community to women in motorsport could play a key role in increasing their presence in technical and engineering roles, thus effectively reducing the gender gap.

In conclusion, reducing the gender gap in sports not only advances the cause of gender equality but also presents substantial benefits in terms of audience engagement, sponsorship, media coverage, and industry growth. It is important to learn from the successful initiatives in other countries, sports, and industries, and apply those lessons to create a more inclusive and equitable sports culture.

Here are some remarkable women who have made significant strides in bridging the gender gap in motorsport. They represent just a small selection of those who have made significant contributions to breducing the gender gap in motorsport. Their achievements demonstrate that given the right opportunities, women can compete and succeed at the highest levels of the sport.

Internationally

Danica Patrick

Known as one of the most successful women in the history of American open-wheel racing, Patrick is the only woman to win an IndyCar Series race (the 2008 Indy Japan 300) and to secure a pole position in NASCAR's Daytona 500.

Michele Mouton

French driver Mouton was one of the best-known female rally drivers competing in the World Rally Championship. She won four events and finished runner-up in the drivers' world championship in 1982. She later went on to co-found the Race of Champions in 1988, an international motorsport event which brings together champions from all disciplines of motorsport.

Jamie Chadwick

A rising star in motorsport, British driver Chadwick became the first woman to win a British F3 race in 2018. In 2019, she won the inaugural W Series championship, an all-female single-seater racing championship. Chadwick is also a development driver for the Williams Formula One team.

Jessica Gardiner, Tayla Jones, Mackenzie Tricker

Motorcycling Australia's 2018 (Six Time winners) of FIM International Six Days Enduro Women's World Championship World Trophy Team. Their breathtaking results, which has in turn cemented their names in the history of the FIM's longest sanctioned off-road motorcycle race

Susie Wolff

Wolff started her career in karting, then moved to formula racing and the German touring car championship DTM. In 2012, she was signed by the Williams Formula 1 team as a development driver, becoming the first woman in 22 years to participate in a Formula 1 weekend when she took part in the British Grand Prix practice in 2014. In 2016, Wolff co-founded Dare To Be Different, a nonprofit organisation aimed at inspiring more women to get involved in motorsport. In March 2023, she was announced by F1 as the Managing Director of the F1 Academy category, which aims to develop and prepare young female drivers to progress to higher levels of competition.

F1 Academy is an all-female driver series featuring five teams, 15 drivers and 21 races at a host of F1 tracks, with Wolff brought in to enhance the managerial structure and offer her unique insight. Inclusion of accomplished women like Susie Wolff in motorsports discussions further underlines the progress made and the potential for continued reduction of the gender gap in the sport. By showing that women can not only compete but also take leadership roles in team management and development, she sets an empowering example for the next generation.

Nationally

Simona de Silvestro:

This Swiss race car driver has been a pioneer in the IndyCar Series, Formula E and Supercars. Originally from Switzerland, de Silvestro competed in the Australian Supercars Championship for several years as a full-time driver and will again be racing in the 2023 Bathurst 1000 for DJR Racing.

She has become a role model for many aspiring female drivers in Australia and continues to break down barriers in motorsport.

Molly Taylor

Taylor is one of Australia's leading rally drivers. In 2016, she became the first woman to win the Australian Rally Championship. Taylor also participated in the Extreme E championship, an FIA sanctioned electric SUV off-road racing series.

Leanne Tander

One of Australia's most accomplished female racing drivers, Tander has competed successfully in many forms of motorsport, from Formula Ford to the Australian Supercars Championship. In 2007, she became the first woman to win a national Formula Ford race in Australia.

Charli Cannon

Current Australian women's Motocross champion who, in 2023 is taking on the Women's World Championship, with top four and Rising Star results .

Betty Klimenko

While not a driver, Klimenko's contribution to Australian motorsport cannot be overlooked. She is the owner of the Erebus Motorsport team, which competes in the Supercars Championship. Klimenko is the first woman to own a team that won the Bathurst 1000, one of Australia's most prestigious motor races.

These women, through their individual achievements and contributions, have helped to pave the way for future generations of female drivers in Australia and have played a significant role in bridging the gender gap in motorsport.

Proposals for Progress

1. Grassroots Development:

The journey to gender equality in motorsport must start from the grassroots. Encourage young girls to participate in karting and junior racing series. Implement programs in schools to spark interest and demonstrate that motorsport is not a gender-exclusive domain.

2. Mentoring and Support Networks:

Establish mentorship programs and support networks for women in motorsport. This would allow them to navigate the challenges and obstacles they may face.

3. Equal Opportunities:

Ensure women have equal access to driving opportunities, engineering roles, and administrative positions. Motorsport governing bodies should actively promote gender diversity within their operations and enforce non-discriminatory practices.

4. Scholarships and Sponsorships:

Initiate scholarship programs for promising female talents to aid their progress in the motorsport ladder. Encourage companies to sponsor female teams and drivers, creating more opportunities for women to progress in the sport.

5. Role of Media

Media has a crucial role in shaping perceptions and challenging stereotypes. By providing equal coverage to women and men, showcasing the achievements of female athletes, engineers, and officials, and avoiding gender-biased commentary, the media can help normalise the idea of women in motorsport.

6. Partnerships with Educational Institutions

Partnerships with schools and universities can help promote motorsport as a viable and attractive career option for women. Guest lectures, internships, scholarship programs, and collaborative projects can be effective ways to engage young women and provide them with the necessary skills and knowledge.

Conclusion

The Federation Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) and the Federation Internationale de Motocyclisme (FIM) are the international governing bodies for automobile and motorcycle racing, respectively. As peak national bodies recognised by the FIA - Motor Sport Australia, Karting Australia, Speedway Australia and ANDRA and the FIM - Motorcycling Australia play a pivotal role in the development of motorsport in Australia. There are several actions these bodies can take to drive female participation:

1. Policy Implementation

Develop and enforce non-discriminatory policies and guidelines to ensure equal opportunities for all, regardless of gender. They should work towards eliminating any bias or discrimination in the sport and should have clear procedures in place for dealing with any incidents.

2. Leadership Roles

Strive for gender balance in leadership roles within the organisation, which will demonstrate a commitment to diversity and inclusion. Female leaders can bring fresh perspectives and ideas, as well as serve as role models for aspiring female participants.

3. Promotion and Marketing

Work with media partners to ensure that women's achievements in motorsport are adequately reported and celebrated. Positive and equal representation in media can help to break down stereotypes and encourage more women and girls to get involved in the sport.

4. Partnerships

Collaborate with educational institutions, non-profit organisations, and businesses to promote motorsport as a career option for women. This could include workshops, internships, and scholarship programs aimed at fostering talent and providing pathways into the industry.

5. Development Programs

Implement dedicated programs for training and supporting women in motorsport, whether they aspire to be drivers, engineers, officials, or administrators. This could include mentoring programs, networking events, and career development resources.

6. Funding and Sponsorships

Advocate for more funding and sponsorship opportunities for female participants. This could include working with existing partners to support female teams and drivers, as well as seeking out new partners who are committed to promoting diversity and inclusion.

7. Data Collection and Reporting

Monitor and report on gender diversity in motorsport, in order to identify areas for improvement and track progress over time. This data should be transparent and accessible, to hold the organisations accountable and encourage ongoing commitment to gender equality.

By taking these steps, the Australian Motorsport Council and its constituent bodies can not only help to increase the number of women participating in motorsport, but also make the sport more inclusive, competitive, and successful overall. With the support of the international governing bodies, these actions could have a significant impact on motorsport in Australia and potentially set an example for other countries around the world.

ⁱ FIA means the Federation Internationale de l'Automobile a member of the IOC Recognised International Sports Federations (ARISF).

ⁱⁱ FIM means the Federation Internationale de Motocyclisme a member of the ARISF.

ⁱⁱⁱ Reference to the Federal Government shall mean some or all of the entities established by the Australian Government by legislation - Australian Sport Commission, Sport Integrity Australia and the National Sports Tribunal.

^{iv} "Inside Track: Exploring the gender gap in motorsport" - More Than Equal

^v Ibid

^{vi} Ibid