

Latrobe University Hockey Club



Club facts

- Latrobe University Hockey Club, established in 1967, has 13 teams across all levels of competition.
- More than two hundred members call Latrobe University Hockey Club home and the club has recently included two additional junior teams.
- Borrowing their nickname from Arsenal FC, the Gunners' home ground is located at the KP Hardiman Reserve in Preston, in the northern suburbs of Melbourne.
- Latrobe University Hockey Club has the highest number of female members of all Latrobe's sporting clubs with five senior women's teams competing.
- Latrobe University Hockey club joined the Women & Girls' Pilot Club program in early 2013, one of six clubs trialling Hockey Victoria's inclusion programs.
- The club participated in the Pilot Club program, taking the opportunity to put into place initiatives aimed at improving women's experience of hockey, with a view to consolidating membership and attracting new members through the creation of safe, inclusive and welcoming environments both on and off the field.

Viewing participation in the Women & Girls' Pilot Club program as a way to address existing issues around girls' participation, the club was keen to be part of the initiative. The club had identified that girls playing in mixed teams were more likely to discontinue playing hockey and were keen to try to address this retention problem.

The Women & Girls' Breakfast was well attended by members of Latrobe University Hockey club. A report on the breakfast described the event as inspiring, citing the keynote speaker and the opportunity to share informal discussion with other clubs about how to make club environments more female friendly. The club appreciated the opportunity to discuss important issues such as retention of younger females through initiatives such as mentoring programs.

The Women's Round was described as a success by the club. Teams competing that weekend wore pink socks to signal their affiliation with the program. The club produced a colourful poster inviting members to participate and posted information on their website, along with calls for suggestions and participation from members.

Initiatives included making improvements to the women's facilities at the club's home ground which had been identified as critical to improving female hockey players' experience of the sport. The club's home ground is old and the facilities outdated and facilities did not meet female players' needs as it had no proper changing facilities. Further, safety had been identified at the club as an issue.

The club comprises a large number of university students; its location at some distance from the University campus was identified as representing a safety concern when players are leaving the club after a late match. The Pilot Club program enabled discussion about how to resolve the safety issue. Furthermore, the club took the opportunity offered by participation in the Pilot Club program to refocus their activities to create more 'female friendly' events and social functions.

The club created additional opportunities for Under-9 girls' teams which were successful. There were also positive outcomes for the women's seniors in the club with discussion facilitated around the subject of retaining older players through providing additional opportunities to become involved in coaching, umpiring and other aspects of club operations. Of note, was the lesson that small things can make a difference. A representative from the club summed up their experience in the program: *'there were simply no negative things associated with participation'*. Getting out into the hockey community and demonstrating what they had done to improve women and girls' experiences of the sport was cited as a major benefit. The opportunity to meet with the hockey community and to share their challenges and actions provided insights into how other clubs were handling similar issues; as expressed by the representative from Latrobe: *'this pilot program enabled me to meet regularly with Hockey Victoria with a cohort of other clubs which I got a lot of support from and we were effecting change'*.