

Southern United Hockey Club



Club facts

- Southern United Hockey club was founded in 2006, following the merger of the Moorabbin Districts and the Sandringham clubs.
- The largest club in south east Melbourne, the club comprises in excess of forty teams playing across all levels of competition.
- With two home grounds, one in each of the cities of Kingston and Bayside, the club attracts players from interstate, overseas, as well as the local area.
- It takes pride in being a high-achieving, family friendly club that welcomes newcomers and provides a friendly environment that encourages its members both on and off the field.
- The club had noticed a slight disparity growing between the men's and the women's sections, which it identified as impacting on female members' sense of inclusion and worth in the club.
- With the men's team performing strongly and achieving success, the club's focus had drifted to the men's competition at some expense to the women's.
- The club was keen to maintain its family friendly atmosphere; improving the experiences of its female members was seen as central to achieving this.



Participation in the Women & Girls' Pilot program enabled the club to put into place initiatives that would improve women and girls' experiences. Supported through the process by Hockey Victoria, the club benefited from sharing their experiences with other clubs in the program.

Describing participation in the program as *'eye-opening'*, members were delighted to find that they were able to affect small changes that made a big impact. Initially thinking that they'd have to undertake radical and drastic change to achieve the parity they desired between the men's and the women's sections, the program participants found that there were many small changes that were entirely within their grasp which would improve females' experiences.

As expressed by a club representative: *'We kept trying to think that you had to do something big to make it happen but we found that just doing little things has actually been the best thing that we could have done. It hasn't been an expensive process; it hasn't been a time draining process or anything like that. It's just a matter of lots of people doing little things around the club and it's really managed to improve the club for us'*. Examples cited were ensuring that changing facilities for men and women were of equal standard and displaying photographs of both men's and women's teams in the club rooms. Small changes enacted by lots of people amounted to a positive outcome that didn't impact negatively on the club culture.

There was some concern within the club prior to its commencement; some members were apprehensive that participation in the program could introduce unwanted tensions. Additionally, it had not been apparent to some members that there was a slight problem of inequity creeping into the club that was impacting on females' enjoyment of the club and the sport. Once the program started, these concerns were quickly allayed when members saw the initiatives being put into place and understood better the intent of the program.

Regular meetings with other clubs, facilitated by Hockey Victoria, provided opportunities, described as *'fantastic'*, to share information and stories. Representatives from Southern United Hockey club found these sessions invaluable as it was in these forums that ideas for how to make small but effective changes were discovered. Ideas gleaned from the discussions in the meetings were taken away and tested at the club; having the opportunity to report back to the program on how the initiative had gone and been received was cited as incredibly beneficial as ongoing evaluation of initiatives was facilitated. The program helped Southern United Hockey club determine its direction and provided the support and encouragement needed to begin the journey: *'enabled us to make the small changes that we needed to make to try to get a better idea and understanding of where we need to be and where we're going'*.