



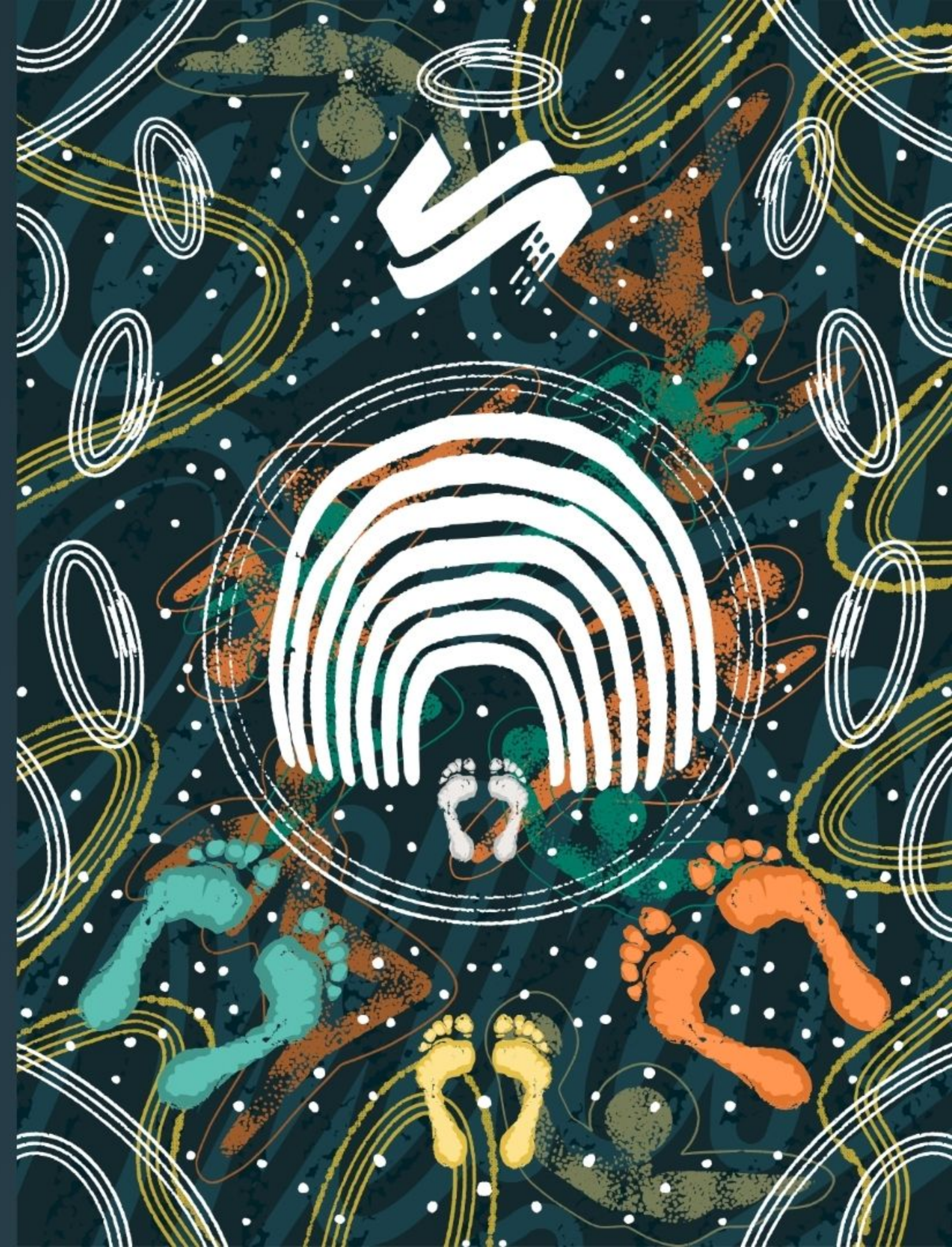
Athletics in Australia National Participation Plan

2026-2034

Everyone has a place in athletics.

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land upon which we run, jump, throw, and roll. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and acknowledge the significant contribution that First Nations people have and continue to make to athletics in Australia.



Introduction

Everyone Has a Place in Athletics

Athletics is the most universal of pursuits, offering something for everyone through running, jumping, throwing and rolling. From schoolyard athletics carnivals to the youth and pandemic-fueled explosion in run clubs, athletics is woven into the fabric of Australian life. Today, participation is at its highest level ever with more than 4 million Australians participating in athletics in all its forms.

A Changing Landscape

The way Australians engage with sport is shifting dramatically. People want participation that fits their schedule, location and lifestyle preferences. They're moving away from intense competition towards social, inclusive, and fun sporting experiences.

Australia itself is also transforming:

- 29.5% of Australians were born overseas and 48% have a parent born overseas.
- 3.4% of the population are First Nations.
- 1 in 5 Australians have a disability. Another 1 in 5 live with long-term health conditions.
- 1 in 8 adults and 1 in 6 children live below the poverty line.
- The population is ageing. Those 65+ will double by 2063.

Technology is advancing rapidly, whilst climate change threatens traditional outdoor athletics with Sydney and Melbourne predicted to reach 50°C heatwaves by 2040.



Our Golden Opportunity

Four powerful forces are converging which present athletics with an unprecedented opportunity.

Play Well Strategy

Australia's first truly collaborative National Participation Plan is driving industry and government alignment to transform sport.

Brisbane 2032

Athletics is the centrepiece of the world's greatest sporting showcase and the eyes of the Nation and the World will be on the Olympic and Paralympic Games in our backyard.

Governance and Operational Reform

The joining of Australian Athletics and Little Athletics Australia and ongoing reform at a state and territory level will create a myriad of exciting new opportunities.

Current Momentum

Record participation levels and interest in athletics, coupled with high performance success provide the ideal foundation for continued growth.

By agreeing priorities and aligning efforts across the athletics ecosystem, we can collectively harness the power of these forces to inspire, empower and support the athlete inside everyone - ensuring that everyone truly has a place in athletics.



A Plan for Athletics, by Athletics

The Athletics in Australia National Participation Plan has been developed by athletics, for athletics. Whilst the process has been led by Australian Athletics with support from the Australian Sports Commission, this plan has ultimately been shaped by key stakeholders across all levels of athletics in Australia. Importantly, the Plan has been informed by data and has been developed to align with and support the delivery of the Play Well Strategy.

A key component of the Plan's development was a series of stakeholder workshops to inform and refine key priorities and projects. Working with state and territory Member Associations, in-person workshops were conducted across the country with a diverse group of representatives including club committee members, athletes (various events and levels), coaches, officials, parents, teachers, Board Members, staff, State and Local Government, sport advocacy bodies, and volunteers.

7
Workshops

117
Participants

1,559
Menti* text responses

* Menti is an online interactive tool that was used to gather participant input during the seven stakeholder workshops.

Play Well

Led by the Australian Sports Commission, facilitated by Deloitte and designed by sport, for sport, the Play Well Strategy was released in late 2023. Its release followed an extensive consultation process and the release of Play Well marks the first time that Australia has had a co-designed National Participation Plan for sport.

The Athletics in Australia National Participation Plan has been designed to link with Play Well and demonstrate how athletics will contribute to and leverage the Play Well Strategy to grow participation in athletics in Australia at all levels.



PLAYWELL





Our vision: Everyone has a place in sport.

Our mission: We will create safe, welcoming, inclusive and fun sporting experiences.

We will achieve this through six priority areas

1.	Empowering people and organisations	Building the capability of people and organisations to meet the needs of everyone involved in sport.
2.	Driving lifelong involvement	Foster a sporting environment that enables positive lifelong involvement in sport.
3.	Activating places and spaces	Creating, improving, activating and better managing places and spaces to ensure everyone can have safe and enjoyable sporting experiences.
4.	Building connections	Creating a connected and collaborative sport ecosystem that supports all organisations to provide quality sporting experiences.
5.	Equitable access	Prioritising equity and choice to ensure all Australians can access sport.
6.	Transforming culture	Transforming the culture of sport in Australia to create an environment where everyone can access safe, inclusive, welcoming and fun experiences.

These priority areas will be pursued across each of the key elements of the sport ecosystem

 <p>People The people that participate in, facilitate and deliver sporting experiences.</p>	 <p>Places The places where sporting experiences take place.</p>	 <p>Partners The organisations which do, or can, support the delivery of quality sporting experiences.</p>	 <p>Programs The activities that make up sporting experiences.</p>
---	--	--	--

All enabled by

 <p>Diversity and inclusion Ensuring diversity and inclusion are central to the delivery of each activity.</p>	 <p>Technology and digital Embracing technology and a digital first philosophy.</p>	 <p>Yarning Listening to the community and taking a proactive approach to advocating for sport.</p>	 <p>Data and measurement Developing data and measurement approaches and practices.</p>
--	---	---	--

Delivered through a deliberately collaborative approach to implementation, supported by annual planning and review.

Definition of a Participant

For the purposes of the Athletics in Australia National Participation Plan, we have adopted a wide definition of participant, which is as follows:

A “Participant” refers to an individual who is engaged in some way in a sporting activity or event, either as an athlete, coach, official, volunteer, or supporter.



Athletics Participation Ecosystem

Athletics participation in Australia exists as a complex and diverse ecosystem of organisations and individuals that contribute to participation in its various forms. Central to the Athletics in Australia National Participation Plan, and aligned with the vision of Australian Athletics, is fostering connections between the various parts of this ecosystem so that we can collectively work towards providing athletics experiences that afford everyone a place in athletics.

The illustration on the next page attempts to capture the complexity, diversity and interconnectedness of this ecosystem.

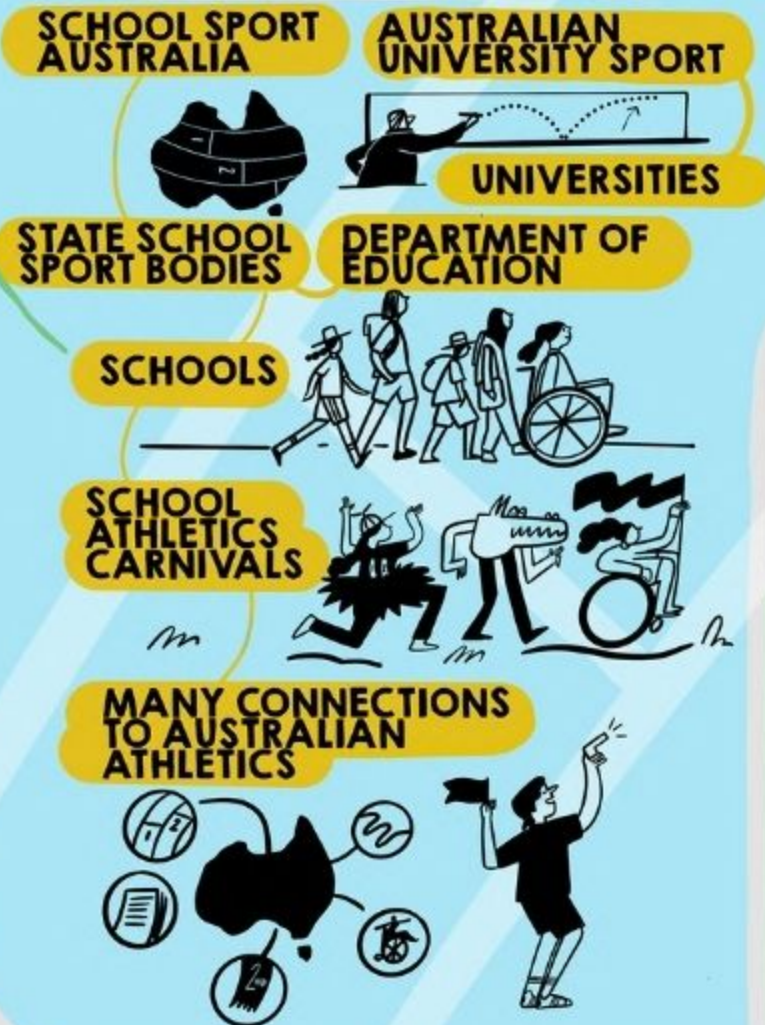


ATHLETICS PARTICIPATION IN AUSTRALIA

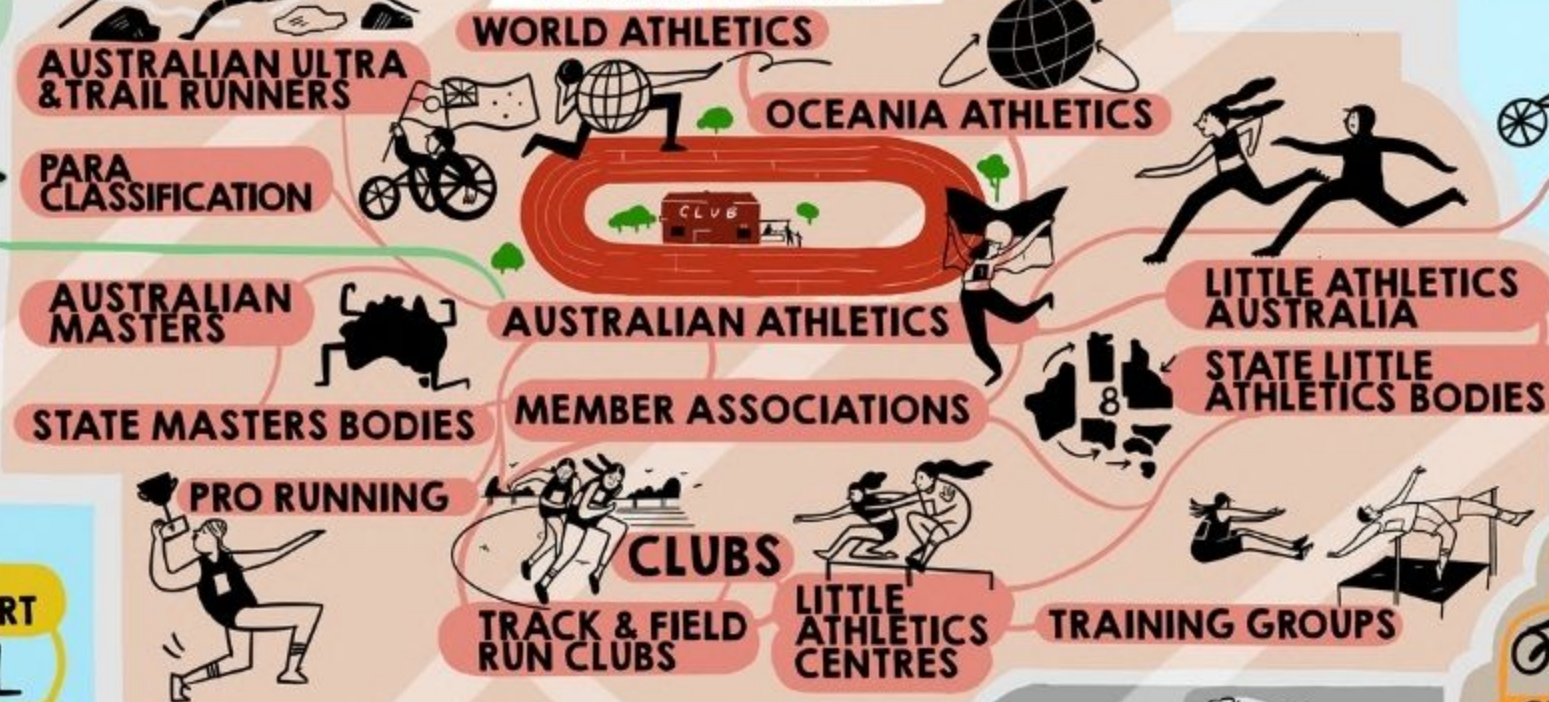
EDUCATION SYSTEM



SCHOOLS & UNIVERSITIES



ATHLETICS



RUNNING



ACTIVITIES



PARTICIPANTS



FACILITIES



FUNDING



STRATEGIC PARTNERS



Plan Overview

The Athletics in Australia National Participation Plan 2026 – 2034 consists of eight key themes that align with Play Well and aim to drive the continued growth of athletics in Australia.

EVERYONE HAS A PLACE IN ATHLETICS

Collaboration and culture

Enhance collaboration and alignment between stakeholders, increase support, and improve culture to deliver a more effective athletics ecosystem.

Participation products and transitions

Develop, strengthen, and connect participation opportunities to support participants to engage and re-engage with athletics throughout their lives.

Accessibility

Increase access to athletics by adapting and expanding offerings to meet contemporary consumer needs and fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Infrastructure and places

Pursue strategic and evidence-based athletics infrastructure development and explore non-traditional facilities, places, and events to facilitate participation opportunities and drive growth.

The Athletics workforce

Develop, support, and celebrate coaches, officials, volunteers, and staff to improve the participant experience, and ensure athletics can meet demand for future participation growth.

Technology and digital

Leverage data, systems, digital tools, and technology solutions to enhance decision-making, improve efficiency in delivery and optimise the participant experience.

Storytelling

Harness the power of storytelling to highlight the reach, power, and impact of athletics participation beyond high-performance outcomes.

Futureproofing

Secure the future of athletics in Australia by embracing and catering to the full spectrum of athletics participants, addressing climate impacts, and defining Brisbane 2032 legacy outcomes.

Key Initiatives Summary

The 2026–2034 Athletics in Australia National Participation Plan contains 96 actions and initiatives. Below is a high-level overview of key initiatives contained within the Plan.



Collaboration and culture

- Strengthen relationships and governance between athletics bodies at all levels
- Prioritise safe, inclusive, and welcoming environments aligned with the National Integrity Framework.
- Support the development of club capability and capacity.
- Improve culture and enhance safeguarding systems and processes.



The Athletics Workforce

- Recruit, train, and retain a diverse, well-supported workforce.
- Expand education and mentoring for coaches, officials, and volunteers.
- Harness technology to reduce volunteer workload, improve efficiency, and enhance the participant experience.
- Increase gender, age, and cultural diversity.



Participation Products and Transitions

- Support participation throughout the various life stages by diversifying product offerings and making it easier for participants to enter and re-enter athletics.
- Improve school athletics delivery, connections, and support.
- Enhance the connection between athletics participation products and services.
- Expand recreational running offerings and leverage the Sydney Marathon.



Technology and Digital

- Improve participation data collection and systems to improve service offerings.
- Investigate the use of technology, including artificial intelligence, to assist in officiating events and improving participant experience.
- Invest in analytical capability and tools to enhance decision-making.
- Provide education and tools to support increased workforce usage of technology.



Accessibility

- Implement initiatives to engage underrepresented groups.
- Improve para classification understanding and accessibility.
- Expand disability participation options beyond para-classification so that more people with a disability can engage in athletics.
- Grow games-based, short form programs to complement traditional products.



Storytelling

- Increase coverage of grassroots and community athletics stories.
- Highlight the social and community benefits of athletics beyond elite performance.
- Engage ambassadors (athletes, coaches, volunteers) to inspire participation.
- Develop campaigns to promote welcoming, safe, and inclusive environments.
- Consider the introduction of a set of National participation-focused awards.



Infrastructure and Places

- Develop evidence-based state and national facilities plans.
- Develop guidance for complementary facilities such as 200m short track.
- Advocate for increased investment in athletics facilities across the country.
- Improve access to existing venues and utilise smaller or non-traditional spaces.
- Explore new event-hosting opportunities to drive facility development.



Futureproofing

- Develop new and refine existing product and service offerings.
- Develop a targeted legacy plan to leverage Brisbane 2032.
- Create a Sustainability Action Plan addressing climate impacts on athletics.
- Strengthen partnerships and financial sustainability.

What Does Success Look Like?

The overarching success of the Athletics in Australia National Participation Plan 2026 – 2034 will be measured against the success indicator statements and overall participant targets below. As part of the operational planning process, quantitative and qualitative measures and targets will be developed for each specific initiative.

GROW

Sustained increase in overall athletics participation and the number of connected participants.¹

DIVERSIFY

Increased diversity of athletics offerings and participants, including members.

ALIGN

The Athletics ecosystem is more aligned, connected, and effective.

EXPAND

More places and spaces for Australians to participate in athletics.

2034 Growth Aspirations

5 MILLION

Australians participating in athletics annually.²

1 MILLION

Support 1M+ participant experiences annually.³

200 THOUSAND

Registered athletes, coaches, and officials.

1. Generally, a connected participant is an athletics participant where Australian Athletics can demonstrate a genuine connection to that individual. This may include, for example, a member or a registered program or event participant.

2. Based on aggregated AusPlay data for athletics, including track and field and running.

3. The sum of registered members; Sporting Schools participants; school carnivals where delivery is supported by Member Associations; Sydney Marathon; affiliated mass participation events; and program and event participants who are not registered members.

Implementation and Performance Measures

This short form version of the Athletics in Australia National Participation Plan 2026 – 2034 contains a high-level overview of the key aspects of the Plan. The long form version identifies some 96 actions and initiatives across the eight key themes. The implementation of the Athletics in Australia National Participation Plan 2026 – 2034 will be guided by a detailed operational plan which will identify and sequence the priority actions and initiatives across three horizons. This has been preceded by an initial establishment phase to establish foundations for the implementation of the Plan.



The operational plan will outline actions and initiatives across each horizon and will contain more specific details in relation to initiatives, outcomes, measures, responsibility, and timelines. Measures will include both qualitative and quantitative outcomes. The operational plan will be developed collaboratively and will consider current priorities, available financial resources, and human resource capacity.

The Athletics in Australia National Participation Plan 2026 – 2034 will be subject to periodic review. Working and monitoring groups will also be established as required to assist with the implementation of the operational plan.

Commencing in Horizon 1, public reporting of progress against the Athletics in Australia National Participation Plan 2026 – 2034 will be included in the Australian Athletics annual report, which is released in late October each year following the Annual General Meeting.

Supporters

The Athletics in Australia National Participation Plan 2026 – 2034 is a plan for athletics in Australia. The following athletics organisations have endorsed the Plan and will work collaboratively to deliver its various elements to ensure that everyone has a place in athletics.



Athletics in Australia National Participation Plan 2026-2034

