

GYMNASTICS AUSTRALIA NEXTGEN ACCELERATED COACHING PROGRAM 2020–2022

High Performance Sport & Athlete Health

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NextGEN Program 2020–2022



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Gymnastics Australia (GA) is delivering an Accelerated Coach Program for women coaches in Women's Artistic Gymnastics. It is being delivered in collaboration between Sport Australia Women Leaders in Sport (WLIS), GA, the Australian Institute of Sport and the University of Queensland. The aim of the 2 1/2 year NextGEN Program is to enhance the leadership capacity, empower the female voice and enrich the experience of female coaches working in the development and performance pathways in gymnastics.

Gymnastics Australia - Providing opportunities for the next generation of coaches to shine

"I had to make the time to reflect on my personal development which is something I didn't really make time for."

The Gymnastics Australia NextGEN Accelerated Coaching Program is a two-and-a-half-year program being delivered in collaboration between Sport Australia Women Leaders in Sport (WLIS), Gymnastics Australia, the Australian Institute of Sport and the University of Queensland.

Commencing in late 2020 and concluding in 2022, the program aims to enhance the leadership capacity of, empower the female voice and enrich the experience of female coaches working in the development and performance pathways in gymnastics.

Through a blended learning model, the program will enhance understanding and development of the interpersonal and intrapersonal skills of coaches that contributes to positive and effective coach-athlete relationships and enhance the ability to accelerate learning opportunities for women to impact in the high-performance domain.

Now in its second year, the program has seen that there is now a sustainable coach development framework for developing high performance women coaches now in place. This has enabled both cross-discipline and cross-sport collaboration to support learning opportunities.

"I'm researching more and finding new ways to coach skills I have coached for a long time; I have resources that I didn't have."

Despite severe restrictions in place within Australia due to COVID-19 the learning outcomes for the women involved in this program have been significant and have included participants indicating that they have grown in self-confidence, have a stronger connection to other women within the group and feel a lot more supported.

"I am not more confident in my ability as a coach. More comfortable in sharing ideas and experiences with others. Refining and implementing reflective practices."

What is the purpose of the project?

The NextGEN Accelerated Coaching Program 2020-2022 is a component of the Gymnastics Australia High Performance Coach Development Program and targets women coaches in Tier 1 and 2 of the GA Performance Coach Program.

A key aim of the NextGEN program is to create a blended learning design for developing performance coaches that will integrate knowledge and expertise from the high performance community and be sustainable beyond the completion of the WLIS grant. The overarching objective is to enhance understanding and development of the interpersonal and intrapersonal skills of coaches that will contribute to positive and effective coach-athlete relationships and enhance the ability to accelerate coaches' learning for women to impact in the high-performance domain.

The outcomes for the ten participating coaches is to:

- Undertake an integrated bespoke program to accelerate coach learning utilising performance profiling

- Accelerate leadership capabilities and improve coaching skills at the high-performance level through mentorship, reflection and experiential and professional learning
- Gain financial support to participate in the Graduate Certificate in Sports Coaching with the University of Queensland
- Participate in an environment that supports and enhances elite coach development in women
- Develop capacity to build coaching networks inside and outside the sport to collaborate, share ideas and knowledge.

What were the enablers that proved successful in your project?

Despite International rules governing the competition requirements at World Championships and Olympic Games, there are limited women coaches at the National Team level in Women's Artistic Gymnastics in Australia. The impact from previous Women in Leadership programs were limited due to small numbers of coaches, 'one-off' grants, retirements and short learning programs. Further, the quality of applicants and access to coaches was reduced by potentially flawed selection and communication processes. The NextGEN program was focused on countering previous limitations by undertaking the following:

- Formal Panel Selection: An extensive selection process was conducted for individuals who had demonstrated evidence of self initiated learning, were currently coaching in the performance pathway, and obtained support from their Club and State endorsement.
- Numbers of candidates: Ten coaches were selected (from the initial 8 advertised) including 2 non-funded coaches.
- Length of program: The 2 ½ year program enables the development of a Community of Practice, extensive 1 on 1 support and mentoring.

- Support Network: A Network has been developed to support Women in Leadership through individual role modelling, group discussions and creating connections with other elite coach development programs for women.
- Sustainable framework: A framework has been established to continue the impact each successive year with an additional cohort added annually.
- Lead facilitator: An experienced lead facilitator to support and enhance the learning journey of the participants throughout the 2 ½ year journey.

What impact did your project have?

The program has been underway for 12 months and there is a sustainable coach development framework for developing high performance women coaches now in place. This will enable:

- Successive cohorts of women to participate in the next calendar year, with the intention for the current cohort to support the learning and development of each subsequent group,
- Cross discipline collaboration and learning with women coaches from Men's Gymnastics, Trampoline and Rhythmic Gymnastics to be added to the Women's Gymnastics coaches,
- Cross sport collaboration and fertilisation at both the pathway and National Team level,
- Continued leverage off partnerships with the AIS, the Tertiary sector and other coach learning opportunities.

What were the outcomes for women?

Despite severe restrictions in place within Australia due to COVID-19 the learning outcomes for the women involved in this program have been significant. Five top themes have been evident throughout the past 12 months. These are:

- **CONFIDENCE:** Continued growth in self confidence and self worth and feelings of empowerment.
- **CONNECTION:** Strong connection within the group of women, with a high level of effort perceived in building connections and collaborating with others.
- **SUPPORT:** High level of support within the group countering the challenges such as isolation, stagnation, loneliness, frustration and feelings of being overwhelmed
- **LEARNING:** A significant impact on areas of personal growth have been identified, contributing to increased self awareness and reflective capacities and high motivation to continue learning.
- **STRENGTHS:** A high level of awareness of strengths and validation of what current knowledge and skills they already have.

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