



Australian Athletics

Mentorship, Allies & 'Paying it Forward' Supporting Women Coaches – Community to High Performance

Women in High Performance Coaching



Funded jointly by AIS Performance Pathways Grants and AA High Performance Program



Offers developing HP coaches 24-month mentorship partnership



**20 Mentor Coaches
(30% women/ 70% men)**

**100+ Mentee Coaches
(38% women/ 62% men)**

'The introduction of a mentoring system for coaches rather than discarding those who had been in the sport for decades had proved to be a masterstroke'

- Jane Flemming AA President and Commonwealth Games Gold medalist



Initial Aims and Objectives

Aims: Establish a formal mentoring program to capture, retain and pass on the collective knowledge of our most highly qualified and experienced coaches to grow the next generation of HP coaches.

Objectives

- Develop more collaborative and trusting coaching relationships within our coaching community.
- Provide professional development for both mentor and mentees through sharing ideas & supporting each other.
- Ultimately lead to greater coach capacity and capabilities resulting in improved athlete performances.

Program Description

- Coaches are invited into the two-year mentorship program as a major component of other AA/AIS HP Programs (Coaching athletes to international teams, Athlete to Coach, WiHPC, Gen 32).
- Mutual mentor/mentee match up process – mentor Bios provided.
- Training and resources provided for outlining responsibilities & commitments.
- Funding available for mentors and mentees to meet in training & competition environments.

Opportunities include:

- Regular structured & informal meetings online and face to face.
- CoP groups with current and past mentees.
- Monthly Town Hall presentations by HP Coaches/Professional experts.
- Individual coach development plans (ICDP).
- Connections/opportunities with national and international experts.
- Opportunities to attend domestic camps and international competition (Team coach or shadowing experiences).
- Career related and psychosocial support/advice.

Outcomes for Women in HP Coaching

The program over the past 5 years has offered 40 women coaches up to 2 years mentoring with one or two mentors.

Two key outcomes have been the support of male allies and coach mentees upskilling to coach mentors and paying it forward.

Key outcomes include:

- Enhanced technical & interpersonal skills and knowledge.
- Strengthened capability and confidence leading to increased representation in national and international coaching roles.
- Opportunities to expand networks and seek guidance, support, and knowledge from expert coaches, peers and related professionals.
- **Amazing support and sponsorship from male allies.**
- **Provided opportunities to upskill as a mentor and pass on knowledge and support to other women coaches.**

Outcomes for Women Coaches

Importance of male allies & supporting other women coaches

Sandro Bisetto Australian Team Coach - Olympics, World Championships, World Universiade, Commonwealth Games, World U20s (1988–2024) – specialising in jumps and combined events... *"Continuing the chain of mentoring by fostering personal, trusting, and positive relationships."*



Sandro mentors jumps coaches Marty Stolberg, Lauren Van Ingen, Karen Roe and Jane Scotney between 2022 until now and is having a huge impact on their development, opportunities and their athlete's performance...

"One of the unexpected highlights of this mentoring program has been the relationships I have built with the other mentees in our group"

- Lauren



"Every great coach has someone who has helped shape their journey. For me, that person is Sandro. Through his mentorship in the Women in High Performance program, I've gained not only valuable coaching knowledge but also greater confidence in my own abilities"

- Marty



"The knowledge, guidance and confidence he has shown in me by recommending me to others as a coach has given me the chance to work with Australian International athletes"

- Lauren



Women in High Performance Coaching Case Study



"The opportunity to work with Sandro and his athlete was amazing to see and hear their interaction during competitions at Nationals and Oceania with Marty. The support from the group has been fabulous and I am very grateful to be working and challenged in such a high-level environment together. This helps me to keep striving to learn/use this knowledge for my own athletes to help others"

- Jane



"Sandro with his wealth of knowledge and generosity to share and teach inside the Mentorship Program has been instrumental in my growth as a Coach. It has allowed me to develop the skills and confidence to be able to pivot quite quickly into a HP mindset. Sandro has also been the driving force in creating this "Squad" of High Jump Obsessed women...now a strongly connected group able to share, learn and provide help, feedback and backup across three States for each other and each other's athletes".

- Karen

Paying it Forward - Women Coaches Mentoring Programs 2025–2027

Australian Athletics



Offers early career coaches
12-month mentorship
partnership



Funded by WLIS grant
(2025) and AA HP
Program (2026)



12 mentor coaches (10 from AA-
HP Coach Mentor Program) and
33 mentee coaches

Initial Aims and Objectives

- Support the leadership development of selected women mentee coaches.
- Develop a formal mentoring program addressing needs of women coaches.
- Build a network of women mentor & mentee coaches who can pass on knowledge and skills to support more coaches in the future.
- Providing opportunities for women coaches involved in AA HP Coach Mentor Program to upskill as mentor coaches.
- Extend the network of more experienced women coaches to support early career coaches.
- Provide a succession plan for community coaches to transition to high-performance coach.

Program Description

- Based on the successful format of the formal HP Coach Mentor program with training for both mentors and mentees.
- Mutual mentor-mentee match ups (mentor bios provided).
- Virtual café meeting conducted for mentors led by AIS HP Coach Mentor Barry Dancer – involved supporting mentors with tools/resources and sharing experiences & challenges with each other.
- CoP groups conducted for the mentee coaches and facilitated by AA HP staff and mentors.
- Regular catch ups with mentors and mentees at state and national competitions.
- Funding for mentor travel to visit mentees and educational upskilling for mentees.



"The privilege to be mentored through the AA HP mentor Program has made a huge impact on me as a person and as a coach which has reflected in my coaching and life...I want to use what I have learnt to help other coaches."
- Andae

"I value collaboration and want to strengthen the Australian jumps community by paying forward what I've learned."
- Marty

"I have gained so much knowledge and insight from the 3 different HP coaches as my mentors in the Australian Athletics mentoring programs so now, I am ready to give back to other women."
- Liz

Outcomes

- Increased number of capable, confident and experienced women coach mentors.
- Extended networks and provided opportunities for more early-career and developing coaches – clearer pathways, higher accreditation courses, exposure and access to other HP coaches in the system.
- Mentors supported & upskilled mentees in technical knowledge, recovery, travelling, programming as well as life and work balance advice.
- Virtual Cafes for mentors and CoP for mentees were very valuable for:
 - ✓ Developing strong communities and perspective (realising they are not alone).
 - ✓ Universal coaching challenges: Many issues transcend sport or discipline.
 - ✓ Value of reflection: Structured debriefs foster self-awareness and confidence in programming.
 - ✓ Balance & wellbeing: Coaches must look after themselves to support athletes.
- Adaptability: Being open to shifting plans and seeking fresh viewpoints is essential.

Application

- Other sports and organisations can improve representation by pairing opportunity with structured, sustained support.
- Start with a dedicated development pathway that connects mentoring, role models, peer networks and practical high-performance coaching experiences.
- Sustain and build on the pathway by investing intentionally, offering flexible participation, creating a safe and inclusive environment, and appointing skilled people to lead and mentor over time.

Recommendations

- Set clear goals and progression milestones for targeted development pathways.
- Connect mentoring, development plans, workshops and practical coaching into one coordinated pathway.
- Mutual matching of mentors and mentees – know and value your allies.
- Fund participation barriers, including travel, caregiving and family responsibilities.
- Build safe, inclusive environments that strengthen confidence, networks and belonging.
- Use experienced mentors and visible role models to guide, sponsor and inspire coaches.
- Invest across multiple years so programs are embedded, evaluated and sustained.

“The program equipped me with valuable tools and insights. I gained confidence (rating my confidence at 4–5 out of 5 post-program) and developed effective strategies such as using structured meeting times, drawing on workshop learnings, and adapting to mentees’ needs- including when health issues disrupted their availability. I shifted from giving advice to asking guiding questions and became more mindful of truly listening rather than planning my next response”- Mentor

“I am not alone. There is a community of women coaches to support and assist with learning and developing. The opportunity to sit and discuss and reflect on coaching environment, practices and relationships was very valuable” - Mentee

