

NZC Board's Women in Cricket Governance Project

Qualitative 'Check In' on Project Impact To Date

June 2021



Executive Summary

NZC's *Women and Cricket* Report, authored by Sarah Beaman and published in November 2016, found (amongst other things) that cricket's national and regional governors had sidelined women's cricket, both structurally and philosophically. It was considered fundamental that NZC and our six Major Associations (MAs) and 24 District Associations (DAs) transform cricket's engagement with women and girls as a prerequisite to us achieving our vision of '*A game for all New Zealanders; A game for life.*'

Women in Cricket Governance (WiCG) Project

The need to address the gender inequity in cricket governance was identified as a high priority. In February 2017, the NZC Board initiated a project entitled 'Women in Cricket Governance.'

The initial purpose of the Women in Cricket Governance (WiCG) project was to increase female engagement with and influence within cricket governance throughout New Zealand, adding much needed skills, expertise and balance to cricket governors' leadership, including better decision-making processes.

To date, the project focus has been on:

- increasing the number of women involved within NZC, Major Association (MA) and District Association (DA) governance and,
- then improving the overall quality of governance within NZC and our MAs and DAs.

Females within cricket governance – the numbers

When the Women and Cricket report was released in November 2016, there were only 11 females amongst the 220 directors on NZC, MA and DA boards. By November 2018, the number of female directors had increased to 69. By November 2021, this number will have increased to in excess of 85.

NZC's own board, which in 2016 had one female director out of 8, now has 4 female directors and, for the last 3 years, NZC's first female President. Some of the MA Boards also now have a 50:50 gender split. All MA Boards had reached the 40% minimum threshold by end-2019. Two of the MA Boards have recently had female chairs.

Purpose of this 'Qualitative Check In'

The purpose of this project check-in is to review, at a high level, the impact of the WiCG project to date. It is a qualitative check-in.

We have set out, herein, to begin to answer the question: '*Has cricket in New Zealand benefited from the governance-inspired changes that have taken place over the last three years?*'

This check-in document summarizes:

- a group discussion of the above question which occurred at a September 2020 meeting of the WiCG Steering Group, and
- WiCG conversations with three individuals – one NZC and two MA board directors – each of whom have experienced the WiCG project from its beginning and who were able to share their individual observations and learnings from the last three years.

This document is one of a series being created by NZC, capturing the story of the WiCG project as it proceeds (see Appendix for details).

In early 2022, just over five years since the release of the 'Women and Cricket' Report, NZC is intending to publish a full 'Five Years On' report, including scorecard detailing progress made implementing the 17 recommendations in the 2016 Report.

WiCG Steering Group Meeting 25 September 2020 – Group Discussion of Project Impact

The WiCG Steering Group, formed in February 2017, meets four times each year, sharing cricket governance experiences and challenges, contributing to NZC and MA development of relevant strategy and initiatives promoting female engagement within cricket governance.

The Steering Group (SG) met on Friday 25 September (see Appendix for full list of SG members). Sport NZ's Head of Governance, Julie Hood, and Graduate, Sophie Parker, also attended.

Project Impact – has cricket in New Zealand benefited?

Earlier in the year, one experienced MA manager asked NZC if the increase of women in cricket governance had made any difference. Asked without cynicism, it raised the question: *'Has cricket in New Zealand benefited from the project-inspired governance changes that have taken place over the last three years?'*

The WiCG Project has consistently had strong momentum since its inception. The SG has played a vital role. The above question challenged the SG to take a step back and reflect on what has been accomplished over a short period of time, and what the impact has been.

What follows below is a summary of the SG's discussion in response to the above question.

Shift in NZC Mindset

Throughout the SG discussion it was recognized by all that there has been a significant shift in mindset, not only within the NZC Board but also within NZC as an organization.

One typical, significant topical example discussed was NZC's decision to send the WHITE FERNS to Australia and to provide that team with a comprehensive 2020/21 home schedule, regardless of COVID-19 complications. This was on top of the Board, at the same time, confirming two rounds of Super Smash male/female double-headers and increased investment into Yeah Girls!

"A few years ago, if we were in a COVID-19 situation, the first thing to have been cut would've been the women's international and domestic schedules. And there was no question about it... it's making sure equity is maintained."

At NZC board level, one of NZC's newest directors (albeit an experienced director in the corporate world) reflected on her first board meeting last year and referred to the 'snigger factor', the idea where members of a board (usually male-dominated boards) would snigger amongst themselves when diversity and inclusion was brought up in conversation or pushed as an agenda item.

However, to her delight, she saw no sign of this within the NZC Board. Her reflection was that the NZC Board had normalised discussion of diversity and inclusion as business as usual (BAU).

"My measure was 'are they still sniggering, or have they moved on?' Not one snigger, BAU. NZC had totally moved into a different sphere, not only a role model for sport but also industries and businesses throughout New Zealand."

This was supported by another member of the NZC Board, who has noticed a significant change in the way the NZC Board goes about BAU. Having joined the board after NZC received the Women and Cricket report, she believes diversity and inclusion started out as an agenda item, but has since changed, specifically in the last 18 months, to now be BAU.

"I've really noticed a significant change in the way the NZC Board goes about BAU. We're seeing lots of great things coming from it... double headers, inclusion about women's cricket at the same level as men's cricket. These opportunities are not dropped or missed and are important to NZC kaupapa."

This director also commented on NZC's widening context of diversity, no longer focusing just on gender but also increasingly on ethnicity of the cricket community and what that might mean for leadership and governance going forward. She believes awareness is key:

"It's about awareness and comfort. The more people around the table that think differently to each other, the more you're aware of wider issues and the more comfortable you become discussing those issues."

These comments not only demonstrate a shift in mindset for NZC to truly value the women's game, but also shows the evolution of discussion at board level to be more inclusive.

Still some ongoing challenges at a DA Board level

The SG reflected that, as has happened with NZC and MA Boards, a true measure of success is when diversity and inclusion stops being an agenda item that is pushed each meeting, and instead, becomes integrated as a normal part of board discussion.

The SG further reflected that, based on the evidence so far, for some DA Boards, diversity and inclusion still remains more of a box ticking exercise than a wholehearted commitment to governance change.

Across the spectrum, DAs are behind on reaching their governance targets, currently averaging approx. 28% female director representation across the 23 DAs. While not all DAs are behind, a number are still struggling.

The SG recognizes that some DAs are not so much a board as a committee or an extension of a club. The group believes the responsibility falls on the MAs to help guide them through this process.

One SG member commented that, at DA level, there is sometimes a lack of people who are prepared to put their hand up and help on these types of management committees. As a result, some DAs find it particularly hard to hit these targets as they struggle to find anyone who is willing to give up their time to govern cricket.

Members believe pockets of DA resistance to change stemmed from the homogenous groups of people who have traditionally run these committees year after year and who are entrenched in their behaviours.

The SG fully acknowledges that some of the cricket governors of the old who sit on these boards are still of high value and that DAs cannot afford to lose them. We need to be mindful that we do not lose people who are passionate about cricket through this process who then feel disconnected.

"For MAs, it's going into DAs and helping them start this journey... explicitly acknowledging that DAs are different sizes so creating something that fits the size of the DA."

"It's a transition, slow but genuine progress is being made."

NZC and MAs therefore need to commit to providing strong governance support to DAs.

Phase 2 shift of focus to quality of governance has worked well

The SG reflected that the project's evolution of primary focus, from Phase 1's focus on growing female governance representation, to Phase 2's focus on quality of governance had worked extremely well.

Many felt that this shift, and the results flowing therefrom, had accelerated the process of female representation on cricket boards being normalized rather than being treated as something exceptional.

Some commented that MA Boards had become much more conscious of what good governance is and what their own boards needed to be doing to improve their own governance competency.

Male ‘champions of change’ are essential

The SG agreed that the change process had been helped and accelerated by the presence of male ‘champions of change’ on the NZC and MA Boards. It was recognized that, notwithstanding the significant growth of female cricket directors, males still sit in most of key decision-making positions.

Governance Networking is breaking down hierarchical governance barriers

Likewise, the gradual growth in cricket network (NZC – MAs – DAs) governance networking was felt by the SG as having a positive impact on governance relationships, breaking down communication barriers, and increasing awareness of governance story-sharing value. The SG felt this networking needed to continue expanding.

Use of quotas

There was considerable skepticism and resistance when, within its 2018/19 cricket Network Partnership Investment agreements, NZC introduced female director minimum quotas and tied these to investment.

Three years later, now that the impact of these quotes, coupled with the impact of other female cricket initiatives, can be clearly seen, almost all skepticism and resistance has dissipated.

In the view of the SG, quotas served a purpose but the hope is that, in the near future, these will no longer be needed.

Overall SG feedback

The SG’s strong concluding consensus is that the huge, positive governance change has occurred already, but notes that there is still much more to be done, including expanding cricket’s diversity and inclusion focus, at all levels, well beyond a gender-centric focus.

The SG felt proud of our group’s strong contribution to what is clearly not only a major change process within cricket but within the whole New Zealand’s sporting landscape. From the position where we started in 2016, NZC is now seen and acknowledged as being a key leader of the national movement to dramatically improve sport’s engagement with and embracement of women and girls.

Summary of Individual Director Conversations

What follows below are summaries of conversations Sophie Parker, whilst working as an intern for NZC, had with the three directors identified below.

Andrew McRae (CCA director)

Andrew has been a director of Canterbury Cricket (CCA) since 2015. With previous experience in club and DA cricket, he has an extensive understanding of cricket governance.

Andrew reflected that he had seen a significant shift in the way the CCA Board operates in recent years.

Before the WiCG Project, the CCA Board had not had a female director since the early 2000s.

Andrew explained that the process of appointing CCA Board directors had been overhauled to remove actual or perceived impediments to growing female governance representation on CCA.

As part of this approach, and noting guidance given by Sarah Beaman both in her 2016 Women and Cricket Report and in the first year of the WiCG project, the CCA Board tried to make it more attractive for a female to apply for director positions, something which Andrew admits the board had not done in the past. Sarah helped to draft advertisements and directed CCA to the right channels to advertise board vacancies. As a result, CCA has since received more female applications, as well as opening the doors to higher quality candidates. In addition to the above, CCA moved to having a more independent appointments panel.

As of 2021, the six member CCA Board Board consists of three male directors and three female directors.

Andrew believes the influence of the WiCG Project, including growth in female governance representation, has seen a shift in CCA Board conversations from what were once predominantly male-orientated conversations, to a point now where such conversations consistently consider 'how will this decision affect women and girls in the game?'

When asked whether the CCA Board perceived the target of a minimum of two women as a 'box ticking exercise', he was quick to explain that this was not the case given the caliber of those females who has since been appointed to the CCA Board. Andrew said these directors have the respect of all directors around the table, have the knowledge of the game, and other relevant skills and abilities that have meant they were each contributing well from day one.

"I can only say that it's been incredibly positive. The caliber of the female directors that we've had has been outstanding. Each has really contributed well around the table. They have really driven change."

Andrew recognizes the significant mindset change that has taken place within the NZC Board, and reflects that NZC's leadership through the WiCG Project and elsewhere has impacted very positively on the CCA Board.

"NZC's attitude has filtered down to the MAs and DAs. Some adopt it more quickly than others but NZC is certainly leading the charge, 'walking the walk' rather than 'talking the talk'."

Andrew acknowledged that the WiCG Project has "opened our male eyes a lot wider than where they were" and recognized that this would not have been possible without, what he described as, 'the ground-breaking women'. These are the female directors who put themselves forward when Boards were populated largely by men and, through their courage, have led the way for other women to do the same, thus steadily transforming the way directors in cricket are thinking and acting.

"They really have been a tower of strength, enabling our associations to attract other highly capable women. As this critical mass grows, it will soon evolve to a point where we're not having this conversation at all, it just becomes normal."

Elizabeth Scurr (CW director)

Elizabeth (Betty) started out, in 2017, as an aspiring director on the Cricket Wellington (CW) Board. Later she was appointed onto the board as a full director and, more recently, was reappointed after completing her first full term. During this time, Betty has held CW Board positions including the Chair of the Financial and Risk Committee and, in the last 12 months, the Deputy Chair.

She believes the role of aspiring director is important for two reasons:

- Firstly, it gives people an opportunity to get governance experience. Betty has found that an aspiring role has enabled her to develop governance experience that is expected when making that first step onto a board.
- Secondly, it is an effective way to bring more diversity and add to the skill sets needed around the table.

The WiCG Project has enabled CW to use its skills matrix effectively to shape itself to become more relevant and attuned to the modern game and its participants.

Prior to the introduction of the WiCG Project, CW already had two female directors (including Betty). Two years ago that number had increased to five (out of seven).

For 2021, the makeup of the Board has again slightly changed. The board now consists of four women and four men (including the president). In addition to this, there are two aspiring directors, one male and one female. When considering ethnic diversity, one member of the board is Indian and one of the aspiring directors is Māori.

When asked about what impact the WiCG Project has had on the board, Betty explained that she is no longer the lone voice and that she has felt a shift since having three women on the board. For example, they (female directors) could bring different perspectives and feel like they could be heard.

“There’s definitely a shift now to when I first started, in that we’re all equals around the table. It might be my own experience, now having been on the board for four years, but I’m much more comfortable in my own role on the board and my own voice. But also every woman around the CW board table has an equal voice.”

Betty considers herself lucky having played cricket. She had extensive knowledge of and interest in the women’s game. As a result, in her first few years as a director, she took a lead role in the CW Board’s discussions of women’s cricket.

However, this has since changed; Betty explained that she is no longer the one who brings up women’s cricket, claiming it is often one of the male directors around the table – *“it is a whole-of-board responsibility and we all take equal ownership for that.”*

Betty believes the CW board is now thinking of diversity and inclusion in a broader sense.

CW recognizes New Zealand’s changing demographic and is committed to bringing better diversity to cricket in Wellington – *“not just male and female, diversity is broader than that... how do we make sure that cricket is truly a game for all?”*

While CW have witnessed several positive outcomes as a result of the WiCG Project, Betty acknowledges that their work is not done, *“There’s a lot we’ve learnt in women and cricket, but we’ve still got a long way to go to make cricket a game for all New Zealanders. What we want to do is set the benchmark for where we want to go, and where we want cricket in New Zealand to go.”*

Liz Dawson (NZC Director)

When she joined in 2013, Liz was the only third woman to have sat on the NZC Board following Dame Therese Walsh and Lesley Murdoch. While it was not unexpected to have a female director on the national board, her appointment was not for the purpose of having a diverse board as this was not a priority at the time.

Reflecting on the voting system at the time of her appointment, Liz explained that members of the cricket community believed the game was being run by people who had not represented the country and therefore did not know what running first class cricket was about. This resulted in the adoption of a different constitution, allowing candidates to go through a more independent process. As a result of the constitutional change, Sir Richard Hadlee, Martin Snedden and Geoff Allot, all of whom have represented their country, were appointed to the NZC Board in 2013.

The 2016 *Women and Cricket* Report found that 51% of the population were not engaged or provided with equal opportunity to participate in cricket.

Out of that Report's 17 recommendations, Liz remembers being clear that the NZC Board and/or organization could not do them all at once, due to the capacity and capability. She recommended starting at the top; her argument for this was that if you start with governance, not only will it filter down through the community game, it will demonstrate true leadership from the governing body – *'we can't expect our member associations to change if we ourselves aren't willing to do so'*. She also recommended starting with the WHITE FERNS and to ensure equity at the elite level of the game is recognized and implemented.

Liz could make many comparisons between when she joined the NZC Board and now, in 2020 (as a departing director). She believes the most important comparison is the level of respect our fans, sponsors, business partners, other sports organizations, government and the international cricket community now have for NZC.

"In my mind, this is because of the new (2013) board coming in and growing diversity on the board... without some of its current board members, New Zealand Cricket wouldn't have had the knowledge or experience to have the courage to be brave and to lead sport in New Zealand. We would have stuck with the tried and true."

Having diversity on the New Zealand Cricket Board has meant that there is diversity of experience and thought, not just diversity of gender. Liz believed this level of diversity has meant that leaders within the organization, such as Chief Executive David White, think differently about decision-making – *'A game for all New Zealanders; a game for life'* now permeates every decision that the organization makes.

Over her seven years on NZC's Board, Liz believes what has actually developed is a maturity of thinking. People within NZC have seen that if you have the courage to do things differently, supported by good logic and strategy, it will pay off and therefore you are confident and have the courage to take it further. The NZC Board has demonstrated this. They have led not only women and cricket governance, but broader diversity and inclusion, driven by our vision of *'A game for all New Zealanders; a game for life.'*

Liz discussed the success of the project and how it has galvanized MAs and DAs, giving them tools and other support to think about diversity on their boards.

She acknowledged that it is harder for women on these MA and DA boards as they are generally working with men who are there because they love cricket and it has been their 'go-to' place for some time. Therefore, helping MAs and DAs challenge that mindset has been an important part of an ongoing piece of the WiCG Project.

A conscious effort on this project is still required going forward to continue to address some of these issues.

“It’s going to be generational to make and fully embed those changes and truly finding ways for women and girls to want to be engaged. Men have to think about this differently. They have to think ‘I know why I want to be involved, but I want to genuinely understand how women want to be involved’ because it’s different.”

Further to her comment above; inviting women, welcoming women, and involving and valuing them in the way they want to be involved, is key to how the WiCG Project will be successful going forward.

Appendix

Documents capturing the WiCG Project Story Since Inception

'Women in Sport Governance: Challenging Institutional Practices in a National Sporting Organisation'
(Sophie Parker Masters Dissertation 2019)

WiCG Phase 2 Project Plan (February 2019)

WiCG Capturing The Story To Date (October 2020)

WiCG Sophie Parker Masters Dissertation Abridged Summary (October 2020)

Phase 2 (2019 – 2020) Steering Group Members

Steering Group Members	Board
Adam Gain	Otago Cricket
Andrew McRae	Canterbury Cricket
Anna Campbell	Otago Cricket (now New Zealand Cricket)
Catherine Rossiter-Stead	Central Districts Cricket
Elizabeth Scurr	Cricket Wellington
Geoff Allott	New Zealand Cricket
Kylie Hawker-Green	Northern Districts Cricket
Liz Dawson	New Zealand Cricket (Project Chair)
Marijana Brajkovich	Auckland Cricket
Martin Snedden	New Zealand Cricket (Project Manager)
Sarah Beaman	Independent Consultant