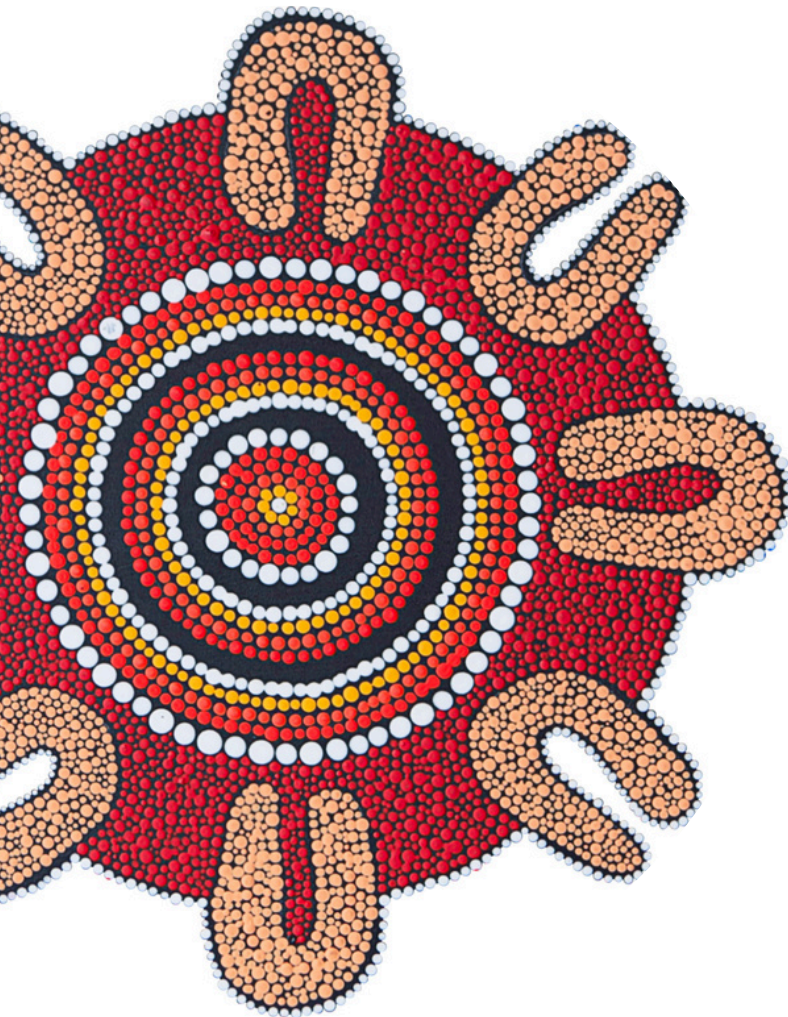




BARWON SPORTS ACADEMY SOCIAL IMPACT STUDY PROJECT REPORT



Artwork by Ammie Howell

Acknowledgement of Country

The Barwon Sports Academy project team acknowledges the Wadawurrung People of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which this Social Impact Project was developed and much of the work within it takes place, on Wadawurrung Country in Geelong.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and to the emerging leaders who continue to carry culture forward. We are thankful for the care, knowledge, and strength that the Wadawurrung People have shared and continue to share with this place and its communities.

This report reflects the lived experiences, strengths, and aspirations of young people, families, and communities and we recognise the vital role of First Nations people, whose cultural knowledge, resilience, and leadership continue to inspire meaningful change.

As community leaders, we are committed to walking respectfully alongside First Nations communities, amplifying local voices, and supporting pathways of opportunity, inclusion, and belonging.

The Leaders for Geelong Program is made possible through the support of our generous Program Partners and Scholarship Providers.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the incredible support, generosity and belief of so many people. We are deeply thankful to everyone who walked alongside us throughout this journey.

Committee for Geelong

Thank you to **Lauren Carnegie** and **Karen MacAdie** for your encouragement and guidance.

Thank you to our fellow **Leaders for Geelong Program** participants for the opportunity to be part of something bigger than ourselves. Your belief in the power of leadership and community impact continues to inspire us.

Thank you to the **Committee for Geelong Board** and the **Leaders for Geelong Program Partners** and **Presenters** for facilitating the opportunity to participate and engage with this project. Your support empowers everyday people to do extraordinary things for their communities.

Barwon Sports Academy

To **Cameron Loftus** and the whole **Barwon Sports Academy team**, thank you for your unwavering support and belief in the value of this work.

To the past and present **athletes**, their **families**, **sponsors** and **community partners**, thank you for sharing your time, your stories and your voices. Your lived experiences brought this project to life and gave it meaning.

Project Mentors

Thank you to our project mentor **Emily Capomolla**, for your insights and support. You have encouraged us and kept us on track throughout the project.

Thank you to the 2024 Leaders for Geelong **Geelong Connected Communities Project Team** for your mentoring and advice.

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FOREWORD

The Barwon Sports Academy is a not-for-profit organisation that was established in 2007 for the benefit of all aspiring athletes in the Barwon region. Resourcing and empowering athletes and coaches is a hallmark of what we do. Our aim is to enhance their opportunities by bringing together a rich array of resources in a coordinated approach.

This Social Impact Report clearly articulates our impact both currently and over the 18 years that we have operated. It provides insights into the important partnerships we have made; the services we have brought to our members, and the impact that our coaches, athletes and families have had on each other.

An exciting and very pleasing discovery that the report reveals is the depth of connection that we have within the Academy. Creating a rich environment of clever and talented people adds great value and far reaching benefits to the ecosystem of sport in our region.

Importantly the report confirms that while we are very proud of the athletes' achievements, there have been many more far-reaching benefits for our families and athletes. Similarly, there has been additional value for coaches, sports, staff and university placement students. The stories within share insights and at times incidental inspirations that highlight the connection of our people.

The Leaders for Geelong project team have spoken directly with many of our past and present athletes, their parents, program managers and community partners. They have provided first hand experiences that delve into their experiences, their successes and their far-reaching connections.

The report also speaks to the impact of our individual sports programs and individuals within having a sense of pride and belonging. The enthusiasm and willingness of past athletes to share their stories and contribute back for the benefit of the current athletes speaks volumes. The passing on of this knowledge and experience has much impact.

The Barwon Sports Academy would like to thank the members of the project team for the professional and dedicated way they have conducted this research. We would like to congratulate them on their final report. You have helped us to identify the social value of our organisation and we are inspired to continue with our work.



Cameron Loftus
Chief Executive Officer
Barwon Sports Academy

OUR TEAM



Aggie Walsh

Aggie is a Certified Practising Accountant (CPA) with experience in finance, accounting operations, and regulatory reporting across both private and public sectors. Spending much of her youth training and competing in sport gave her insight into its impact on personal growth - an experience that sparked her interest in this project supporting holistic athlete development.



Kate Manning

As a communications and engagement practitioner, Kate is passionate about building trust and relationships, and fostering genuine opportunities for community participation in decision making. Kate was excited to join this social research project to help showcase the social connection, belonging and inclusion that the Academy is delivering for our local community.



Emily Cannard

As a nurse unit manager in healthcare, Emily is passionate about ensuring quality care, efficient operations and fostering a positive work environment for her team. This project connected with Emily because of its compelling vision and acknowledgement of the contributions of our youth for the regional sporting world.



Jonathan Frost

A civil engineer by trade, Jonathan's career has spanned a wide range of roles within the water and transportation industries. He was drawn to this project by his love of community sport and understanding of the impact sport can have in the lives of individuals, families and communities beyond the playing field.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From the track to the pool, from courts to fields, Barwon Sports Academy (BSA) athletes have stood on podiums across the world. Since 2007, they've supported over 1,884 athletes - including 7 World Champions, 3 Olympians, 3 Paralympians, 180+ Australian representatives, and more than 750 Victorian representatives.

But medals are only part of their story. They know that champions are built from more than talent and training. To truly thrive, young athletes need resilience, confidence, leadership, wellbeing and a strong sense of belonging. That's why BSA's approach is holistic - they grow the whole person, not just the athlete.

This Social Impact Report is their way of showing that impact to the world. It captures, measures and shares the change they have seen - in athletes who lead, inspire and lift their communities. It proves that their work is not just about sport - it's about shaping futures. By being able to demonstrate the tangible outcomes, the BSA can inspire broader support, secure vital resources, and ensure more young people can thrive through sport.

The Barwon Sports Academy's story is one of dedication, impact and opportunity, driven by a small but dedicated team. BSA has a full-time CEO, two part-time staff, volunteer program managers, specialist service providers, and a committed volunteer Board.

Real Stories, Real Impact

At the heart of this report are the voices of BSA's athletes and their families - powerful stories of transformation made possible through sport. These testimonials bring our data to life, illustrating how BSA programs contribute to personal breakthroughs, stronger communities and brighter futures.



ABOUT BARWON SPORTS ACADEMY

The Barwon Sports Academy (BSA) is built on the belief that sport has the power to change lives. BSA exists to unlock the potential of talented young athletes across the Barwon region - helping them grow not only as competitors, but as confident and dedicated learners, and positive changemakers in their communities.

As a not-for-profit organisation, BSA offers more than high-performance pathways. It provides a place where young people are supported, encouraged, and inspired to become their best selves - in sport and in life.

With the backing of valued partners, the BSA delivers elite coaching, strength and conditioning programs, and education in areas such as nutrition, mental health, and wellbeing. Every program is designed to nurture talent, remove barriers, and open doors to opportunities that may otherwise remain out of reach.

The academy has a vision that every talented athlete in the Barwon region is recognised, supported and given the opportunity to reach their full potential - not only in their chosen sport, but in every aspect of their journey.

BSA's support extends beyond the field of play. The Academy strives to ensure that athletes from all backgrounds can access the resources they need to succeed:

- **BIS-Sport Grants** support travel and competition costs.
- **Disability Grants** help athletes access coaching, equipment and opportunities.
- **High Performance Opportunities** provide elite strength and conditioning training.
- **Deakin University Partnership** supports athlete wellbeing, education, and future study through gym access, apparel, and tertiary awards.

BSA's impact is felt far beyond sport. With a focus on inclusion, opportunity and growth, the Academy is helping to shape the next generation of athletes and leaders. Young people who are resilient, connected, and ready to contribute to their communities.

Built on partnerships, purpose, and people, the Barwon Sports Academy is driving a stronger, more inclusive future for sport and for the region it proudly represents.



PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Barwon Sports Academy (BSA) Social Impact Project aims to better understand, evaluate and amplify the positive effects of the Academy's programs - not just on young athletes, but also on their families and the broader Barwon community.

While sporting excellence remains central to BSA's mission, this project recognises that the Academy's true value extends far beyond athletic outcomes. Rooted in the belief that sport is a powerful driver of personal growth and social change, this project seeks to capture how BSA helps shape confident, resilient individuals, supports healthy living, encourages educational and career readiness, and fosters a strong sense of belonging and inclusion.

At the heart of this project is a Social Impact Report and Framework, which will assess BSA's contributions across four key pillars:

1. **Youth Development & Aspirations**
2. **Healthy Living & Wellbeing**
3. **Education & Career**
4. **Belonging, Inspiration & Inclusion**

To capture this impact, the project used a combination of surveys, interviews, case studies, and storytelling - bringing to life the lived experiences of athletes, parents, coaches and stakeholders across the region.

Importantly, the findings will be used to amplify BSA's mission through authentic storytelling, highlighting real examples of transformation and success. These stories will also be used to enhance BSA's visibility across digital platforms and stakeholder communications.

With the 2032 Olympics on the horizon, this project not only reflects on their achievements - it positions BSA to play a vital role in preparing the next generation of champions, by ensuring our region's athletes are supported not just as competitors, but as well-rounded individuals prepared for life.





PROJECT TIMELINE

Project Initiation

April - May 2025

- Initial introduction meetings
- Draft project scope
- Present scope to panel for feedback
- Approval of project scope

Evaluation Framework

May - June 2025

- Research social impact frameworks and select an appropriate model
- Develop the Evaluation Framework and tools for measuring social impact
- Approval of framework and tools

Project Work

June - August 2025

- Survey development and roll-out
- Case Study interviews with BSA participants
- Analysis of BSA's available program data
- Develop Social Impact Report template
- Commence video plan framework drafting

Assess Social Impact

August - September 2025

- Finalise and evaluate data analysis findings
- Collate and evaluate survey responses
- Summarise interview responses
- Present draft Social Impact Report to BSA and Committee for Geelong
- Develop and finalise video plan framework

Present Final Report

September - October 2025

- Finalise and evaluate data analysis findings
- Collate and evaluate survey responses
- Summarise interview responses
- Present draft Social Impact Report to BSA and Committee for Geelong
- Develop and finalise video plan framework



PROJECT DELIVERABLES

The project produced three key deliverables designed to capture and communicate Barwon Sports Academy's social impact in a meaningful and sustainable way:

Social Impact Evaluation Framework

A practical tool that defines BSA's intended Social Impact outcomes and provides a roadmap for measuring progress over time

Social Impact Report

A narrative and evidence-based summary of the change BSA is creating across the four pillars, highlighting quantitative data and lived experience

Video Plan

A strategic outline for a future video that brings the impact story to life - designed to support promotional activities, funding conversations and stakeholder engagement.

Project activities included:

- Understanding and measuring BSA's impact
- Identifying meaningful indicators aligned to the four pillars
- Recommending and designing data collection tools (eg. surveys, interviews, observation)
- Providing guidance for ongoing measurement so BSA can track its impact over time and adapt as needed

Together, these deliverables provide a foundation for BSA to evaluate, communicate, and enhance the social outcomes of its programs - today and into the future.



EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

To evaluate and communicate Barwon Sports Academy's impact in a credible and compelling way, we developed a structured Social Impact Evaluation Framework. This framework provides a clear foundation for understanding, measuring and communicating change

A tool to tell a story

The Social Impact Framework provides a structured approach to define, measure, and communicate the positive change BSA's program create for individuals, their families and broader communities.

It helps align BSA's activities with their mission, track their progress, and tell compelling stories of change. It provides a logical structure for reporting built around the four pillars of impact.

A Theory of Change was also developed to guide the framework. This sets a clear roadmap that explains how BSA's activities lead to lasting impact.

The Theory of Change is built on the belief that sport is a powerful platform for personal and community transformation.

Through positive role models, mentoring and a strong sense of belonging, young people are empowered to become leaders and contributors to their communities. This transformation is guided by lived experience, measurable outcomes, and ongoing input from participants, families, and partners.

This integrated evaluation approach allows BSA to track real change, tell powerful stories, and use data to drive future decisions - all while staying true to its values and purpose.

The evaluation framework was provided directly to BSA and is not included in the public report.

"IF we provide inclusive, consistent and engaging programs, THEN young people will build key life skills, confidence, improved wellbeing and set meaningful goals"



SOCIAL IMPACT REPORT

The key deliverable for this project is the Social Impact Report. Our approach included desktop research about BSA, talking with Academy staff, undertaking surveys and interviews with current athletes, former athletes, parents and community partners

Community partners included organisations that sponsor BSA, allied health professionals and peak sporting bodies.

We developed survey and interview questions and worked with the project champion to refine these, ensuring the questions would lead to valuable data for BSA.

We launched the survey on the Microsoft Forms platform and promoted it broadly through BSA's networks and email databases and provided hard copies at training sessions.

Our project champion supported us with targeted outreach to secure interviews to support the survey research. We undertook short interviews online via Microsoft Teams or over the phone.





VIDEO PLAN

As part of this project, a video plan was developed to support BSA in showcasing its work and communicating the significant social impact of its programs. Video was identified as a powerful storytelling tool to engage stakeholders, celebrate achievements, and highlight lived experiences across the four impact pillars.

Plan Development

To inform the plan we:

- **Reviewed** research findings and impact data to select a series of meaningful participant stories.
- **Gathered** supporting statistics to reinforce the depth and breadth of BSA's social impact.
- **Created** a detailed storyboard, which includes:
 - Key narratives and testimonials
 - Core messages aligned with BSA's values
 - Suggested visuals and footage to bring each story to life

Next Steps

Our project team's role was to deliver the pre-production planning only. BSA will lead the next phase, including:

- Finalising the script
- Hiring voiceover artists or on-screen talent
- Coordinating production and post-production

This plan provides a strong foundation for a future video that can be used for stakeholder engagement, funding conversations, community outreach, and promotional activities.

The video plan was provided directly to BSA and is not included in the public report.





STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The success of the Barwon Sports Academy Social Impact Report relied on capturing the voices and experiences of stakeholders. The report's purpose is not only to measure impact but also to guide future strategy and provide meaningful insights back to the community.

To achieve this, we focused on understanding the experiences, perspectives, and aspirations of those most connected to the Academy. Engaging with athletes, parents, coaches, sponsors, partner schools, and community groups has ensured the report represents the full breadth of the Academy's influence.

Our engagement approach centred on surveys and interviews, enabling us to capture both quantitative insights and personal stories. This process created space for stakeholders to share feedback, highlight successes, and identify opportunities for growth. Their contributions have been critical in shaping the direction of the Social Impact Report and reinforcing a shared vision for the Academy's future success.

Stakeholders Engaged

- Barwon Sports Academy CEO
- Barwon Sports Academy Staff
- Current academy athletes
- Former academy athletes
- Families of academy athletes
- Academy service providers, including coaches, mentors, program managers & allied health partners
- Partners and sponsors
- Sports clubs and peak sporting bodies

Engagement Activities

- Targeted stakeholder surveys
- Case study interviews
- Fortnightly meetings with BSA CEO
- Attending 2025 Bis-Sport Breakfast



OPPORTUNITIES & INSIGHTS

Capturing the observations and experience of key Barwon Sports Academy stakeholders was fundamental to this project. Undertaking this exercise helped draw out a number of key insights and opportunities.

Stories Matter

Athlete and family stories are powerful tools for connection, advocacy, and engagement.

Equity Still Needs Focus

Financial, geographic, and social barriers remain for some athletes - targeted support is essential.

Evaluation Strengthens Strategy

The new framework gives BSA better tools to measure impact and inform decisions.

More Than An Athlete

BSA doesn't just develop the athlete, but focuses strongly on developing the person as a whole.

Partnerships Create Possibilities

Collaboration with schools, sporting bodies, local government and community partners is key to delivering holistic support.

This project has reinforced that BSA is not just building better athletes, but nurturing confident leaders, strengthening communities, and transforming futures. Continuing to listen to stakeholders and measure social impact will allow BSA to understand their influence more deeply and help them create an even greater and lasting legacy.

Detailed insights and opportunities have been provided to Barwon Sports Academy in the Social Impact Report and the background work underpinning it.

“BSA doesn't just develop the athlete, but focuses strongly on developing the person as a whole”



RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our research, Barwon Sports Academy is clearly excelling in its mission. The academy provides so much positive impact and their athletes, alumni and community partners overwhelmingly speak highly of the academy.

From our research, a key recommendation for Barwon Sports Academy is to continue with regular social impact research and reporting.

The What:

Barwon Sports Academy could consider undertaking a Social Impact Report every 1-2 years.

This would involve using the Social Impact Evaluation Framework to document case studies, listen to athlete outcomes and understand broader community benefits to reflect the Academy's evolving impact.

So What?

Regular reporting ensures that impact stories and data remain current and manageable. It helps BSA demonstrate its value to stakeholders, attract funding, and support strategic decision making without the burden of compiling years of information all at once.

Now What?

Review BSA's existing reporting cycles and explore how ongoing social impact reporting could be integrated. Consider how this could be embedded within the existing team and resources to ensure it's sustainable.



CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

Like most research projects, there were challenges along the way and limitations to the study.

Data Availability and Survey Uptake

A critical challenge lay in securing a robust and representative dataset to measure BSA's social impact. Survey participation rates were initially low. Low uptake or partial responses can limit the reliability of findings and hinder longitudinal tracking.

Fortunately, additional promotion and targeted outreach helped boost response rates to ensure diverse voices were captured.

Conversely, we received a lot of rich data and stories through the interviews and it was challenging to narrow that down to select the best stories and insights for the report - they were all so inspiring and valuable!

Time Constraints

The timeframe for designing the research and promotion strategy, seeking responses, analysis and report writing was tight. We needed to balance depth with efficiency, ensuring meaningful insights were gathered without compromising timelines.

In response, we divided the tasks, with one team member focusing on surveys and three taking on the interviews, splitting up the list to ensure we could meet with all stakeholders in time.

Key Group Availability

The availability of key stakeholders - athletes, staff, families and community partners - was a limitation. Athlete calendars are extremely full with training schedules, competitions, school and work. Coaches and administrators often juggle multiple roles, limiting their availability for interviews or feedback sessions.

This meant we needed flexible scheduling, multi-channel engagement, and advanced planning to ensure inclusive participation. Resourcing and availability for the BSA team was also a consideration.





PROJECT TEAM REFLECTIONS

As the team behind this Social Impact Report, we have been both inspired and challenged by the process of gathering insights, stories and data from across the Barwon Sports Academy community. This project has reinforced what we already believed - that BSA is far more than an athletic development program. It is a place where sport sparks transformation.



Collaboration Is Key

The development of this report was only possible through strong collaboration between the BSA team, partners and the community. It reflects a shared passion and commitment to accountability, improvement and long-term success.

The Power of Community Voices

The most powerful moments in this project came from listening - to athletes, families, coaches and partners. Their experiences brought depth and meaning to the numbers, and reminded us that behind every statistic is a story of growth, resilience and belonging.

Unlocking insights with data

It was important to have a multi-pronged approach. For some research participants the survey tool was the most approachable way to provide input, while for others an interview was the best way to tell their story.

Evaluation Creates Insight

By mapping BSA's activities against our four pillars - Youth Development, Healthy Living & Wellbeing, Education & Career, and Belonging & Inclusion - we were able to more clearly see the breadth of the Academy's impact. This framework helped illuminate strengths and gaps, and provided a foundation for strategic direction.



CONCLUSION

The Barwon Sports Academy Social Impact Report marks a powerful step forward in capturing the depth and breadth of their influence across the Barwon region.

By combining data with personal stories, the Social Impact Report not only celebrates BSA's achievements but also reveals its deeper value - nurturing confident, healthy and connected young people whose growth ripples through families, schools and communities.

Grounded in four key pillars and shaped by lived experience, the report offers a clear, evidence-based framework to guide future investment, amplify community engagement, and ensure BSA continues to inspire and uplift beyond the boundaries of sport.



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APPENDIX A:

SOCIAL IMPACT REPORT



BARWON SPORTS ACADEMY SOCIAL IMPACT REPORT

Acknowledgement of Country



Artwork by Ammie Howell

The Barwon Sports Academy acknowledges the Wadawurrung People as the Traditional Custodians of the land, waterways and skies on which we live, work, play and tell stories. We pay our deepest respects to their Elders past and present, and we recognise their enduring connection to Country, Culture, and Community.

During our writing of this Social Impact Report we have heard many inspiring stories about strength, resilience and inclusiveness. The Wadawurrung People have spent many years telling stories of their history, the great land and their people. It is in this truth telling that helps us to enrich ourselves in history and continually learn and grow so that we can forever tell stories for future generations.

May we walk gently on this land and continue to learn from its First Nations story tellers and Custodians.



BARWON
sports academy

“It’s about giving back to the community. BSA provides athletes not just opportunities in sport, but to become a leader in their communities and schools, and gain a diverse range of skills. BSA helps athletes elevate their skills beyond sport early on.”

- Jonathan, BSA Alumnus

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FOREWORD

The Barwon Sports Academy is a not-for-profit organisation that was established in 2007 for the benefit of all aspiring athletes in the Barwon region. Resourcing and empowering athletes and coaches is a hallmark of what we do. Our aim is to enhance their opportunities by bringing together a rich array of resources in a coordinated approach.

We joined five other regional academies as part of the Victorian Regional Academies of Sport. This was achieved by partnering with expert service providers to provide a holistic approach to sport education. This includes mental and physical preparation, injury prevention, strength and conditioning, expert sport specific coaching and a focus on nutrition, goal setting and leadership.

This Social Impact Report clearly articulates our impact both currently and over the 18 years of operation. It provides insights into the important partnerships we have made; the services we have brought to our members and the impact that our coaches, athletes and families have had on each other.

An exciting and very pleasing discovery the report reveals is the depth of connection that we have within the Academy. The far reaching benefits of creating a rich environment of clever and talented people, adding great value to the ecosystem of sport in our region.

Importantly the report confirms that while we are very proud of the athletes' achievements, there have been many more far-reaching benefits for our families and athletes. Similarly, there has been additional value for coaches, sports, staff and university placement students. The stories within share insights and at times incidental inspirations that highlight the connection of our people.

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The Barwon Sports Academy would like to thank the members of the project team for the professional and dedicated way they have conducted this research. We would like to congratulate them on their final report. You have helped us to identify the social value of our organisation and we are inspired to continue with our work.



Mr Cameron Loftus
Chief Executive Officer
Barwon Sports Academy



ABOUT US

Where Sport Sparks Transformation

The Barwon Sports Academy (BSA) is built on the belief that sport has the power to change lives. BSA exists to unlock the potential of talented young athletes across the Barwon region - helping them grow not only as competitors, but as confident and dedicated learners, and positive changemakers in their communities.

As a not-for-profit organisation, BSA offers more than high-performance pathways. It provides a place where young people are supported, encouraged, and inspired to become their best selves - in sport and in life. With the backing of valued partners, BSA delivers elite coaching, strength and conditioning programs, and education in areas such as nutrition, mental health and wellbeing. Every program is designed to nurture talent, remove barriers and open doors to opportunities that may otherwise remain out of reach.

A Vision for Every Athlete

That every talented athlete in the Barwon region is recognised, supported, and given the opportunity to reach their full potential - not only in their chosen sport, but in every aspect of their journey.

A Lasting Impact

BSA's impact is felt far beyond sport. With a focus on inclusion, opportunity and growth, the Academy is helping to shape the next generation of athletes and leaders - young people who are resilient, connected and ready to contribute to their communities.

Built on partnerships, purpose and people, BSA is driving a stronger, more inclusive future for sport and for the region it proudly represents.

Lifting Barriers, Creating Pathways

BSA's support extends beyond the field of play. The Academy strives to ensure that athletes from all backgrounds can access the resources they need to succeed:

- **BIS-Sport Grants** support travel and competition costs.
- **Disability Grants** help athletes access coaching, equipment and opportunities.
- **High Performance Opportunities** provide elite strength and conditioning training.
- **Deakin University Partnership** supports athlete wellbeing, education, and future study through gym access, apparel and tertiary awards.



UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIAL IMPACT

For years, the Barwon Sports Academy has transformed lives in our region. While its influence is clear, BSA has lacked a structured way to showcase its broader social impact.

What is a Social Impact Report?

It's a way to capture how BSA's programs create positive change - through numbers (participation, scholarships, events) and stories (testimonials, personal experiences) - painting a full picture of impact.

Why it Matters

- **Transparency:** Shows athletes, families, partners and funders the outcomes achieved.
- **Strategic insight:** Guides future planning with real data and community voices.
- **Celebration and advocacy:** Recognises achievements and builds support for ongoing investment.
- **Continuous growth:** Highlights opportunities for innovation and deeper community benefit.

Looking Beyond Sport

The Social Impact Report also highlights BSA's hidden value - the benefits that may not be immediately visible. For many young athletes, the Academy provides role models, friendships and safe spaces, as well as opportunities that ripple outward into families, schools and the broader community.

Focus Areas

The report examines impact across four pillars:

- **Youth Development & Aspirations**
- **Healthy Living & Wellbeing**
- **Education & Career**
- **Belonging, Inspiration & Inclusion**





HOW THE PILLARS WERE DEVELOPED

The four pillars guiding this Social Impact Report were developed through a collaborative and evidence-informed process that reflects the heart of Barwon Sports Academy's mission and the lived experiences of its community.

The Leaders for Geelong project team began by conducting an in-depth interview with BSA's CEO to identify the key areas where the organisation strives to create the greatest positive impact. This conversation provided early insights into recurring themes of personal growth, opportunity and community belonging. The project team then aligned these themes with BSA's core values and reviewed the range of programs and services we offer. This approach enabled a clear mapping of how BSA's practical work connects to broader social and developmental goals.



From this analysis, four core pillars were developed:

- **Youth Development & Aspirations** – fostering personal growth, leadership, resilience and communication to support well-rounded citizenship.
- **Healthy Living & Wellbeing** – encouraging physical health, mental resilience and overall wellness.
- **Education & Career** – supporting future pathways through learning and skill-building.
- **Belonging, Inspiration & Inclusion** – promoting accessibility, diversity and meaningful social connection.



HOW IMPACT IS MEASURED

Measuring impact means going beyond counting participation numbers. It involves showing how Barwon Sports Academy's programs change lives, families and communities. At BSA, impact is measured through a mix of quantitative data, qualitative insights and community feedback.

1. **Quantitative data** – athlete numbers, grants, training hours, education and health outcomes.

2. **Qualitative insights** – stories from athletes, parents and community, showcasing growth, resilience and belonging.

3. **Perception and satisfaction** – surveys for athletes, parents and community partners, feedback on program quality, accessibility and support.

4. **Community outcomes** – increased pride, inclusion of underrepresented groups (First Nations, culturally diverse, low-income, athletes with disabilities, rural youth), stronger partnerships with schools, universities, health services and businesses, and economic benefits (local services supported).

5. **Ongoing tracking** – annual surveys and interviews, long-term follow-ups, and continuous review to inform strategy.

“Seeing the role BSA and Cameron Loftus plays in Geelong inspired me to want to take a similar pathway.” – Madison, BSA Alumni



SOCIAL IMPACT SUMMARY

How the Surveys Worked

Stakeholder surveys involved a mix of short answer questions and rating questions. Each rating question presented a statement, to which respondents would rate their agreement on a scale from 1-6.

Each statement related back to one of the four pillars of impact.

This structure gave consistent measures across all pillars while

capturing the lived experiences of athletes, parents and community partners.

Averaging the ratings provided against each statement generates an average level of agreement shown by stakeholders with that statement. This can then be turned into an average agreement percentage.

Survey results show consistently high impact across all four pillars, with average ratings above 5 on a 6-point scale. Belonging, Inspiration & Inclusion rated the highest, reflecting a strong sense of community and support, while Healthy Living, Youth Development, and Education all scored strongly, highlighting the Academy's role in helping young people thrive both in sport and beyond.



YOUTH DEVELOPMENT & ASPIRATIONS



At Barwon Sports Academy, youth development is the heartbeat of everything we do. It shows in every training session, every mentor's encouragement, and every conversation. Young people grow not just as athletes but as leaders, learners and changemakers - leaving one of the Academy's strongest marks.

From community partners to parents, athletes and alumni, the message is clear: The Academy doesn't just prepare athletes for competition - it helps prepare young people for life.

What our alumni think:

- 91% - Average agreement with the statement: "I learned to set goals and stay focused on achieving them."

What our parents think:

- 76% - Average agreement with the statement: "My child shows greater independence and initiative."

What our current athletes think:

- 75% - Average agreement with the statement: "I feel more confident and proud of what I've achieved."
- 83% - Average agreement with the statement: "I keep trying even when things get hard."

What our community partners think:

- 100% - Average agreement with the statement: "The program supports young people to set goals and work toward their future."



BSA's message was clear: driven athletes need reminders to pause, recharge, and prioritise mental health. This supportive ethos helps the athletes maintain equilibrium through demanding schedules.



Case Study: From Pool to Purpose - A Young Athlete's Journey of Growth and Leadership

At just 12 years old, Nicole joined Barwon Sports Academy through a connection between a coach and Barwon Sports Academy CEO. BSA's educational sessions became a cornerstone of the swimmer's personal development. Covering topics like time management and mental resilience, these sessions helped Nicole navigate the pressures of high school and competitive sport. One standout moment was applying psychological strategies learned at BSA to perform successfully at national competitions. The Academy's flexible approach allowed Nicole to prioritise academics during critical years, reducing stress and promoting autonomy. This balance was key to sustained engagement and growth. Confidence blossomed, especially in public speaking, and Nicole now gives back by mentoring newcomers and assisting with Academy events - driven by gratitude and a desire to pay it forward.

Now serving as club captain at Geelong Swimming Club, Nicole is a wonderful leader. Inspired by role models within the Academy, Nicole has adopted a supportive, approachable style - encouraging questions and fostering a safe space for learning. She's always ready and willing to check in on anyone who might be struggling. The Academy's leadership philosophy centre's on empathy and empowerment, and it's clear to see they are passing these traits on through their amazing work.

Education & Career Aspirations

Time management emerged as a vital skill, with the swimmer using diaries and study blocks to juggle training and academics. The commitment paid off - now studying primary education at Deakin University while working part-time as a swim teacher and training for Nationals. Nicole's ultimate goal is to compete for Australia.



"The Academy's belief in me has helped me realise I can positively impact other organisations I'm involved with."



YOUTH DEVELOPMENT & ASPIRATIONS

Case Study: Finding Your Voice, Building Your Tribe: Social Growth at Barwon Sports Academy

Social connection and communication was a key theme throughout the interviews. Athletes have built lasting friendships and connections. The inclusive culture, driven by Cameron's genuine care and personal check-ins, create a sense of belonging. These relationships extended beyond sport, with ongoing support and celebrating each other's life achievements years after leaving the Academy.

Summer and Matilda shared stories about the strong connections they had made and the importance of being surrounded by people who lift you up and inspire you to do better, be better.

The Academy turned teammates into lifelong friends. Strong connections formed through shared goals and a supportive environment. The program creates a space where athletes felt seen, valued and united. Fun challenges built trust - planks, laughs, and pushing each other forward.

Athletes shared how they grew together - learning to communicate, collaborate and celebrate. From quiet beginnings to confident voices, athletes learned to speak up, support each other, and lead with empathy.

"Without Barwon Sports Academy, we'd be on separate paths. With it, we're a community."
- current athlete

"I've grown into a more outgoing person. Meeting a whole bunch of different people has helped me develop my social skills, communication skills and approach to team work."
- Matilda, tennis athlete



Case Study: Building Confidence Through Cricket and Connection - a Story from Northern Bay

Since joining Barwon Sports Academy in 2022, young cricketer Lauren has transformed both on and off the field. Initially drawn in by the opportunity to meet new people and access structured training, she quickly discovered the Academy's holistic approach - combining sport-specific sessions with gym work, nutrition education, and personal development. What began as a shy introduction to a new environment has grown into a confident stride toward higher-level competition, with aspirations of returning to premier cricket and even eyeing Vic Cricket and the Big Bash.

Lauren was our first athlete to join BSA from Northern Bay Secondary College, opening the door for others into the future. And as a proud First Nations athlete, Lauren is an inspiration for others - showing what's possible when culture, community and sport come together. When young First Nations athletes are visible in sport, they help others see themselves in those spaces. It sends a clear message: "You belong here too."

Empowering Healthy Habits and Mental Wellbeing

BSA's impact reaches far beyond athletic performance. Learning about nutrition - like swapping toast for protein-rich eggs - has helped her fuel long days of cricket more effectively. Sleep, recovery, and mental health strategies have also become part of her routine, with the Academy encouraging self-care and emotional awareness. "If you're not feeling great, they tell you to take a break and do something that makes you happy," she shares. These lessons have shaped Lauren's understanding of what it means to be truly healthy, both physically and mentally.

Leadership, Allyship and Community Impact

BSA kept Lauren engaged in sport and career. Lauren graduated last year and outside the Academy, Lauren has taken on a role as an Education Support trainee, guiding younger students in both learning and sport. Her experience at BSA - especially in building relationships and understanding allyship through sessions with leaders like Brett Goods - has equipped her to support others with empathy and confidence. The Academy's inclusive environment has helped her break out of her shell and she now gives back by mentoring others and taking on opportunities such as being interviewed in front of a large crowd at Bis-Sport.

Looking Ahead: Dreams and Advice for Others

Inspired by mentors like Barwon Sports Academy CEO Cameron and motivated by the achievements of those around her, Lauren is now focused on pushing herself to the next level. Her message to others considering the Academy is simple but powerful: "Take the opportunity - it goes a long way." For Lauren, Barwon Sports Academy wasn't just a place to train - it was a launchpad for personal growth, community connection, and a future filled with possibility.

HEALTHY LIVING & WELLBEING



Barwon Sports Academy has a strong emphasis on Healthy Living and Wellbeing. This isn't just targeted at the athlete but also the families to help promote conscious healthy decisions. By eating well and encouraging a positive mindset athletes can nurture strong social connections and live fulfilling lives.

What our alumni think:

- **95%** - Average agreement with the statement: "I felt valued and part of a supportive community where I made lasting friendships."

What our parents think:

- **89%** - Average agreement with the statement: "Barwon Sports Academy promotes respect, inclusion and friendships across diverse backgrounds."

What our current athletes think:

- **83%** - Average agreement with the statement: "I feel accepted and safe to be myself."

What our community partners think:

- **100%** - Average agreement with the statement: "Barwon Sports Academy builds community, connection and pride among young people."



5x world champion water skier Jacinta and her dad share a hug after she breaks her jumps world record

HEALTHY LIVING & WELLBEING



A parent's message on: Positive Changes in Confidence, Life Skills, Health and Goal Setting

Parents observed significant improvements in their children's confidence, resilience, and social skills, with many noting a shift toward seeing failure as a learning opportunity rather than a setback. Several highlighted growth in goal-setting, planning and focus, with journaling and self-reflection being valuable tools. A number of responses pointed to healthier habits, including better nutrition, meal preparation and reduced junk food, alongside improvements in fitness, strength and determination. Maturity and preparedness were also recurring themes, with children showing greater responsibility, commitment to goals, and balance between sport and broader life skills. Parents appreciated the Academy's role in nurturing both communication and social connections, as well as reinforcing the idea that sport is part of a holistic lifestyle.

Parents value supportive environment, and opportunity to learn on healthy living and wellbeing.

The parents' responses highlight several strong themes about what they value most in the Academy. Many appreciate the opportunity for their children to develop sporting skills while also being exposed to specialist knowledge and pathways they may not have otherwise known about. Parents consistently mentioned the importance of education sessions, covering both sport-specific and broader topics like resilience, behaviours and lifestyle, which they felt supported their child's overall growth and enthusiasm for learning. Education on periodisation, workloads and the developing body is a key component. Several noted how the program provides guidance for parents as well, giving them information and clarity to better support their child.

Overall, parents see the Academy as more than just sport training. It's a holistic program combining skills development, education, community, and high-performance pathways, all within a supportive and inclusive environment.

The motivation to be healthy and have a strong mindset: If you can't see it, you can't be it!

Most parents agreed that the Academy has positively influenced their child's goals and dreams, with many noting increased motivation. Meeting inspiring athletes and being part of a structured pathway encouraged many to pursue their sporting dreams with greater determination. Others noted that the achievement of joining the Academy itself was a confidence boost, particularly for quieter achievers.



"The Barwon Sports Academy provides athletes with opportunities to achieve their goals with lots of opportunities to improve their health and wellbeing with workshops and support to be their very best. I can't thank the Academy enough for showing my child what was possible in his chosen sport."

– Jenny, BSA Parent

EDUCATION & CAREER



Barwon Sports Academy is not just shaping athletes for competition - it is preparing them for life. By building transferable skills, opening doors to new pathways, and surrounding young people with mentors and role models, BSA supports futures that extend well beyond sport.

What our alumni think:

- **95%** - Average agreement with the statement: “Barwon Sports Academy helped me gain skills useful for school, work and life after school.”

What our parents think:

- **85%** - Average agreement with the statement: “Barwon Sports Academy supports my child’s long-term growth and aspirations.”

What our current athletes think:

- **75%** - Average agreement with the statement: “I manage school and sport better.”

What our community partners think:

- **96%** - Average agreement with the statement: “Barwon Sports Academy helps youth stay engaged in learning and opens pathways to education and careers.”



“BSA gave me lots of opportunities and networks to build on the interest I already had in a career in sports, which was really helpful leading into my degree.”
- Madison, BSA Alumni

EDUCATION & CAREER



The Talent Continues

Jonathan

Jonathan attended the Academy from 2015 to 2017 as a tennis athlete. He has been involved in tennis from a young age, serving as a ball kid at the Australian Open for a number of years as a junior. His desire to remain involved in the sport now sees him travelling the world working for Hawkeye. Teamwork, discipline and professionalism are some of the qualities that were nurtured during his time with BSA. These skills have translated to his professional life, helping him to be successful in the fast-paced environment of the pro tennis circuit. “BSA taught me a lot about the professionalism and discipline you need to become a professional tennis player. I didn’t go down that route, but that professionalism and discipline are now things I’ve taken into my career with Hawkeye.” The exposure BSA provides to a broad range of possible career options was also influential for Jonathan. “Being surrounded by strength & conditioning coaches, dieticians, physios... I took that and learned there’s so many opportunities in the world of sport I have access to. I ended up studying physiotherapy at university, and a large part of that was because of the BSA and that elite sporting atmosphere around me.” When asked about the importance of supporting Barwon Sports Academy, Jonathan said “It’s about giving back to the community. BSA provides athletes not just opportunities in sport, but to become a leader in their communities and schools, and gain a diverse range of skills. BSA helps athletes elevate their skills beyond sport early on.”

Madison

A talented swimmer, Madison was a Barwon Sports Academy athlete from 2017 to 2023. Highlights from her career so far include winning three gold medals at the 2023 State Championships (200m, 400m & 800m freestyle) and placing second in the 2025 Pier to Pub race in Lorne. Excelling in swimming from a young age, Madison found herself on the path towards being a professional athlete early in life. While focusing on her swimming career, BSA provided her with exposure to a wide range of sporting career paths beyond her career as an athlete. “Seeing the role BSA and Cam (Loftus) plays in Geelong inspired me to want to take a similar pathway.” Through participation in the Academy, and making the most of the opportunities provided, Madison has been inspired to set herself up for a career in sport. She is now studying a double degree in Sports Management / Exercise and Sport Science through Deakin University. “BSA gave me lots of opportunities and networks to build on the interest I already had in a career in sports, which was really helpful leading into my degree.”



EDUCATION & CAREER

Partner Spotlight - Deakin University

Deakin University has been a key partner with BSA since 2017. We share a strong and symbiotic partnership that benefits both institutions and the wider community. BSA provides Deakin with direct access to its target audience for sports science and nutrition programs, while Deakin students gain invaluable hands-on experience through placements at the Academy. These placements not only enhance students' practical skills and work readiness, but also create a pipeline for future employment - several graduates have transitioned from placement to professional roles within BSA and beyond. Together, they foster a powerful ecosystem of learning, development and career progression.

"The Academy has made my child think about careers that they hadn't previously considered. If you can't see it, you can't be it!" - Parent of a current BSA athlete

"(BSA's) guidance, support, education and mentorship is a true gift to those living in a regional community, allowing access to elite level services at a young age."

- Jacinta, former BSA athlete and 5x water ski jumps world champion

BELONGING, INSPIRATION & INCLUSION



When athletes walk through the doors of Barwon Sports Academy, they don't just find a training program - they find a family. They see older athletes who've gone before them, proving what's possible. They feel their community behind them, proud of every step they take. Parents and families become part of the journey too, sharing in the wins, the lessons and the moments of inspiration. This is what Belonging, Inspiration & Inclusion looks like in action: a culture where every young person feels valued, connected and inspired to dream bigger.

What our alumni think:

- **95%** - Average agreement with the statement: "Barwon Sports Academy helped me gain skills useful for school, work and life after school."

What our parents think:

- **85%** - Average agreement with the statement: "Barwon Sports Academy supports my child's long-term growth and aspirations."

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BELONGING, INSPIRATION & INCLUSION

Building Belonging Through Sport — The Impact of Barwon Sports Academy's Athlete Development Program

For many young athletes, joining the Barwon Sports Academy marks their first step into high-performance sport. Often shy and uncertain at the start, these individuals are welcomed into a nurturing environment that fosters both athletic and personal growth. BSA's inclusive structure brings together athletes from diverse sports and schools, allowing them to connect with peers they might never have met otherwise. Whole-academy education and strength and conditioning sessions break down barriers and build friendships across disciplines. This shared experience helps athletes feel part of something bigger - an environment where they're supported, seen and valued.

Community Impact and Inclusion

BSA's reach extends far beyond the training ground. Their strategic engagement with schools, families and local communities has built a deep network of support. The Academy recognises the importance of being accessible and provides financial support and scholarships to eliminate barriers for athletes and families, and ensure a level playing field. Deakin University is a proud partner of the Academy. Speaking with Lyndell at Deakin, she shared that they value the increase in inclusion that the Academy is providing. There has been an increase in recruitment for First Nations communities, athletes with a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) background, strong support for paralympic sports. Women in sports and providing opportunities for girls in the Academy has been a key focus. Lyndell highlighted that the Academy is supporting groups that are often marginalised – and that this aligns with Deakin's values and focus, too.

**“It's a wonderful thing to have
local talent, grow local talent,
keep talent local.”**

- Amie, City of Greater Geelong

Inspiring Growth and Confidence

As athletes progress, their transformation is striking. From timid newcomers to confident, outgoing leaders, the journey is shaped by expert coaching, targeted education, and a culture of encouragement. Older athletes often return to their local clubs to mentor and inspire the next generation, creating a ripple effect of aspiration and leadership.



BELONGING, INSPIRATION & INCLUSION

A Critical Community Service

BSA's growing presence and reputation reflect its commitment to inclusion and excellence. Year-on-year growth in participation is a testament to how well BSA integrates into the community and uplifts young people through sport.

Former Exercise Sports Science Masters student and BSA program coordinator - and now Brisbane Broncos high performance sports scientist - Tom shared how critical this service is. If it didn't exist, young athletes would miss out on important services, advice and support that would help them progress to where they want to be. They might need to move to Melbourne to access those services – and Geelong would lose those athletes.

Amie from City of Greater Geelong agreed it's a wonderful program and asset for the Geelong and surrounding community. She shared how vital it is to have regional opportunities for kids who don't live near a major city. "It's a wonderful thing to have local talent, grow local talent, keep talent local."

Key Takeaway

Barwon Sports Academy isn't just developing athletes - it's cultivating a culture of belonging, inspiration and community connection. Through strategic outreach and genuine care, BSA empowers young people to believe in themselves, support one another and lead with purpose.

"I really valued that the Academy offered their program as optional sessions. It meant I could focus on year 11 and 12 when needed and knew I didn't have to attend every session. This helps creates buy-in – you go to the sessions because you want to, not because you're forced to be there."



WHY PARTNER WITH BARWON SPORTS ACADEMY?

Supporting athletes to reach their full potential and achieve sporting success is one of our fundamental outcomes. But success in the sporting arena is only part of the mission. We care even more deeply about developing great people - not just athletes. Partnering with Barwon Sports Academy means investing in the region, supporting the personal growth of young people in our community, and helping inspire the next generation of leaders. We're empowering youth, creating awareness about opportunities and building resilience. Together, we are building stronger, healthier, more connected communities.

Partner Value

- **Positive brand alignment** – be recognised as a leader in social impact, youth development and community building.
- **Community visibility** – gain exposure through events, athlete stories, media and BSA networks.
- **Legacy building** – create lasting change in the lives of young people and contribute to the momentum towards Brisbane 2032 and beyond.
- **Investing in our community's future** – contribute to empowering the leaders of tomorrow!
- **Shared purpose** – align with a trusted regional institution that delivers measurable impact and inspires real stories of transformation.

“Without (BSA) I would’ve had a very different experience in my sporting career. It presented me with a lot of opportunities that as a regional athlete I wouldn’t have the same access to compared to Melbourne. I was really fortunate to have the BSA experience; it’s led me to have not only great athletic achievements and experiences but also personal experiences. It shows the power of what can happen if we invest in not just the athlete, but the person.”
– Olivia, former BSA athlete



THANK YOU

Thank you to two of our existing partners featured on the next two pages. With their support the benefits we deliver and our impact is reaching even further.

“Geelong wouldn’t have had so many successful athletes in the last 20 years if it wasn’t for the support of the Barwon Sports Academy.”



BIS-SPORT BREAKFAST 2025

'Geelong's Next Wave'

Bis-Sport is a grants program run by the BSA. It is co-funded by the City of Greater Geelong and local business support through a fundraising breakfast. Bis-Sport has enabled many athletes, by way of grants, to compete at state, national and international levels. It also provides subsidies for membership if financial challenges occur. This year Bis-Sport celebrated its 13th breakfast at GMHBA Stadium and the event recognised and celebrated the talented athletes from the Barwon Region. 260 guests gathered to hear how important community support is to Barwon Sports Academy and to acknowledge that these grants go a long way towards the achievements of young athletes.

BIS - Sport Grants:

2025 - \$16,000 for 68
athletes across the region.

Since 2011 over \$165,000
has been granted to support
over 600 local talented
athletes.

The City of Greater Geelong has a long standing relationship with BSA, and Manager Community Participation Amie Higgs applauded the Academy for their community service - getting more people active and participating in sports. "They're helping us deliver a better and healthier community, which helps us achieve our strategic goals." - Amie, City of Greater Geelong





NEW INITIATIVES

The Phillips Foundation Grant

The Barwon Sports Academy looks forward to working with The Phillips Foundation in 2026 to support the growth and development of future participants.

The grant will help with:

1. **Talent identification** of athletes from schools in the region that may not have been found. There will be an inclusive focus to search for those that are First Nations, from lower socio-economic backgrounds and new to Australia. This will help to diversify the BSA talent pool and provide opportunities for all.
2. **Coaching Development:** Coaches will now have access to 3 x online seminars and a coaching conference. The emphasis will be on development for the local junior coaches and teachers to ensure sustainability of this service for the BSA.
3. **Mental Edge:** Creating resources and education around resilience, using your mind as a powerful tool and mindset.

The partnership approach of The Phillips Foundation is to help young people flourish - building hope, confidence and resilience through participation in a combination of education, sport and wellbeing. With BSA values of innovation to services and commitment to provide the best value for families, this partnership will see that real change and impact is made to the lives of the Barwon Region athletes, families and coaches.



the
**Phillips
Foundation**
Education changes lives



CONCLUSION

Barwon Sports Academy's Social Impact Report reflects our deep commitment to shaping a healthier, more inclusive and aspirational community through sport. From empowering youth with leadership and resilience, to promoting physical and mental wellbeing, supporting educational and career pathways, and fostering belonging across diverse groups - our impact is broad and meaningful.

This report aligns with our new Strategic Plan and serves as both a celebration of progress and a tool for reflection. It helps us identify where we're making a difference and where we must do more - especially in reaching under-represented cohorts and ensuring pathways are accessible to all.

We're not just about sport - we're about opportunity, connection and growth. The benefits we deliver ripple outward: to kids, clubs, families and the wider community. With each report, we raise our profile, sharpen our focus and ask the vital question: **What more can we do?**



BARWON
sports academy



 COMMITTEE FOR
GEELONG
LEADERS FOR GEELONG


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