

GAME DEVELOPMENT **CULTURAL DIVERSITY** **ACTION PLAN**

2025 - 2028



PLAY



FOREWORD

Australian Football has always been more than just a game—it is a shared passion that brings people together from all walks of life. With a rich historical legacy spanning over a century, the AFL is committed to continuing to grow the game into the future, ensuring that everyone can love and connect with Australia's game.

Australia is one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world, and our game should reflect and celebrate this richness. Generations of migrants and multicultural communities have contributed to the fabric of our society, helping shape our identity and strengthening our collective future. This diversity is one of our greatest strengths, and we are committed to ensuring that everyone feels a genuine sense of belonging across all levels of football.

While significant progress has been made in making our game more inclusive, we recognise there is still work to do. By continuing to listen, learn, and evolve, we can build on the foundations already in place to create an environment where all cultures feel respected and represented.

This Cultural Diversity Action Plan reaffirms our commitment to making Australian Football a game for all. Meaningful change happens when we work together, and we will continue to collaborate with multicultural communities, leaders, and organisations to ensure that football remains a welcoming space for everyone.

A truly inclusive game is a stronger and more dynamic one. This Action Plan represents our commitment to continue to grow and thrive as Australia's national game—welcoming, supporting, and inspiring generations to come.



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The Cultural Diversity Action Plan is about more than increasing participation—it's about strengthening communities through football, and creating a legacy of future generations who love Australia's game.

The AFL will strengthen connections to Australian Football within culturally diverse communities by taking a place-based approach across 21 local government areas (LGAs) nationwide.

By working directly with community organisations, schools, and local leaders, we aim to increase access to our game by reducing barriers, providing flexible participation opportunities, and creating welcoming environments where people of all backgrounds feel a sense of belonging in football.

Through the Community Connect and School Connect programs, we aspire to have Australian Football embedded at the heart of neighbourhoods and schools throughout the country.

Strong partnerships within these communities will guide the bespoke co-design and delivery of programs across each LGA, and help ensure meaningful entry points for new participants.

We are excited about the impact this plan will have and look forward to continuing to work alongside communities to grow the game in a way that is inclusive, sustainable, and reflective of Australia's rich cultural diversity.

For our game to truly reflect the diversity of our society, inclusion must be more than a principle—it must be embedded in the way we engage, design, and deliver programs.

This Cultural Diversity Action Plan is built on two critical approaches: co-design and place-based approaches. Co-design means working with communities rather than for them, ensuring that culturally responsive programs are shaped by the voices and experiences of the people they aim to connect with and support. A place-based approach ensures that our initiatives are locally driven, built on strong partnerships, and tailored to the specific needs of each community.

Through collaboration with schools, families, and grassroots organisations, we aim to make Australian Football more accessible and meaningful for all—for recently arrived and migrant families, and those who may have been here for generations. We aspire to celebrate the rich cultural heritage that comprises the fabric of our Australian society through the power of sport. By partnering with community organisations to align participation programs with broader social impact initiatives where possible, we can ensure that our game not only welcomes but empowers diverse communities, fostering connection, opportunity, and lasting change.

This plan is an invitation—to listen, to learn, and to act—and to work together so we can shape a game that truly belongs to all Australians.

The AFL acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work and play our game. We pay our respects to Elders past and present. We acknowledge we play our great game on this land and respect the cultures of all First Peoples, their contribution to our nation and contribution to the game of Australian Rules Football.

AFL VISION

For everyone to love and connect with Australia's game.

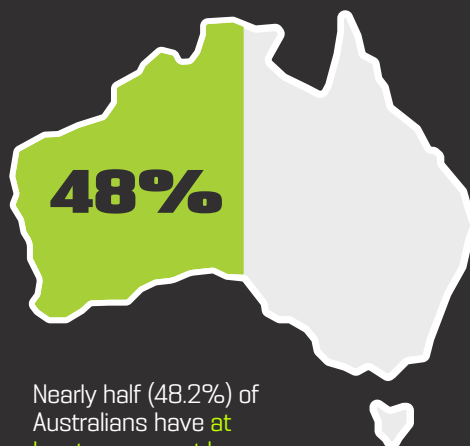
To achieve our vision, we aspire to meaningfully connect with increasingly multicultural communities across Australia.

The Game Development Cultural Diversity Action Plan (2025 - 2028) will provide a consistent, systematic framework and direction to realise our vision nationwide.

The primary emphasis of the action plan is to take a **place-based, community co-designed approach**, focusing on specific Local Government Areas (LGAs).

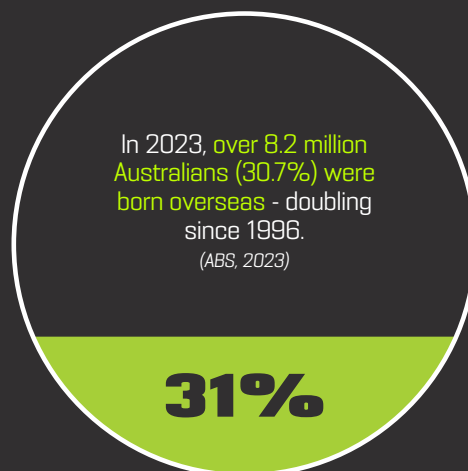
To achieve this, **AFL Community Connect** and **AFL School Connect** programs will be delivered in **21 priority LGAs** across Australia in partnership with a range of community organisations.

STATE OF PLAY



Nearly half (48.2%) of Australians have **at least one parent born overseas**.

(ABS, 2021 Census)



In 2023, **over 8.2 million Australians (30.7%) were born overseas** - doubling since 1996.

(ABS, 2023)



Nearly 25% of Australians **speak a language other than English at home**.

(ABS, 2021 Census)



OVER 10%

of Australia's population has Chinese or South Asian ancestry.

(ABS, 2023)

GUIDING PRINCIPLES



CO-DESIGN

Bespoke, community co-designed programs through multi-stakeholder partnerships to offer an alternative to the traditional AFL approach



BELONGING & CONNECTION

Primary focus on building a sense of belonging and connection through the creation of safe and inclusive environments



SUSTAINED ENGAGEMENT

Ongoing, long-term commitment to LGAs and communities in scope



INTERSECTIONALITY

Address the barriers to participation through an intersectional lens to consider the effects of systemic inequality, socio-economic status, gender diversity, language, and privileges inherent to access in traditional footy communities



TEST AND LEARN

Our programs are pilots—we will monitor and evaluate impact over the next 2 years to refine and strengthen our initiatives in Years 3 and 4



EDUCATION & TRAINING

Education and training of staff and key stakeholders in cultural awareness, sensitivity, and responsiveness is a fundamental enabler to drive systemic change



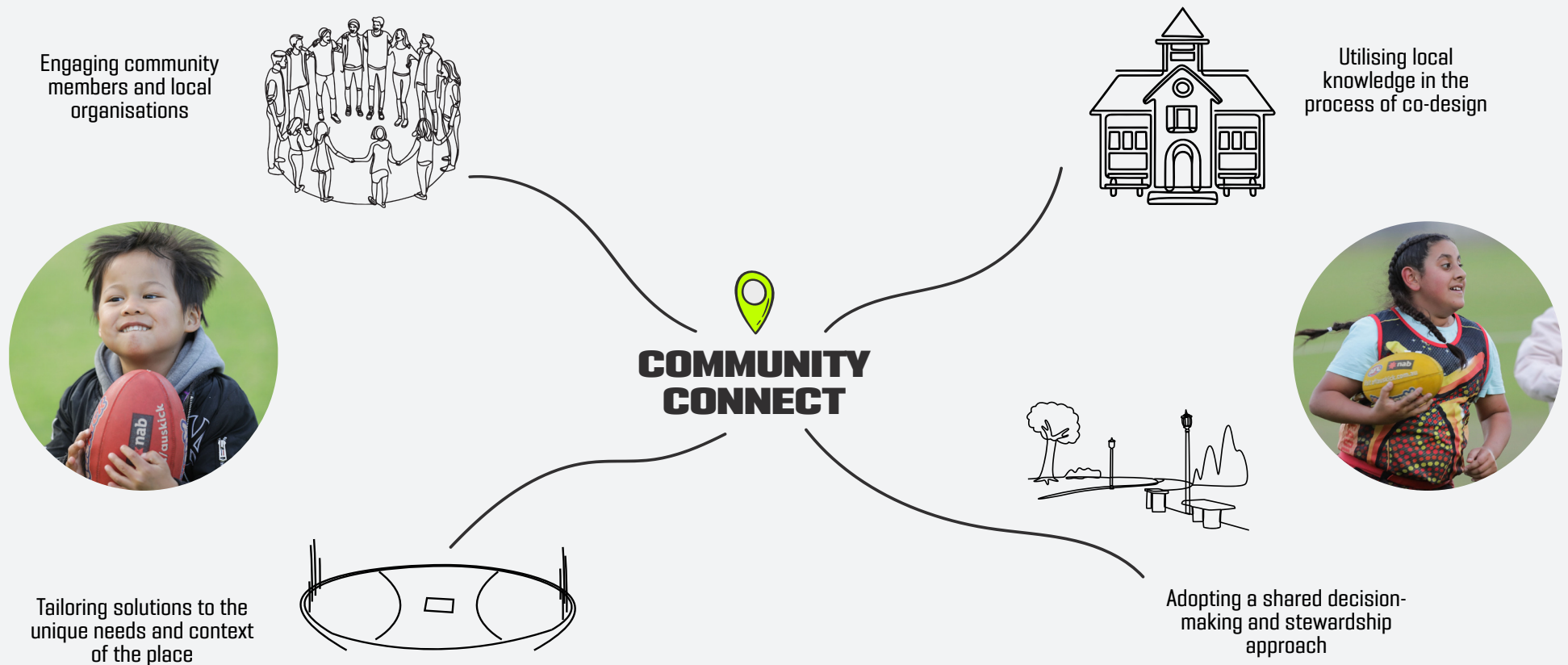
ACCOMPANYING THE JOURNEY

For some culturally diverse communities, it will be a long journey. Substantial participation growth will only be achieved after sustained and genuine commitment, patience, humility, and adopting a posture of learning.



PLACE-BASED APPROACH

A place-based approach addresses issues and opportunities within a specific geographic area through a spirit of collaboration and capacity building to drive sustainable, community-led change by:



KEY INITIATIVES

AFL COMMUNITY CONNECT

Informed by co-design work, AFL Community Connect will be a combination of unstructured opportunities in conjunction with NAB AFL Auskick, NAB AFL Superkick and AFL Nines sessions.

This provides an initial introduction to the AFL and supports both social impact and participation outcomes.



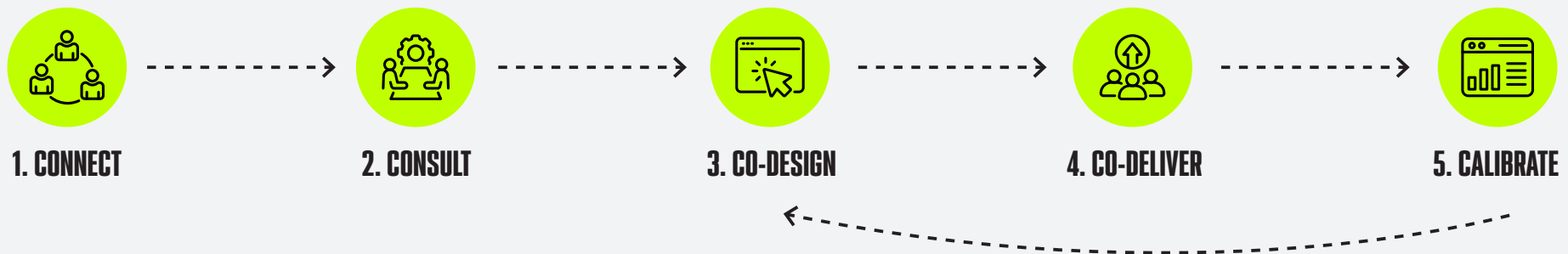
AFL SCHOOL CONNECT

AFL School Connect will see an AFL Education Specialist placed in four schools across select LGAs to deliver curriculum aligned content over a minimum 12-month period.

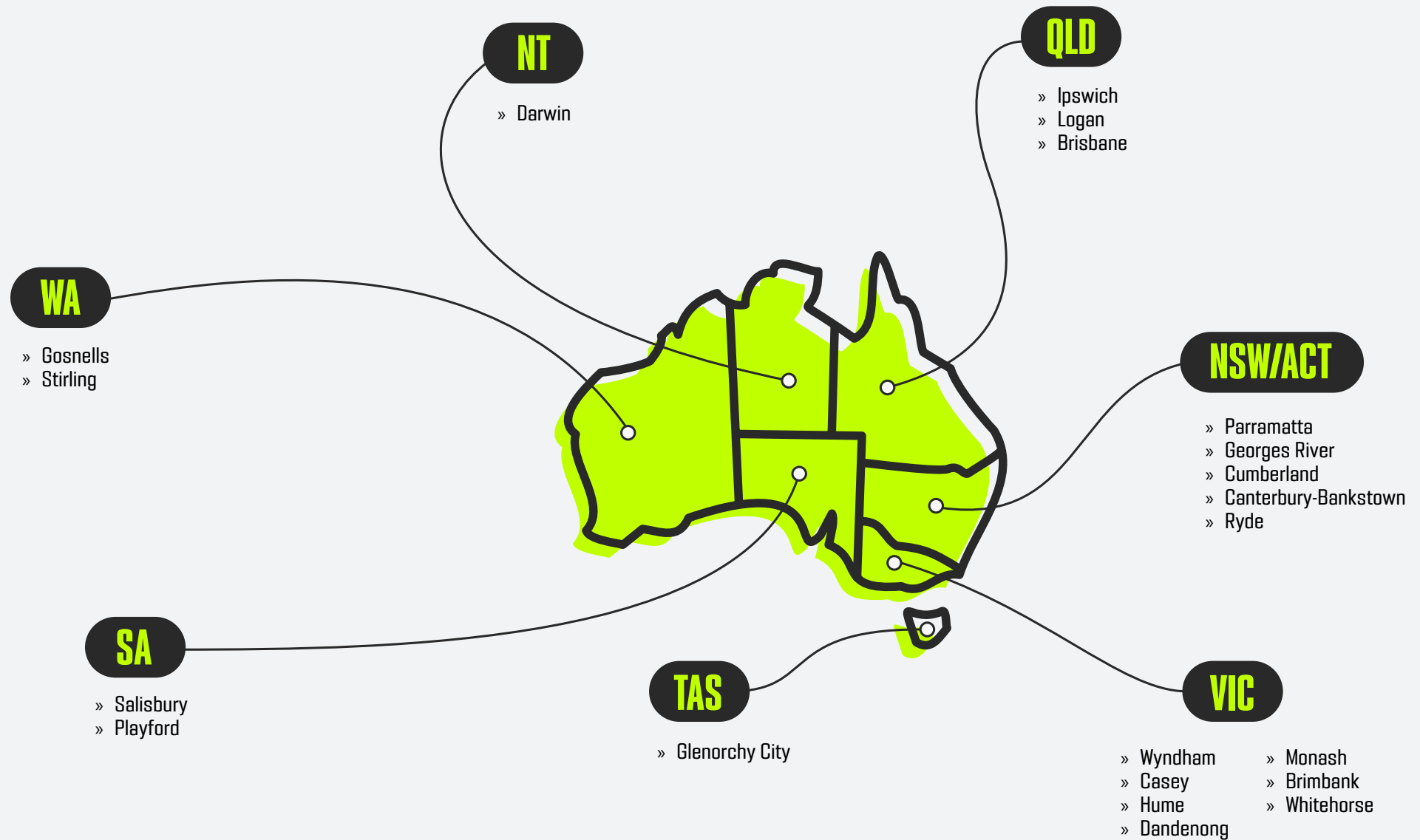
This program will engage the wider school community as well as upskill and support teachers, equipping them with resources and knowledge on how to teach physical education through Australian Football.

In partnership with AFL Clubs, School Connect will strengthen the sense of belonging and connection to the game through player appearances and match attendance opportunities.

AFL COMMUNITY CONNECT WILL BE DELIVERED IN LINE WITH THE FOLLOWING 5 PHASES:



LOCATIONS





 play.afl/multicultural