

EXMOUTH EAGLES FOOTBALL CLUB

STRATEGIC PLAN



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2026 - 2028

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Introduction



The Exmouth Eagles Football Club Strategic Plan (2026-2028) provides a strategic framework for the growth and future directions over the next three-year period, to the end of 2028. It reaffirms our Club vision, purpose, values and identifies some priorities to focus on.

This Strategic Plan was developed following an initial Country Football WA sporting clubs' cultural collective workshop in 2023, and an Exmouth Eagles football Club members strategic workshop, following the AGM in 2025, both of which were facilitated by external consultants.

The development of this Strategic Plan has been supported by the Shire of Exmouth, their major community sponsors – Woodside Energy and its Greater Enfield/Vincent joint venture partner, Mitsui E&P Australia (Ngujima-Yin FPSO), and Scarborough joint venture partners JERA and LNG Japan and with funding from Dept. of Creative Industries, Tourism and Sport (CITS).

Overview



The Exmouth Eagles Football Club Inc., collectively known as the Eagles, is based at the Exmouth Recreation Centre, in the heart of Exmouth, Western Australia. The Exmouth Eagles Football Club (EEFC) was established in 1993 and has grown considerably over the past few years, due to the expansion of junior competition, the success of the EGALS Women's Team, the continued on-field success of the Senior Men's Team, and a thriving Masters event.

It has become the cornerstone of the local community, fostering a passion for football, developing talent, and bringing the community together. It aims to continue to deliver a thriving club atmosphere, a place where everyone feels welcome, a football club offering opportunities for all ages, genders, races and experiences and an integral part of the sporting, social and community fabric of Exmouth.

The Club has recently amalgamated its structure, under one Football Club governance structure, It introduces children aged between 3 and 8 to the game, fields competition in junior and colt age-groups from 8 to 17, a Senior Men's team competing in the Gascoyne Football Association league, a Masters competition and an EGALS Women's team, leading the way in women's football in the northern part of the state. The Eagles is a 'traditional country club' that draws players, supporters, and volunteers from throughout the community.

The Club also acknowledges that it plays a significant role in the fabric of the community, particularly in one with such a large transient and young population. The Club owns two buses, which it makes available for other clubs and community groups to use, and is coordinating a recycling initiative in which funds raised can be donated to sporting clubs and community groups in Exmouth.

Over the next four years, it aspires to reinforce the ONE Club environment and continue to provide and support pathways for all and any footballers to play, develop, and improve. The Club's strength lies in its people – its players, coaches and committed volunteers. The Club will work hard to continue providing a supportive environment that attracts, supports and recognises the many volunteers who contribute both on and off the field and in the community.



AFL - Continuing to Grow



As a sport, Australian Rules Football (AFL) is part of the fabric of many rural communities. It remains one of the most popular sporting codes in Western Australia, with particularly strong overall growth in recent years, in women's, girls and junior participation levels.

Participation-tracking data collected by AusPlay running since 2015 show a consistently high participation rate across Australia, particularly for adult males and in traditional rural heartland states such as Victoria, Western Australia and South Australia. In 2024, AFL saw a record participation rate with over 6000,000 active participants across community sport, including junior, youth, seniors and masters.

More women and girls are picking up the footy, experience growth across the country and accounting for over 22% of grassroots football registrations, and participation growing by over 10% year-on-year. Richard Goyder, the previous AFL Chair (and ex-Tambellup country junior!), stated in the AFL Women's Football Vision *'The inclusion of women's football has been a defining moment in the rich 161-year history of our game and has clearly opened our eyes to all the possibilities that lie before us in the future.'*¹

The Exmouth Eagles Football Club has a powerhouse EGALS Women's team, which in its short history has developed several successful female players, who have debuted in the professional AFLW.

La Trobe University undertook research in Victoria.² 'identifying the value of a typical community football club with every \$1 spent on a community football club, there is at least a \$4.40 return in social investment'. This return is measured in terms of increased social connectedness, wellbeing, mental and physical health, employment outcomes, civic pride and support of other community groups.

During the members workshop, these outcomes were identified and it was acknowledged that the Exmouth Eagles were 'more than just a footy club.' The research also confirmed that a football club's reach is significant and extends beyond the players, coaches, administrators and volunteers as 'through every one player, football clubs reach ten people in their community.'

The Exmouth Eagles Football Club typifies a traditional country football club with a rich history and recognition as a social and community hub. Football will continue to be an essential and focal point for rural communities, and the Exmouth Eagles Football Club will continue to play a critical role in the health and welfare of the Exmouth community.

Shire of Exmouth Demographics

The Shire of Exmouth is located over 1,200 kms north of Perth, on the tip of the North West Cape. Covering over 6,500 km², the district is bordered by the Exmouth Gulf and the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage Area. While the town was founded around defence industries, tourism is now the largest industry in the Shire, with eco-tourism and natural resource development experiencing significant growth.

According to the Shire's Strategic Community Plan³ 'Exmouth faces a challenging situation 'with a small ratepayer base, it is struggling to meet its costs.... It is essential that resident and visitor population growth does not outstrip infrastructure, services or environmental protection.'

¹ AFL Women's Football Vision (2021-2030)

² 'Value of a Community Football Club' La Trobe University, Centre for Sport and Social Impact

³ Shire of Exmouth Strategic Community Plan 2023-2033, Updated 2025

AFL - Continuing to Grow



The latest Census report⁴ shows the Shire has an estimated population in 2021 of just over 3,000 permanent residents, with a median age of 36. However, during the winter months the number of visitors in Exmouth more than triples. While this presents some challenges for a small community with limited resources, it also provides important stimulus for the local economy. According to the Shires Community Strategic Plan 'The majority of residents want a growing, thriving economy, are pro-environment, not anti-growth.' But growth must be balanced and consistent with the protection of the environment and the valued lifestyle.

Some of the trends identified within the Shire of Exmouth Strategic Community Plan (2023-2033)⁵, informed by the 2021 Census data and discussed within the workshops, and which may have an impact on the Club include:

- ✓ An increasing population, with more families with children
- ✓ A changing community, with a transition from a recognised 'retirement town' to a vibrant, mixed demographic town
- ✓ Higher percentage/population of children aged between 0 and 9 years, than the state percentage/population
- ✓ Significantly higher percentage of adults aged 25-34, than the state percentage/population
- ✓ Lesser percentage of people married, and higher percentage of people never married, than the state percentage/population
- ✓ Significantly higher percentage of residents undertaking voluntary work through an organisation (nearly 1 in 4), than the state average.

Unlike many other rural communities, the number of adults (20 – 39-year-olds) who would be the traditional age cohort found within many football clubs is significantly higher than the state age population.

Interestingly, the 5-9 age group shows a higher percentage/population than regional WA. Junior footballers from Auskick to Under 14's are the next generation of Eagles players, and the work within the Club will continue to nurture and support these young players into generational footballers, through continued strong links and support strategies to transition them from junior to senior ranks.

Anecdotal evidence and recent population forecasting research⁶, post-COVID is also showing a significant population shift to smaller communities and rural settings, such as Exmouth. Younger people are returning to their rural roots, and people are choosing to move to regional regions (across Australia). Intrastate migration has grown considerably post-COVID, particularly to coastal areas and it is projected that the Shire of Exmouth may well see the population continue to grow in the 20 – 50 age group as many choose flexible work and home life options. However, as has been identified challenges of employment opportunities and housing will have an impact on the potential increases in population.

As discussed within the workshops, these demographic shifts can provide a significant opportunity for AFL in the region (particularly in support of junior football) but also a challenge for clubs (and their largely parent volunteer base) to support any growth, shift and changes. The social goal for the Shire of Exmouth is to 'nurture a friendly, safe and inclusive community spirit', which is strongly reinforced within the EEFC vision, values and goals.

⁴ <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/SAL50497>

⁵ Shire of Exmouth Strategic Community Plan and Corporate Business Plan 2023-2033 (2025 Update)

⁶ <https://blog.id.com.au/2020/population-forecasting/how-covid-19-will-impact-the-future-population-of-rural-areas/>



EEFC - A Snapshot



The Exmouth Eagles Football Club (EEFC) was established in 1993 and celebrates a rich 30-year history. The EEFC has traditionally played in the Gascoyne Football Association League, competing against other Carnarvon clubs. The EEFC achieved a significant milestone in 2025, with a '3peat' as the GFA Senior Men's Team Premiers. However, this has been soured by the demise of the competing clubs from Carnarvon. As one of the larger zones in regional WA (covering over 6,500 square kms) distances to compete, transient populations and extremely small population bases means there are some challenges ahead, with the traditional men's football competition structure and offerings.

Women's football has seen a significant rise in interest and participation and again the EGALS have been successful, but the loss of other female teams in the club structure, has meant the girls have only been able to play occasional curtain-raisers and mixed matches over recent years. There is no regular female competition on offer.

Juniors football including Auskick, Midgets, Juniors and Colts, for those aged from 3 to 17, continues to go from strength to strength. There are currently over 200 junior participants. EEFC is the largest junior Club in Exmouth and is nearing capacity.

Masters football, for those aged 35 and over, has seen a recent resurgence. The EEFC successfully hosted the inaugural North-West Masters Cup in 2025 and will retain the event for the next 5 years. This will see Masters players and teams from across the state, travelling to and competing in Exmouth, bringing interest, enthusiasm and tourists to the region.

Currently, the season runs from March to September for Junior level and from May and August for the Seniors. The popular pre-season training provides an opportunity for those wanting to maintain and/or build up the fitness levels. The Senior men train on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, and on Thursdays, they are joined by the EGALS for combined training sessions. The juniors train on Tuesdays and currently compete on Friday afternoons.



EEFC - A Snapshot



On Thursday nights, there's a 'Family Dinner' after training for the senior teams. This initiative was established to strengthen bonds, foster inclusiveness at higher levels and motivate travelling for away games and the formation of strong relationships. Exmouth is a transient town to some degree with residents coming and going to follow working seasons and demand. Building a team in this environment can be challenging. This initiative also strengthens the bonds between men's and women's teams who train at the same time, and where possible mixed training sessions are also encouraged.

The EEFC is based at the Exmouth Recreation Centre and plays home matches at Talanjeer Oval. The EEFC is currently negotiating with the Shire of Exmouth to take over the lease of the Exmouth Recreation Centre and manage the multi-use community facility. Currently there is a small multi-use club area with bar and canteen facilities and changing facilities for men, women and away-teams visiting. The lights have recently been upgraded to AFL standard, presenting the opportunity to host WAFL and AFL games in the future.

Thanks to the generosity of previous sponsors, the EEFC owns two buses that allow the club to transport players to towns across the region, to compete in league games, ensuring that travel is safe, efficient and accessible for all. Due to ongoing sponsorship, the bus's running cost are fully covered, allowing the EEFC to extend its use to other local clubs and community groups at no costs. This has strengthened connections across the region and supports wider participation in sport and community events.

Success over the Clubs thirty-year history has traditionally been measured in wins and premierships. However, as the Club has matured and expanded its football offerings for children, youth, adults and seniors, players and supporters it is now measuring its success not only by goals and wins, but also by fostering a sense of connection and community. Like many regional football clubs, it now recognises its importance in the health, well-being and connectedness of its community members.



Our Opportunities & Challenges



Feedback on the Club's opportunities and challenges was collected through an online survey and workshops, including an internal and external review (SWOT and PESTLE). The following summarises the key issues and opportunities the Club will address over the coming few years.



Stretched Volunteer Base

Our volunteers are the backbone of our club. However, many are currently stretched beyond their capacity, with 'too few, doing too much'. In small communities, these same volunteers step up to support many sport and community groups with 'too few on too many committee'. As a club, we need to understand who is in our club and match skills and opportunities to volunteering roles. As a club, we require more volunteers, with everyone 'doing a little' and sharing the load. We need to create a more robust and positive volunteer culture and look for ways to include, support, recognise and acknowledge those volunteers and supporters. We will explore opportunities to 'streamline' what we do, rather than duplicate.



Organisational Structure to Support Growth

As a large, complex and many-layered club, involving juniors, seniors, volunteers, coaches and parents, we need to make sure everyone can find a way to contribute to the ongoing success of the 'collective club' operations. The club requires a clear and contemporary organisational structure, where people can see where they can fit in, how they can help and what is involved. A review of the organisational structure has been undertaken, and an amalgamation of the two clubs (senior and junior) will commence in 2026 to create a more streamlined and cohesive structure. More sub-committees (and volunteers) with clear roles, responsibilities and documentation will support the larger team.



Governance and Leadership

The foundation of any not-for-profit group lies in its leadership and robust governance. The small Committee has a considerable volunteer workload and recognises the need to identify skill sets of potential members who may be able to step up onto the Management Committee. The amalgamation will see less duplication, but it may take some time to bed down the new structure and move away from the traditional hierarchical focus of many football clubs.



Pathways from Participation to Dreams

A club is only as strong as its pathways from participation to potential. Promoting and supporting clear pathways for aspiring and talented footballers to be nurtured and supported will ensure the long-term viability of the club. Nurturing our 'homegrown talent' and making sure they are provided with opportunities to develop as players (and people) with a one club philosophy is an important part of our ethos. The goal is to create stronger pathways and real opportunities for them to develop within the club and across the region and beyond (if they so choose).

A Nurturing Inclusive Club

We want to create a club which empowers people to be the best they can be and give everyone a fair go. To do this we believe we must inclusive, nurturing, accepting and supportive. We view success within our club as more than just competing and winning a game of football. We will nurture and support – equally and celebrate and embody many of the values that makes Exmouth such a special place to live and play (football).



Our Opportunities & Challenges



A Community and Footy Hub

The Exmouth Recreation Centre is the recognised home of the EEFC and the home space for several other clubs and community groups. The trend towards joint-share, co-location and joint management provides a possible solution to the challenge of 'too few volunteers doing too much' in managing a large multi space facility. Rather than duplicate or stretch an already thin base of volunteers, the EEFC has offered to take the lead as the facility manager. Initial work commenced in 2023 with the Thriving Club program and will continue to be driven by the EEFC, if successful with the lease agreement with the Shire. The opportunity for the club to lead by example, support a number of other clubs and community groups will help with long-term sustainability for all concerned.

Seamless Integration



We are an innovative football club, that is committed to creating a One Club environment. To do this we need to support seamless integration of our players (and volunteers), encouraging them to remain a part of the club; fostering and transitioning from Auskick to Juniors, to Seniors, to Masters. And perhaps once the boots are put away, putting back into the club as a volunteer or mentor.

Every talented footballer started somewhere, and the club understands the focus on developing, supporting, and retaining the juniors within the club. However, with the natural migration of youth from the town (for employment and education) and the transient nature of the population, it is also important to prioritise retaining existing (senior) players to field competitive teams. The motivation for this may well be intrinsic (such as friendships, focus on fitness, comradery, feeling of community) as much as the extrinsic rewards of winning. A continued focus on the culture and values will be important.



Strategic Alignment



Exmouth Eagles Football Club has identified and incorporated the following significant alignments with key stakeholders at a strategic planning level.

Organisation	Strategic Priorities	Document Ref	EEFC Priorities
Dept of Creative Industries, Tourism and Sport (CITS) (Previously DLGSCI)	To lead the public sector in community-focused delivery, with a high performing organisation and a thriving workforce: 1. Connected Communities – WA communities are cohesive and inclusive. People in these communities have a strong sense of identity and belonging. People in all communities have equitable access to our programs, services and infrastructure. 2. Prosperous industries and sector – Our industries and sectors are thriving. Their contribution to the development and diversification of the WA economy is widely recognised and continues to grow. 3. Healthy Living – People in WA's communities have a strong sense of physical, mental, emotion and social wellbeing. People participate in communities safely and free from harm. 4. Effective Operations – our processes, systems, governance structures and decision making capabilities enable us to effectively deliver programs, services and infrastructure to WA communities.	Dept of LG, Sport and Cultural Industries Strategic Plan 2024 – 2029 https://www.cits.wa.gov.au/publication/department-of-local-government-sport-and-cultural-industries-strategic-plan	✓ Our Sustainable Club ✓ Community Footy Hub ✓ Max Participation ✓ Support Our People
Shire of Exmouth	Goal 1 – Social 1.1.1 Deliver a range of events for community and visitors, and ensure venues and facilities attract visitation and improve lifestyle, offering inclusivity 1.1.2 Support and encourage community and cultural programs that are community-driven, encourage interaction and promote a sense of pride and belonging 1.2.3 Implement Exmouth Recreation Master Plan to include a multi-functional centre for recreation & emergency services	Shire of Exmouth Strategic Community Plan 2023-2033 (2025 Update) https://www.exmouth.wa.gov.au/your-choice-our-future	✓ Our Sustainable Club ✓ Community Footy Hub ✓ Max Participation ✓ Support Our People
WA Football Commission	Industry Focus: 1 Club, Volunteer and Administrator Support: a. Build capacity, diversity and capability of vols and administrators b. Simplifying the role of vols, providing tools to support them c. Support clubs in establishing best practice governance and management processes that drive positive 2. Facilities and Infrastructure a. To have sufficient and sustainable facilities that support the growth of the game now and into the future 3. Participation, Development & Talent Pathways & Comps a. Participation pathways continue to grow at a sustainable rate b. Provide a clear talent pathway that enables individuals to reach their full potential c. Our competitions are well governed, safe, fun, fair and inclusive.	WA FOOTBALL COMMISSION Strategic Plan 2023 – 2025 https://wafootball.com.au/wafc/about-us/annual-reports/strategic-plan	✓ Our Sustainable Club ✓ Community Footy Hub ✓ Max Participation ✓ Support Our People
WA Country Football (CFWA)	1. Community & Engagement – Strengthening local clubs, supporting volunteers and ensuring inclusivity for all backgrounds 2. Facilities – Partnering to upgrade and build new, inclusive and accessible grounds, addressing funding shortfalls 3. Excellence & Pathways – Developing talent, supporting elite pathways and ensure high quality football experience across regional leagues	https://wafooty.com.au/download/d/nU-YuHuLOrDH57sh_RDZLX7DG-bzohHjK5YnIAJrs	✓ Our Sustainable Club ✓ Community Footy Hub ✓ Max Participation ✓ Support Our People



EEFC - Strategic Plan Overview

2026 -2028

Our Vision

A unified and thriving community football Club.
The pride of the Nor'West – on and off the field.

Purpose

The Club prides itself on its strong sense of community, its pathways for every footballer to strive and its commitment to providing a safe and supportive environment for all.

Our Priorities

- 1. OUR SUSTAINABLE CLUB** – To raise the standard of governance across the Club, to unify and strengthen long term sustainability.
- 2. COMMUNITY-FOOTY HUB** – To provide quality AFL regional level facilities which foster connections and a sense of belonging.
- 3. MAXIMUM PARTICIPATION & PATHWAYS** – To provide and support pathways for all players to be able to participate, develop and aspire. Each player can reach their own goals.
- 4. SUPPORT OUR PEOPLE** – To ensure our coaches, officials & volunteers are competent, confident and supported in their roles. To have fun and contribute.

Our Values

- BELONGING** – we will create a safe and fun place for people to connect to.
- RESPECT** – we will treat everyone with dignity, kindness and empathy.
- SAFE** – we will strive for our teams and players to be safe, on and off the field.
- OPPORTUNITY** – we give everyone the chance to play footy.
- ACCOUNTABLE** – we will be transparent and communicative in our integrated club dealings.
- SUPPORTIVE** – we will make every effort to be ONE club, supporting many players with diverse interests.



Success will be measured by:

Success for the Exmouth Eagles Club will be measured by:

-  More volunteers, everyone doing something
-  One Club governance structure
-  Fun and vibrant game days

-  Fully utilised Clubrooms
-  Healthy bank balance
-  A sense of community



1. Our Sustainable Club



What will we do?

- 1.1 Finalise the Strategic Plan and report annually on result.
- 1.2 Review, expand and document the unified organisational structure
- 1.3 Identify and document all volunteer positions
- 1.4 Establish a Succession Plan for the Committee, including a 'buddy/mentor' system
- 1.5 Provide an Induction Package for all Committee members.
- 1.6 Identify, invite and recruit members into volunteer roles.
- 1.7 Continued compliance with all legislative and peak body requirements
- 1.8 Establish annual Facility Sinking fund for future upgrades
- 1.9 Consider annual budgets for operational committees
- 1.10 Annually review and update all key documents

How will we measure success?

1. Strategic outcomes tracked and delivered
2. All Committee positions filled
3. Healthy bank balance
4. Committee satisfaction ranking
5. Member satisfaction

Priority Areas >>>

The following four Priority Areas, objectives and actions have been identified and will be the targeted over the next three-year period:

To raise the standard of governance across the Club, to unify and strengthen long term sustainability.

2. COMMUNITY FOOTY HUB



What will we do?

- 2.1 Finalise negotiations with Shire on Lease agreement
- 2.2 Establish facilities reserve fund, with annual % put aside for facility upgrades
- 2.3 Identify, prioritise and cost football and ancillary facility improvements
- 2.4 Seek mix of funding sources for improvements
- 2.5 Continue to promote and track usage of bus for football and other groups
- 2.6 Upgrade to facilities including but not limited to:
 - I. Electronic Scoreboard
 - II. Reticulation to oval
 - III. Line Marking equipment
 - IV. Kitchen and Canteen areas
- 2.7 Active involvement in Facility Master Plan for Exmouth Recreation Precinct.

How will we measure success?

1. Long term plan established, with priorities
2. Facility upgrades and equipment purchased
3. Growth in membership and diversity
4. Increased Club activation
5. Additional regional events
6. Member satisfaction

To provide quality AFL regional level facilities which foster connections and a sense of belonging.



3. MAXIMUM PARTICIPATION & PATHWAYS



What will we do?

- 3.1 Explore options for alternative football competition structures, to increase opportunities to play
- 3.2 Promote and encourage pathways for participation
- 3.3 Explore a combined Game Day environment with all levels participating
- 3.4 Encourage more regional carnivals and events from Exmouth
- 3.5 Combine regional football events with coaching, officiating certification
- 3.6 Regular, planned visits by high profile football clubs/players
- 3.7 Sub-Committee and support for AFL Masters Cup
- 3.8 Target seniors to buddy/mentor junior training and games
- 3.9 Work with EGALS to attract increased opportunities to participate

How will we measure success?

1. Profile regional events held
2. Retention rate of players
3. Positive Game Day environment
4. Performance (of Club, individuals)
5. Increase in regular games/season
6. Member satisfaction

To provide and support pathways for all players to be able to participate, develop and aspire. Each player to reach their own goals.

4. SUPPORT OUR PEOPLE



What will we do?

- 4.1 Identify the coaching and officiating requirements for the Club
- 4.2 Promote annual Coach and Official educational opportunities (in Exmouth)
- 4.3 Consider subsidies for Coaches and Officials (on agreed targets)
- 4.4 Create a stronger volunteer culture and expectation from ALL members through:
 - I. Identify skills, experience and interest from members through Club 'touch points'
 - II. Include volunteer contribution in membership
 - III. Provide one-off volunteer roles (e.g. for events)
 - IV. Committee set volunteer targets
- 4.5 Recognise all volunteers through:
 - I. Annual Volunteer thank you event
 - II. Volunteer of the Month
 - V. Nominate Volunteers for Shire/Football Awards
 - VI. Free merchandise for volunteer contributions
- 4.6 Recognise Sponsors through sponsor event, regular communications
- 4.7 Establish an Events Sub-committee

How will we measure success?

- 1. Number of new Coaches and Officials
- 2. Increase in number of volunteers and volunteer support hours
- 3. Reduced volunteer fatigue from existing volunteers
- 4. Retention of sponsors
- 5. Member satisfaction

To ensure our coaches, officials and volunteers are competent, confident and supported in their roles. To have fun and contribute.



