

# Media Release

**The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP**

Leader of the House

Minister for Health

Minister for Health Infrastructure

Minister for Ambulance Services



Monday, 9 December 2024

## UNDERSTANDING CONCUSSION'S IMPACT ON WOMEN IN SPORT

The Allan Labor Government is partnering with the AFL to deliver a first of its kind Australian study examining the impacts of concussion experienced by AFLW players.

Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas today to announce the details of a new research project, which seeks to explore factors associated with honest reporting and disclosure of concussion symptoms post-injury, and how this might differ between sex and gender.

The project is the first of its kind in Australia and will inform concussion education for players and coaches in the future to improve safety.

While there is growing awareness of concussion management and the potential long-term consequences, much of the research to date has focused on the experience of football and sporting participants in general, without examining gender-based discrepancies, despite the growing participation rates of women in sport.

As part of this new study researchers will speak to both community and elite adult players to better understand how existing policies and guidelines for concussion, including recent changes to the guidelines for the 2024 season are applied.

They will also consider whether barriers exist that may prevent safe practices from being adopted, including whether experiences differ for men and women.

The research is expected to inform future innovations to improve player safety. It follows the implementation of the AFLW's 'Prep to Play' coaching manual, which is currently being evaluated by La Trobe University.

This project will be delivered through a three-way partnership between the Department of Health, AFL and La Trobe University.

Findings from the new research project, Elite and community AFL player perspectives to optimise concussion management, are expected to be delivered in late 2025.

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

*"There's growing awareness of the potential long-term consequences of concussion, but relatively little research has looked specifically at the experience of female athletes – we're changing that."*

*"This research will be vital to improving prevention, treatment and management of concussion and we're proud to partner with the AFL on this important work."*

### Quotes attributable to AFL General Counsel Stephen Meade

*"Protecting past, present and future players from risks to health and safety presented by sport-related concussion and other head trauma is a key priority for the AFL."*

*"We have six people working full-time in this space, have made more than 30 changes to rules and tribunal and match review guidelines and continue to drive more research and evolve our rules and approach as we learn more."*

**Media contact:** Max Resic 0435 256 250 | [max.resic@minstaff.vic.gov.au](mailto:max.resic@minstaff.vic.gov.au)