



Women in High Performance Coaching

# **AIS VIS ASPIRE COACH PROGRAM**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Victorian Institute of Sport sits on the lands of the Bunurong/Boon Wurrung People of the Kulin Nation.

We acknowledge the Bunurong/Boon Wurrung People as the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work and play sport.

The Bunurong/Boon Wurrung traditional land extends from the Werribee in the east across to Leongatha in the west and includes the Mornington Peninsula and Phillip Island.

Bunurong/Boon Wurrung People are part of a language group or nation known as Kulin. Their cultural, ceremonial and spiritual life was shaped by the seasons through the availability of their natural resources.

Through thousands of years of observation, Bunurong People were able to predict the availability of their season's resources by certain change in plant growth and animal behaviour.

Bunurong People played an active and important role in the protection and preservation of the land and environment surrounding the Victorian Institute of Sport which we enjoy today.

We acknowledge and pay our respects to ancestors of this country, Elders, knowledge holders and leaders – past, present and emerging.



# AIS VIS ASPIRE COACH PROGRAM

The AIS VIS ASPIRE Coach Program is a 3-day initiative designed to support the development of women coaches who aspire to enter and thrive in the High Performance (HP) coaching landscape.

This initiative aims to support and enhance the skills of early-career aspiring women coaches by providing opportunities to develop:

- Self-awareness
- Understanding of the HP environment
- Communication and career navigation skills.

An initiative of the Women in High Performance Coaching Project  
[AIS.gov.au/coach-development/WiHPC](https://ais.gov.au/coach-development/WiHPC)

## Why ASPIRE?

Insights from the Women in High Performance Coaching (WiHPC) Project reveal significant entry barriers for women coaches, including:

- Limited access to HP coaching pathways
- Unclear role expectations and commitments
- Inadequate remuneration
- Restricted opportunities for professional development

These challenges often lead to early exits from the HP system, preventing long-term career progression.

We are aiming to develop the talent pool at the bottom of the Leaky Pipeline!

## Target group

Women coaches who meet following criteria:

- Have experience coaching competitive athletes at a state and or national level.
- Aspire to have a career as a coach in the HP landscape.
- Have key capabilities identified as important for an early-career HP coach. These are prioritised as:
  - Continuous learning
  - Self-awareness and emotional intelligence
  - Mission, Vision and Values (Passion)
  - Psychological Safety
  - Understanding the Individual
  - Communication

We will utilise the [AIS HP Coach Capability Framework](#) to support the selection of 30 aspirational women coaches.

“

**Looking ahead, I am committed to dedicate more time to the development of my sport and my athletes, guiding them towards their fullest potential. I intend to continue my educational journey, which should never stop, drawing on diverse sources of knowledge to improve my coaching skills.**

”

— Experiential Learning Program Coach 2024

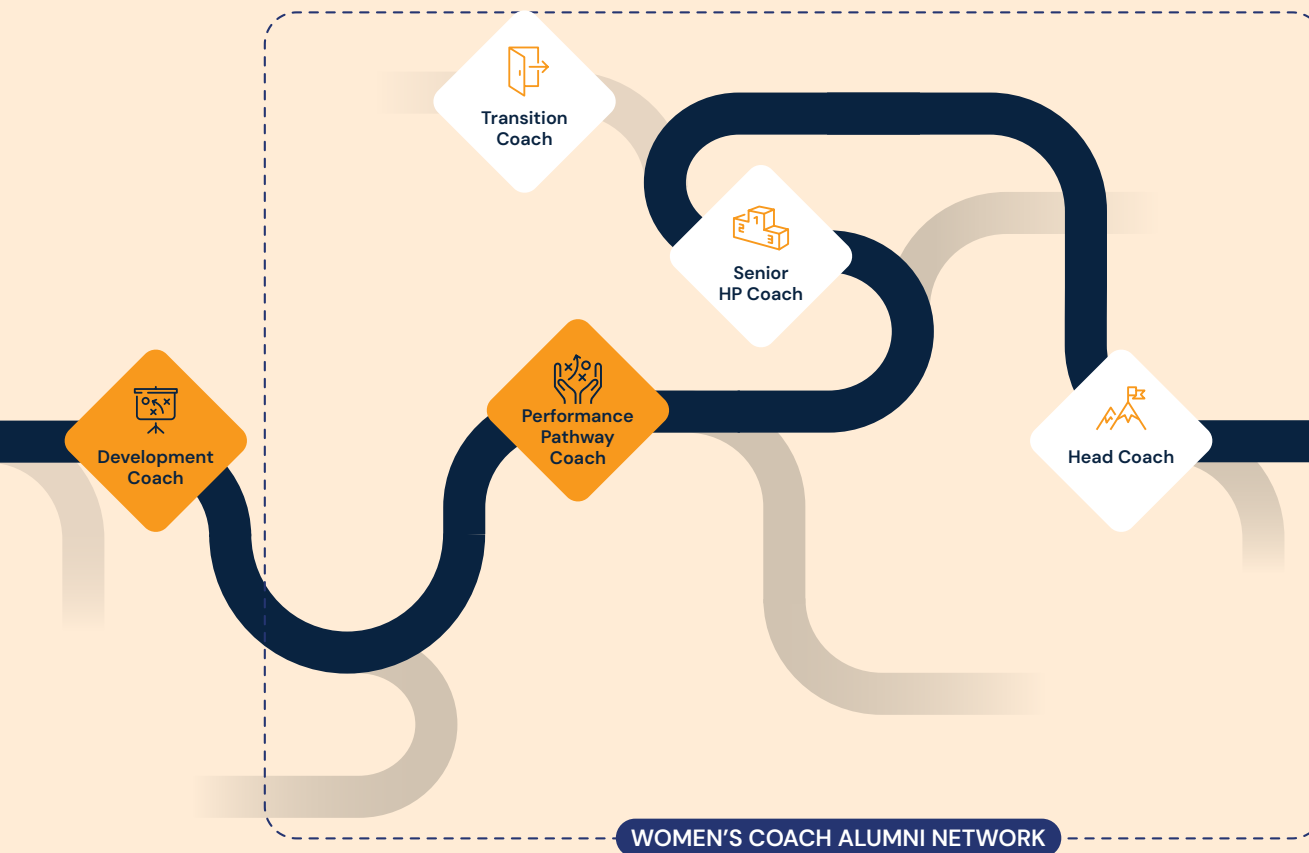
# THE COACHING PIPELINE



This program aims to address the systemic barriers that contribute to the “leaky pipeline”—a phenomenon where women coaches face challenges entering and remaining in HP coaching roles.

Take a look at the [WiHPC Leaky Pipeline](#) to understand if you are suitable for this program.

Creating a visible pathway to enable direction and progression is a critical element for every coach!



● ASPIRE Coach Program Target Group

WOMEN'S COACH ALUMNI NETWORK

# PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The AIS VIS ASPIRE Coach Program will focus on developing the knowledge and competencies of Australia's early-career women coaches specific to:

- Awareness and understanding of self
- Understanding the HP landscape regarding role clarity, expectations, available development resources and networks
- Development of communication and navigational skills to support entry into the HP environment.

The program has been co-designed by women coaches and will be delivered by a leadership team of women coaches.

The program will include:

- **Co-facilitated delivery** with a women coach leadership team
- **1 x Virtual meeting** prior to the Workshop
- **2 x Preparation task** (Individual Profile and AIS HP Coach Self Evaluation Tool)
- **1 x 3-day face-to-face** learning experience
- **Access to people and experiences** who will share their lived experiences and journeys to meet program needs
- **3 Virtual sessions** in small groups in the following 6 to 12 months

## Delivery Principles

- **Connection and belonging**  
Intentional learning design and delivery to optimise psychological safety and storytelling through values-based facilitation.
- **Practical application**  
Learning is relevant, practical and applied to the early-career coach in HP.
- **Community**  
Development of a sense of community, belonging and a network of support.
- **Inclusive and diverse**  
Foster an inclusive environment that respects and utilises diverse experiences and viewpoints.

**Participants in the ASPIRE Coach Program may be invited to join a research project following the workshop to explore additional learning and development support.**

PHOTO: ANULA COSTA, VIS PARA SPORT UNIT COACH (LEFT) AND THOMAS MCGOUGH, PARA ATHLETICS (RIGHT)



# QUICK PROGRAM FACTS

30

A COHORT OF UP TO  
30 WOMEN COACHES



3

## DAY PROGRAM

Face-to-face,  
with preparation tasks  
and an online meeting

2-4

OCTOBER  
2026



## LOCATION

Victorian Institute of Sport,  
Lakeside Stadium, Melbourne



## TRAVEL COSTS

Airfares and/or  
ground transport is  
at the expense of the  
participant

## INCLUSIONS

- ✓ Individual Profile
- ✓ AIS HP Coach Self Evaluation Tool
- ✓ Accommodation
- ✓ 3-day learning experience
- ✓ Follow up network activities.



I'd like an opportunity to shadow and be exposed to international comps for confidence and experience.



— Anonymous Coach

PHOTO: HARRIET JONES, VIS DIVING HEAD COACH

# SELECTION CRITERIA

- Identify as a female aged 18 years and over.
  - Is an Australian citizen or has been granted permanent residence status.
  - Is a resident of, and coaches in Victoria or Tasmania.
  - Has coached at State or National level within an Olympic, Paralympic or Commonwealth Games Sport.
  - Has aspirations to coach within the HP landscape.
  - Is willing to engage in all facets of the ASPIRE Program, including the Individual Profile, AIS Self Evaluation Tool and all learning activities.
- Can demonstrate and articulate the following capabilities through the application process:
    - Continuous learning
    - Self-awareness and emotional intelligence
    - Mission, Vision and Values (Passion)
    - Psychological Safety
    - Understanding the Individual
    - Communication
  - Has a demonstrated commitment to ongoing training and development (i.e. continuous learner).
  - Is available to attend the AIS VIS ASPIRE Coach Program on 2-4 October 2026 in Melbourne..

## Selection notes

**Applications open:** 13 July 2026

**Applications close:** 2 August 2026

**The coach will be required to submit their own application. The NSO Director/s and SSO Director/s are recommended to support nominations from their coaches.**

Open information sessions will be conducted to support applicants through this process. It is highly recommended to attend one of these sessions:

- Thursday 23 July 2026, 1:00pm – 2:00pm AEST
- OR**
- Tuesday 28 July, 11:00am – 12:00pm AEST

The application process will involve completing:

- Application letter
- Video submission
- Character reference

You are encouraged to reach out to the VIS coach development team with any questions you may have at [aspire.coach@vis.org.au](mailto:aspire.coach@vis.org.au)

**If you think you are not eligible, we still encourage you to apply anyway.**

“

**Interacting with other coaches proved to be profoundly beneficial. Such exchanges offered me reassurance and a sense of community, highlighting the common challenges we face; it makes us stronger, boosts our confidence, and fuels our desire to make a meaningful difference.**

”

— Experiential Learning Program Coach 2024

# WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT AT THE WORKSHOP?

- ✓ A welcoming, supportive environment
- ✓ A team of women coach facilitators and a network of HP coaches to enhance your learning
- ✓ Exposure to coach and management experts working within the HP industry
- ✓ A participant cohort of like-minded women coaches
- ✓ Development of a supportive network to enable your progress
- ✓ Deepen your understanding of self
- ✓ Awareness of skills and requirements to navigate entry into HP coaching

## What does the workshop look like?

### DAY 1

**Building connections**  
**Understanding self**  
**Exploring the AIS and HP Landscape**

### DAY 2

**Navigating the HP coaching landscape**  
**Communication for empowerment**  
**The learning and development landscape in HP**

### DAY 3

**Performance wellbeing**  
**Building connections and networks**  
**Stepping into challenges**

“

**The first 2–3 years are critical – Initial experiences are so important, and getting adequate support, mentoring and demonstrating pathways for progression.**

”

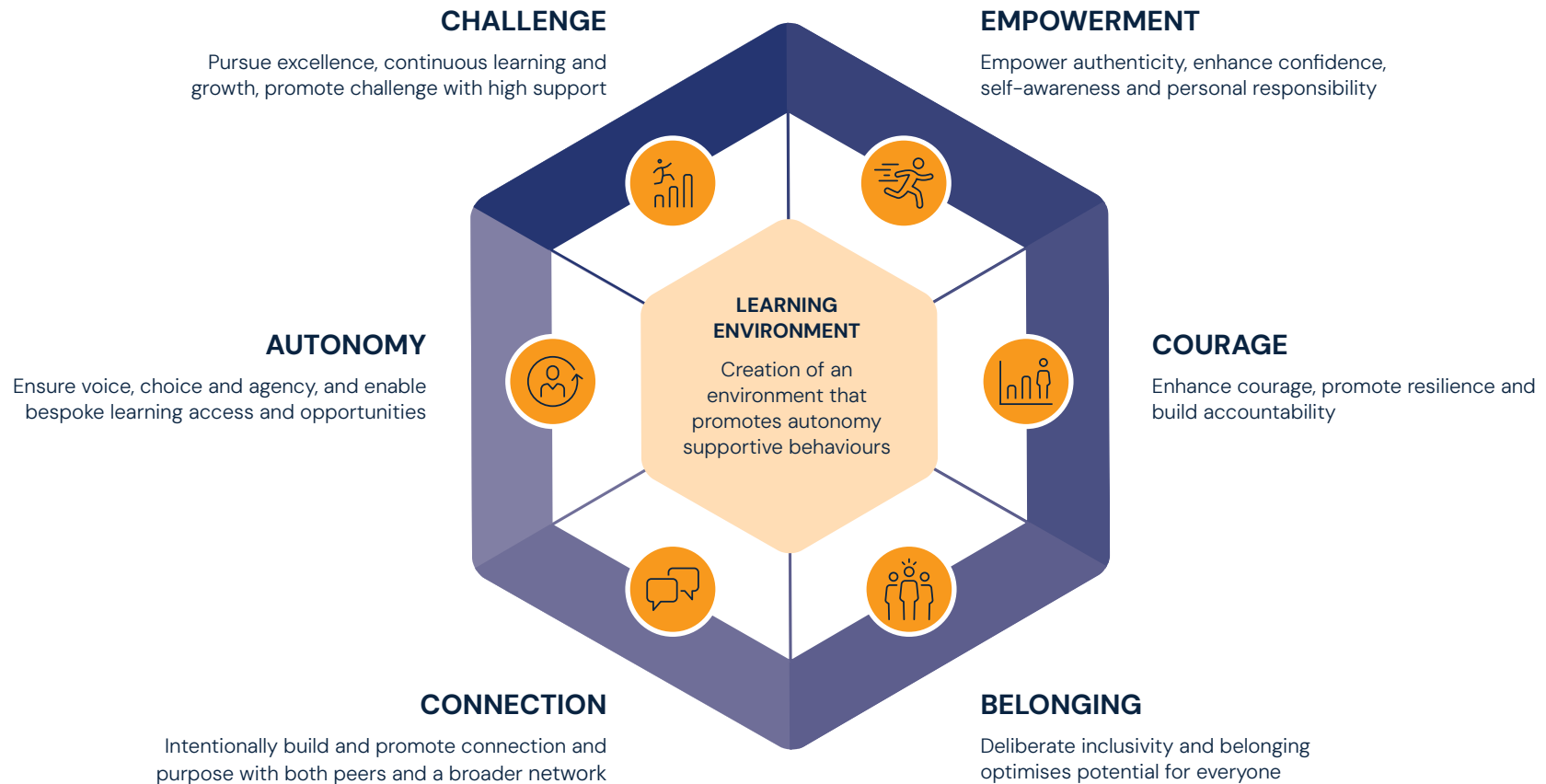
– Anonymous Coach

PHOTO: STACIA STRAIN, AIS-VIS COACH DEVELOPMENT LEAD AND ASSISTANT NATIONAL WOMEN'S HOCKEY COACH (HOCKEYROOS)



# PRINCIPLES

To optimise the learning experience



# FAQS

## How do I know if I am eligible?

First, check the eligibility requirements. Take some time to look at the [WiHPC Leaky Pipeline](#) to see the different coaches' stories that may assist you. If in doubt apply. Email [aspire.coach@vis.org.au](mailto:aspire.coach@vis.org.au) with any questions.

## What will I need to pay?

You will need to organise your own travel to Melbourne, and this is at your own expense. You will NOT need to pay for the course itself. We suggest you seek potential grants / support from your Club, State or National Organisation for travel costs.

## What about accommodation? What if I need to arrive the day before?

Accommodation for two nights is included in the program costs. If you need to arrive a day earlier for travel reasons, subject to availability there may be options for an additional night's accommodation.

## How do I know if my coaching experience is sufficient / suitable to apply?

You need to be involved with coaching or have coached at the State or National level. We will ask you to identify and provide evidence of the top three results from your athletes over the past two years. Your athletes results are not the defining selection criteria, nor your amount of time in a coaching role. What matters is your intention to coach in the HP landscape.

## I have just finished competing as an athlete and I am keen to explore coaching. Am I eligible to apply?

If in doubt apply or email [aspire.coach@vis.org.au](mailto:aspire.coach@vis.org.au) with your specific circumstances. It does not matter how long you have been coaching, only that you have evidence of some results at a State or National level.

## Who should complete my character reference? Do they need to be a coach?

You should select someone who knows you well, your values and what you stand for. Ideally, it would be good if they have worked alongside you (in your capacity as a coach) and know how you interact with others to build relationships.

## What do I include in my application letter?

Read the application documents carefully and attend the information briefing session. We strongly advise you to articulate in your application letter how you demonstrate at least three of the key capabilities for ASPIRE and what evidence you have to support this. Refer to the [AIS HP Coach Capability Framework](#) for more details.

## What is the AIS HP Coach Self Evaluation Tool?

The Individual Coach Development Plan (ICDP) Program is based upon the HP Coach Development Framework and HP Coach Capability Framework. It is a step by step process that helps identify a coach's strengths and highlights opportunities for development. You can read more at: [AIS.gov.au/coach-development/programs](https://ais.gov.au/coach-development/programs)

“

... I definitely believe confidence has been improved as I have realised from this trip that I am a good coach, and I do hold a lot of the skills necessary to be a High Performance senior national representative level coach...

”

— Experiential Learning Program Coach 2024

For additional information, refer to the [program information](#) including guidelines and selection criteria or contact [aspire.coach@vis.org.au](mailto:aspire.coach@vis.org.au)

# MEET THE TEAM



**Michelle De Highden**

*AIS High Performance Coach Development Senior Lead, High Performance Coach and ICCE Coach Developer*

Michelle is leading a national project to shift the dial on the underrepresentation and experiences of women in high performance coaching. Michelle is an experienced high-performance coach and coach developer, passionate about facilitating coach development at the high-performance level.

Coaching at both the development and World Championships level has enabled Michelle to understand both the athlete and coach development pathway from grassroots to international success. With over 35 years' experience coaching, Michelle is a qualified teacher and coach developer. She has completed a Master of Sport Coaching (2021) and attended the ICCE and NSSU Coach Developer Academy in Japan (2019-2020).



**Hannah Every-Hall OLY**

*General Manager High Performance, Victorian Institute of Sport*

Hannah Every-Hall is an Olympian, high performance leader, NCAS Level 3 rowing coach and experienced coach developer with a passion for creating environments where people can fulfill their potential.

A London 2012 Olympian and former elite rower, Hannah returned to international rowing after having two children and went on to become one of the first Australian mothers to compete in rowing at an Olympic Games. She has built her career across coaching, leadership, athlete development and high performance sport, coaching across schools, clubs, para sport and elite development environments. Hannah continues to contribute to rowing through her involvement with World Rowing and as a national selector for Rowing Australia.

As General Manager High Performance, at the Victorian Institute of Sport, Hannah supports coaches, program leads and performance teams across multiple sports. Her work focuses on strengthening systems, building coach-led and athlete-centred environments, clarifying standards, and supporting people to perform at their best.



**Stacia Strain**

*AIS-VIS Coach Development Lead, Assistant Coach Australian Women's Hockey Team (Hockeyroos)*

Stacia Strain is the High Performance Coach Development Lead at the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS), based at the Victorian Institute of Sport (VIS) on secondment from her role as Head Coach of the VIS Women's Hockey Program, a position she has held since 2016. She also serves as Assistant Coach of the Australian women's national field hockey team, the Hockeyroos.

Her coaching career followed a distinguished playing career spanning more than a decade in the national system, including over twelve years as a VIS scholarship holder. In 2021, she was appointed Head Coach of the Australian Under-21 women's national team, the Jillaroos, leading the program to two Oceania Cup titles before stepping down in early 2025.

Known for her people-first approach, Stacia is committed to building confidence, self-belief and strong performance environments where athletes and coaches are supported to grow both on and off the field. She holds degrees in Exercise and Sport Science and Education from Australian Catholic University and Monash University.

# MEET THE TEAM



Stacey Morlang

*VIS Coach Developer, Aleda Facilitator International, State and Club Lacrosse Coach*

Stacey Morlang is a leadership facilitator at Aleda Collective, where she helps create a more collaborative world by connecting global leaders across diverse industries.

A seasoned coach and mentor, Stacey brings deep experience from her time as an international, state, and club-level lacrosse coach. A former elite athlete herself, she proudly represented Australia in five Lacrosse World Cups, serving as captain in four of them.



Kylie Moulds

*University lecturer, Canberra University. High Performance Coach and Coach Development Leader*

Dr Kylie Moulds is a university lecturer in Sport Psychology. A former professional tennis player and coach at the Australian Institute of Sport, Kylie has been involved with athlete and coach identification and development programs for several national sporting bodies.

Kylie's research examines the motivational environment of sport, focusing on multiple psycho-social factors, particularly the coach and how the coach can impact sustained performance and participation. Kylie is a qualified High Performance Tennis Coach and consultant.



Jo Banning

*Strategic Communications, High Performance Leadership: Board Director*

Jo is a communications, leadership and wellbeing specialist with more than 25 years' experience across corporate, not-for-profit and high performance sport. A former Hockeyroo, Jo has worked across communications, management, leadership, wellbeing and governance roles with organisations including the Australian Olympic Committee across five Summer Olympic Games, Manchester United, St George Illawarra, Basketball Australia, Hockey Australia, NSW Rugby League and Surf Life Saving Australia.

Jo is known for building trusted stakeholder relationships, delivering high-impact media and community campaigns, managing high-profile brands, and supporting athletes, coaches and teams to thrive on the world stage. She brings broad qualifications across teaching, communications, business, wellbeing, governance and human movement, along with a genuine passion for learning, high performance, teamwork and culture.

# APPENDIX 1

## The Australian High Performance Coach Development Framework



Developed by the AIS HP Coach Development Team

# APPENDIX 2



## HP strategic alignment

The AIS has a strong track record of delivering transformative development opportunities for HP coaches and continues to prioritise coach development in its HP 2032+ Win Well Sport Strategy and the National HP Coach Development Strategy.

The ASPIRE Coach Program directly supports the development of aspiring women coaches. The program fosters capabilities that aim to ensure coaches are identified and equipped to navigate entry into HP environments that prioritise both excellence and wellbeing by embedding a culture of continuous learning, self care and connection. The ASPIRE Coach Program strengthens diversity in Australia's coaching workforce at the entry level into HP Coaching.

Read the HP Coach Development Strategy:  
[AIS.gov.au/coach-development](https://ais.gov.au/coach-development)



