

COMMUNITY

SOCIAL IMPACT REPORT

2024



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Boots designed by First Nations
artist Gerard Black



We at the Geelong Football Club acknowledge Wadawurrung as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Land on which our club, our families and our communities work and play. We also acknowledge the Traditional Owners on Eastern Maar land and across Australia, where we play and connect with our great game. We pay our respect to Elders of the past, the present and those that will lead their collective future.



GROWING GREATNESS

On behalf of the Geelong Cats, we are pleased to present the 2024 Social Impact Report.

It is with great pride that we reflect on the achievements, initiatives, and contributions which have made a meaningful impact in our community through strategic partnerships, innovative programs, and our staff that exemplify the Kardinia Spirit with a service mindset.

In 2024, the Geelong Cats Community has focused on ensuring our offerings meet the evolving needs of the community, connecting individuals and groups to the club and players while also celebrating many other organisations within the region. Cats Community have seen over 26,000 people directly engaged in programs and events and had impact within 124 schools. Cats Community have also generated over \$245,000 of in-kind support to the community. New partnerships have formed, focusing on a proactive approach to Mental Health with the Resilience Project in schools, powered by GMHBA. Our increased stadium capacity has also seen the evolution of the Dulux Community Bay, giving us a chance to elevate local organisations and those individual heroes within.

The Geelong Cats extend our thanks and gratitude to the Board, Foundation Board, Executive, Partners, Staff, Coaches and players for the support they have provided to our community framework. Communities impact is driven by a Team of ALL approach at the club, with contributions made beyond the community team, all of which would not be possible without the support of our extremely generous Foundation donors, who we are grateful for.

Lastly, we would like to thank Deakin University for their guidance in supporting a co-designed approach to how we report our social impact. Deakin have provided a framework for the future as we continue to evolve our social impact footprint.

The Geelong Cats are excited for 2025, with the support of our program partners to Grow Greatness, at Home or Far Away.

UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL IMPACT

Capturing the social impact of community engagement initiatives is inherently complex, as it involves understanding and conveying not only quantitative metrics but also the nuanced and often deeply personal experiences of participants about the significant and positive changes that can result from these activities.

For some, the impact of these experiences can be articulated almost immediately, yet for others, its influence can peak at a time well beyond the initial point of engagement. Understood through various lenses, social impact can span economic, environmental and social dimensions and evidence of the impact of sporting clubs has been linked with crime reduction, educational achievement, subjective well-being, improved social capital and economic return.

For us, the complexity of measuring social impact for the individuals engaged with different programs or interventions necessitates a multi-faceted approach that integrates rich qualitative narratives to fully illustrate the program's effectiveness and influence. In seeking to project the impact of the Geelong Cats Community endeavour, we were drawn to a range of innovative qualitative methods. Among these is the use of digital storytelling techniques to capture accounts of social impact for participants across the various programs and activities, and to provide insights about the ways in which social impact has penetration beyond the experiential moment. Against this backdrop, we attempt to understand the impact of the community engagement programs on the everyday lives of participants, their families and communities.

COMMUNITY FRAMEWORK

Regions Community Champion — sharing our resources and scaling our DNA, to seed, grow and celebrate Greatness everywhere.



Fostering Football Connections

Contributing to the development of the game, strengthening the base to secure the future.



Empowering Legit Inclusion

Providing the Community with a sense of belonging to the Geelong Cats and our great game.



Supporting Healthy Lifestyles

Empowering children and adolescents with the knowledge to create Healthy Lifestyles.



Contributing To The Community

Giving back to the community by sharing our knowledge and resources.



26,539

Direct reach

▷ People directly engaged with
Cats Community programs and
events in 2024

\$247,266

Contributed to the community

▷ Through in-kind support

124

Schools engaged

▷ Within our Geelong Cats
fan zone

74

Community Organisation
& Partners

▷ Have benefited from events,
programs and partnerships
involving the Cats Community



GAME DEVELOPMENT

The Geelong Cats support AFL Victoria, AFL Barwon and AFL Western District to deliver a range of targeted initiatives to help grow the game at Auskick level, in schools and through alternative or inclusive formats. Initiatives alter from year to year, depending on the needs of the region.

4,001 ▶ Students

43 ▶ Schools

300 ▶ Super Clinic Attendees

*Above numbers are additional game development activities outside of Community Camps.

Fostering Football Connections

WOMEN COACHING PROGRAM

A week immersive experience with the AFLW program coaches and players upskilling local coaching of female players within the region.

The 2024 Women's coach program was endorsed by the AFL with coaching accreditation points awarded to all participating coaches.

17

Local AFL
Barwon Coaches

*'Thank you for the opportunity.
You are all doing a fantastic
job in promoting and nurturing
women in sport and more
importantly bridging the gap
between community footy and
elite!'*

Women's Coaching Program Participant.

COMMUNITY CAMPS

AFL and AFLW Community Camps are designed to increase participation, fans and viewers of AFL and AFLW in regional, remote and culturally diverse communities. Strengthening the connections in the community to AFL with a strong focus on coaches, volunteers and children aged 4-12 years old.

Geelong Cats AFLW players visited Colac for their 2024 AFLW Community Camp. With challenges facing female football participation in the Region, the Geelong Cats aimed to encourage participation and kick-start conversations to help the development of female football.

*Scan to watch what happened
at AFL community camp.*

Fostering Football Connections





Fostering Football Connections



Community Camp — Warrnambool

1800

Fans attended

30

Schools

4500

Students

280

Attended super
kick event

8

Local coach
experience



Community Camp — Colac

68

Attended all
girls clinic

9

Schools

675

Students

16

Forum
attendees

AFL BARWON PARTNERSHIP PILLARS

- ▶ Community Engagement
- ▶ Organisational Resourcing
- ▶ Facilities & Environments
- ▶ Participation & Membership
- ▶ Partnerships

*Scan to watch Tom Atkins
speak about the 2024 Country
Round Game*

Fostering Football Connections

50%

Increased uptake on 2023 with AFL
Barwon x Geelong Cats Partnership
Memberships

\$10,000

Marathon Food Community Grant

\$5,011

Raised for AFL Barwon Female
Football Clubs through AFLW Match
Day BBQ

60

**Participants attended Geelong
Cats Auskick Graduation**

51

**Clubs gifted a 2024 Team Signed
Guernsey to utilise for fundraising**

904

**People visited the Vilification
Module — With video content from
Tom Stewart & Meg McDonald**

SENSORY ZONE

The Kardinia Park Stadium Trust and Geelong Cats partner with US not for profit organisation KultureCity to provide inclusion for all by accommodating guests with challenges in processing sensory information.

A Sensory pop up zone was offered to events and programs at GMHBA stadium creating a break-out space for anyone experiencing sensory overload.

"My Daughter is autistic and really struggles with the noise at the football. We really appreciate this room as it allows us to go to the football as a family"

User of the Sensory Zone.

5

Sensory pop up zones activated

932

Users

82

Sensory Bags utilised





FIRST NATIONS BOOT ART

In 2024 a selected number of AFL and AFLW players were invited to collaborate with local First Nations artist to design football boots to wear in Sir Doug Nicholls Round for the AFL and Indigenous Round for AFLW.

Artists

Michelle Searle

Mitch Edwards, Jack Henry, Lawson Humphries, Georgie Prespakis, Julia Crockett-Grills & Jackie Parry

Gerard Black

Tom Hawkins, Tom Stewart, Georgie Rankin & Mikayla Bowen

Nathan Patterson

Mark O'Connor, Patrick Dangerfield, Kate Darby, Amy McDonald & Meg McDonald.

Aimmee Howell

Brandan Parfitt & Mark Blicavs

*Scan to watch the AFLW
players being presented with
their boots*



'I wanted to reach out and say thanks again for allowing my daughter to be mascot for the game . She has not stopped talking about it. She loves & plays girls footy, and her dream job she says is to be an AFLW player , so she was just so excited to run out with the girls Friday night.'

Djilang participant AFLW Junior Mascot-
AFLW Week 10.

60

Participants

3

Junior Mascots

35

**Guard of Honour
Participants**

219

**Tickets to AFL & AFLW
Matches**

DJILANG PROGRAM

The Djilang Program proudly supported by Barwon Water is a cultural connection program run by the club in consultation with the local First Nations community.

The program invites First Nations children and young people to participate in sessions at the GMHBA Stadium including art workshops, Stadium tours, Player Q & A and kick-to-kick sessions. The artwork created by the participants is also celebrated and displayed during the Club's AFL Sir Doug Nicholls Round and AFLW Indigenous Round matches, as well as forming a permanent art installation at GMHBA Stadium. The 2024 art installation can be found on the external wall of the staircase at Gate 10 of the stadium.

The program also gives opportunities for First Nations children and young people to be involved in pre-match experiences on AFL and AFLW game days, with opportunities in the Guard of Honour, Junior Mascots and Post match experiences.

1,530

Participants

28

Schools

97%

Teachers who have participated believe participation in BioCATS has increased students' positive attitudes to science, mathematics, health and physical education

BIO CATS

Engaging grade 5 and 6 students in the science, maths, technology and health of Australian Rules football.

The free full-day program is delivered from the Deakin Cats Community Centre and provides students and teachers with an opportunity to experience a day in the life of an elite athlete through GPS data tracking and analysis, the skill of handballing and the importance of nutrition and hydration and the benefits that come from sports participation.

The BioCATS program focuses on providing an educational experience to schools throughout Victoria with 79% of schools accessing this program being classed as either rural and/or disadvantaged.



READ THE PLAY

'The Geelong Cats partnership with Read the Play provides tangible benefits that significantly enhance the program's impact. Through access to high-profile ambassadors like Claudia Gunjaca, Mark O'Connor, and Mark Blicavs, the partnership elevates the program's reach and credibility.'

The Cats also play a vital role in coordinating the annual Read the Play filming and photoshoot, bringing together ambassadors and young sporting players to create engaging promotional materials. This collaboration not only amplifies mental health awareness but also inspires young athletes by showcasing strong role models within their local sports community.'

Michelle Gerdz

Read the Play General Manager



Supporting Healthy Lifestyles

THE RESILIENCE PROJECT

The partnership between The Resilience Project, GMHBA and Geelong Cats is a proactive approach to address the growing mental health crisis among young people, equipping students with the tools to build positive mental health and resilience through the GEM principles (Gratitude, Empathy & Mindfulness).

The program teaches and supports positive mental health in the classroom, staff room and wider community, with proven impact through evidence-based evaluations.

The Geelong Cats AFL & AFLW players as part of the partnership visited each school using the GEM conversation cards, to share insights with the students on how they practice the GEM principles everyday as an elite athlete.

Scan to watch more of The Resilience Project in 2024



2120

Students engaged

270

Parents/Guardians
Attended Community
Night

250+

Teachers engaged

6

Schools



Contributing to the Community

12
Wishes

172
Requests
Granted

WISHES & REQUESTS

The Geelong Cats aim to create special experiences for individuals and families going through a tough time. These experiences aim to bring some joy into life, whether that's in the form of a gift from the club, a donation to a fundraising cause, a message from a player, or a training or game day experience.

Tom makes Audrey's dreams come true

Audrey, who is seven years old, was born with a rare genetic condition called Tuberous Sclerosis Complex. In her short life, she has been through a lot including brain surgery at the age of two and a second surgery at the age of seven.

Audrey is a huge Cats fan, watching games and cheering everyone on especially her favourite Tom Hawkins. On a special day in February, the Geelong Cats welcomed Audrey to the club to enjoy a day being surrounded by the team she loves and meeting her favourite player.

*Scan to watch Audrey's
dreams come true*

DULUX COLOUR YOUR CLUB

The Geelong Cats and Dulux share an ethos of connecting with the community, with the Dulux Colour Your Club™ campaign at the heart of the partnership. In 2024 20 clubs entered the Dulux Colour Your Club™ campaign with the winning clubs Portarlington FNC & Western Eagles FNC. Equating to over \$20,000 worth of donations for 2024

*Scan to see the
transformation of
Portarlington FNC*

*Scan to see the
transformation of
Western Eagles FNC*

Presented by

Dulux



Contributing to the Community

DEAKIN CATS COMMUNITY CENTRE

The Deakin Cats Community Centre is a purpose-built facility designed to facilitate community meetings, education and learning.

The center is made available at no charge to community groups who meet the criteria of encouraging healthy and active lifestyles for all ages and abilities.

The Deakin Cats Community Centre is also home to the Geelong Cats Past Players & Officials Association, Bob Gartland Heritage Centre, Graham Evans Archive Centre and the Sensory Zone.

6,251 ▶ Center visits

787 ▶ Usage hours

\$118,000 ▶ Saved in-kind booking fees

Presented by





“Sitting in the Autumn sunshine amongst the vibrant crowd, made me realise how important it was for me to continue with life even though I am grieving” — “such a great experience which I am most thankful for”

Dulux Community Bay participant from Anam Cara House who had very recently lost his wife whilst she was in Palliative Care.

Contributing to the community

1250

Gifted Tickets

18

Community Organisations

*Scan to watch the impact
of the Bay in Round 21*

Presented by



DULUX COMMUNITY BAY

The Geelong Cats and Dulux share an ethos of connecting with community. The Dulux Community Bay provides community members from local community groups and organisations with a chance to experience a Geelong Cats home game in a dedicated seating bay at GMHBA Stadium.

At each home game, we shine a spotlight on a local hero from an organisation. The Dulux Community Hero award recognises an individual from the local community who has made a positive difference to the lives of others.

Round	Organisation/s	Community Hero
Round 1	Leisure Networks	Luke Maher – Leisure Networks
Round 5	Barwon Health Foundation, Anam Cara House	Rebecca Sebeart – Barwon Health Foundation
Round 9	Meli, Our Village & Emmanuel College Warrnambool	Viv Sinclair – Meli
Round 11	Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative, Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Corp, Department of Education, Department of Premier & Cabinet, Strong Brother Storg Sister & Ngarrimili Murran Hub	
Round 12	AFL Barwon	Mark Sinkinson – St Albans FNC
Round 17	Give Where you Live	Daleene Kroger – Give Where you Live
Round 19	Read the Play	Tayla Johns – Read the Play
Round 21	Geelong Food Relief Centre	Pam Lamont – Geelong Food Relief Centre
Round 24	Foundation 1 Diabetes Group, Catholic Care	Chrimoo Yohellaymusaw – Catholic Care



CARTER FAMILY COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS

The Carter Family has supported the Geelong Cats community programs since 2012 and are recognised with the award now known as the Carter Family Community Champion Award.

The award is presented to a player/s that have provided outstanding commitment to community, both for the Geelong Cats and/or relationships and engagement with community based organisations, programs, campaigns and initiatives

Kate Darby

Kate's commitment to the Cat's community programs is exceptional. She has been involved in countless programs and initiatives to support community organisations, schools, events, individuals and families creating positive, lasting life-changing experiences.

'We thank Kate and the Geelong Cats Community so much. These funds will go straight to our inclusive and accessible outdoor playspace in Norlane.'

Following Geelong Cats donation to Kate's nominated charity.

Tom Hawkins

Over 18-years Tom has demonstrated an outstanding commitment to community. He has nurtured relationships with community-based organisations, become a dedicated ambassador for programs and campaigns and established himself as a gracious and community minded individual.

In Tom's own words, it is his 'heartfelt goal to always give back, whilst providing guidance and support to others embarking on their own remarkable journey'.

'Congratulations Tom on this incredible self achievement and club milestone. Not only are you a legend of the AFL, but an amazing role model for my son and people in general. Thanks for all your hard work on and off the field.'

A fan before his GFC games record breaking match

*Scan to view previous Carter
Family Community Champions*





► Moving into 2025, we aim to create memorable moments that have a lasting impact on our community.