

Check against delivery

## 12 NOVEMBER 2014 | NETBALL AUSTRALIA press conference

**Marne Fechner, Commercial Operations Manager, Netball Australia:** Ladies and gentlemen, I will start by paying my respects to the traditional owners of the land, past and present.

Thank you all for being here today. It is a great pleasure.

I think we are kicking off the proceedings, so it is lovely to have netball first in line to start this and a privilege to be here.

It was very fortunate that the Fast5 World Series was being played in Auckland because the International Netball Federation board had meetings in Auckland last week so we were fortunate to be able to grab INF President Molly Rhone when this opportunity came up to bring her to lovely Brisbane.

It is her first trip to Brisbane.

So, I'll be back a little bit later, but it is my privilege to introduce the International Netball Federation President Molly Rhone.

(APPLAUSE)

**Molly Rhone, President, International Netball Federation:** Thank you.

Good afternoon, everyone. It is so great to be here.

It is a privilege to present to the media and we are grateful for this wonderful opportunity to do so.

Netball, as many of you know, or may not know, depending on where you are from, we claim to be the leading women's team sport.

It is very similar to basketball.

I think they came from the same beginning, over a century old.

Globally, some 20 million ladies and girls participate and the International Netball Federation, of which I am the President, has 75 national associations as full or associate member, representing every corner of the globe.

But netball is more than a sport, it is primarily a woman's sport and, as such, it plays a vital role globally in the empowerment of women.

It is often possible to establish netball in places and cultures where women's opportunities for interaction outside of the family are limited and non-existent.

Netball succeeds because it is fun. The sport has developed and continues to do so.

At the elite level, netballers are top athletes, as we see at our world events, and recently at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.

At that level, netball is breathtakingly fast and a thrilling spectacle.

We also have Fast5, our shortened version of the game.

It is specially developed to delight TV audiences and win new friends for the sport.

Currently we are here in Australia to get an update of the plans for our next one, netball's premiere event. It will put us on an equal footing with those of other global sports.

We are very pleased that everything is going well.



**G20 SUMMIT**  
BRISBANE 2014

These competitions provide the fuel of aspiration which drives netball forward. However, it is not simply that.

Through netball, a girl from a village in Malawi might find herself competing against Australia, New Zealand or England on the world stage.

It is also the opportunity for our smaller nations to host World Youth Championships which will next be held in Botswana in 2017. The first time a netball tournament of that stature has been hosted by an African nation and the requirement to develop good governance and career paths for coaches and umpires.

Netballers are united by their love of the sport and by the determination of the International Netball Federation to give players at every level the very best playing experience.

The quality of our show joint case events is of huge importance, as is the governance and development of our national associations.

The INF, which is the International Netball Federation, is a very lean governing body and we face the challenge of exponential success.

Our rules have been translated into Spanish, French and Mandarin, as the sport expands into new territories in South America and Asia, and are on our website.

We are pleased to see the game taking off in Argentina and this summer in Calgary, we had Argentina, the first Spanish-speaking country, taking part in our qualifiers for the World Championships.

In Asia, we have seen tremendous growth where we have members now, like Japan, Chinese Taipei, Myanmar, Vietnam, South Korea, Nepal, Thailand and the associates, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Bahrain.

We also partner very well with governments and NGOs who recognise the key role netball can play in women's health, the development of women's roles, and positive role models and women's empowerment.

Good examples of this are the hugely successful anti-obesity scheme run in Tonga with the support of the Tongan and Australian governments.

Back to netball, which is run in England, has encouraged thousands of women to participate in team sport again.

It is great to know that in England last year netball got the prize for the fastest-growing sport in England.

We also got the World Health Organization award for that program in Tonga.

Also, our goal program in India and the netball safaris which we run in Africa are great examples of us reaching out into the community and giving women opportunities to play netball and develop invaluable skills, which can change their lives.

For that program, we have won Sport in the City, Beyond Sport and the Peace in Sport award where we introduced netball to the girls in war-torn Burundi.

Netball is a good-news story. It is fast and fun, requires a minimum of space and equipment and can be played virtually anywhere.

It is primarily a woman's sport, as I said before, and does not suffer by being overshadowed by a male game. It can be played for sheer fun at the grass roots.

Our commitment to good governance and providing the very best experience that we can for members means that the INF and the more established national associations work constantly with emerging netballing nations to provide pathways for coaches and umpires, identify talent and grow the grass roots game.

The UN has identified that economies where women are empowered are stronger economies.

Netball can play a key role in providing women with opportunities for personal development, health and fitness, and interaction outside of the family.



**G20 SUMMIT**  
BRISBANE 2014

I repeat, it is great to be here.

It is vital to have the support of the media, as we continue to tell our story and attract much-needed funding and commercial partners to our sport so we can continue to grow our sport and reach even more territories and change women's lives for the good.

Thank you for your time and please do give to our event and expand on netball's impact in empowering women and girls. It is a topic that is really close to my heart.

**Marne Fechner:** As a young netballer, I was inspired through the support of, and encouragement of, many women, and men, that provided me the opportunity to reach my full potential in the game and represent my country.

Eventually it led into a career in sport management and here I am today leading this phenomenal event. I feel very fortunate.

It is even more important to me now as a mother of two girls that I am involved with an organisation that really is at the forefront of leading women's empowerment, not only here in Australia, but also around the world.

When I was preparing for the media briefing today, I read with interest the G20 conference gives the opportunity for leaders to come together to discuss obviously global economic issues with a view to using their collective power to improve people's lives.

Netball is not that dissimilar.

As Molly highlighted we play a key role globally in developing the capacity of the communities, more significantly empowering women and girls to not only be their best and enjoy the game, but also to improve their life status.

I was intrigued when I started looking at the concept of empowerment that there was no clear agreement of what that was. For most people it holds a personal definition.

For my 11-year-old daughter empowerment is as simple as her being able to ride her bike every morning and me letting her do that without worrying.

If you look at the UN social development networks resource empowerment, what does it mean to you, and empowerment is described as the power to achieve political, social and economic equality, giving people or groups the strength and knowledge needed to help them overcome their obstacles and allowing every individual to make free choices and achieve the capacity.

Giving people this sense of control and influencing their agenda, whatever that may be, is central and is something that I think netball has been leading the way in developing people's lives.

One of the most empowering experiences I've had has been the opportunity to work with hundreds of women from around the country that volunteer to deliver our sport day in and day out and have done so for many years.

Netball would not be where they are without these women and I get a sense they are both empowered themselves in doing so, but definitely empowering others.

So now I will cue my fabulous men at the back to play a short clip that highlights some of that.

(Video played)

I think it is the opportunities that it has given me.

It is a sport that taught me to respect myself, to respect others and to teach others to do the same.

Netball is like the best boyfriend that you never really get over.

For me, that is exactly what netball is.

I love it with all of my heart.

More than 20 million women play netball on courts all over the world.



**G20 SUMMIT**  
**BRISBANE 2014**

Off-court this global game is guarded by a much smaller but truly inspirational group of women. I have dedicated my life to netball.

I think I am the first president who has served full-time.

I gave up my corporate job to netball because of the passion I have for this sport and where I think the sport could really reach, what it does for young girls and for women and it has been my passion since I was probably 10 years old.

I have seen women who have no opportunities through the culture of their country, as well as literally the opportunities that their government are able to give them feel confident by being given - you don't actually give them knowledge, but you reassure them they have the knowledge and the skills and they know how better than me how to use those in their communities.

So it is really about empowering them with confidence, as opposed to actually passing on knowledge.

In the African culture, once again, they think they should stay at home still. In this aim, they should stay home and do the cooking and raise children.

Now, you know, and all of a sudden now they know, that they can also love a healthy lifestyle and contribute towards leadership, empowering of girls.

In my own country, I see how we take the girls from the inner-cities and how netball has made them into a woman who has such self-esteem, who is proud of their achievements and they get the travel and know the world.

That is something that would never happen to them.

It makes them into a whole different human being and that is a joy for me in netball.

Apart from rugby, netball is the biggest women sport in Fiji and, yes, all young girls love to play netball. Netball is the number one women's sport in Singapore.

So I guess if you are thinking perhaps badminton and table tennis might be predominant sports, but netball is big.

For women in Scotland it gives them an opportunity to take the lead, to be leaders in the sporting world and there certainly still exists a huge glass ceiling there for that to happen.

Well, (inaudible) I love my husband to death and my children and my family and I love my work, which was as a teacher, but there is something so special and so exciting about the people that you work with.

To love it is just - it doesn't say enough, how much I feel about the sport. My kids keep asking, "but why do you do it so much? Do you get paid for it?" I don't get paid for it.

I absolutely, absolutely love it. It defines me. It enables me to take a break out of my other life.

Wow. I always - I have seen that video a few times now and it still gives me goosebumps in terms of what these women do.

As you may have picked up, netball is a sport played by over 20 million people predominantly female in over 70 countries, which makes it the No. 1 team sport played by women.

Given netball is largely a female sport it does provide a unique opportunity to have an impact on the social, political, economic and educational and health status of women and girls around the globe.

Further to what Molly has outlined I will give a brief outline for two sport for development programs that we are involved with that use netball as the primary engagement tool.

In both instances we partner with the Australian Government through the Australian sports outreach program to actually fund this.

First is the Goal Program which Molly mentioned. There are more than 600 million adolescent girls living in countries.

This is a scary figure when you are faced with women in some if not all of these countries.



**G20 SUMMIT  
BRISBANE 2014**

It was developed by the International Netball Federation in partnership with standard charter bank and delivered in India where their experience was that women and girls faced similar disparities in early marriage, social and economic opportunities, that grass roots sport is generally independent, well organised, not part of the P.E. curriculum.

Less than 30% of children and youth participate in organised sport and there are serious deficiencies in sporting infrastructures which limit the young people's ability to participate.

It is definitely not perceived as being safe, particularly for girls and the socio-cultural norms, attitudes and belief that play a very strong influence, more strongly influence the agenda than the intervention that sporting can do.

For example, abuse in India is often not discussed. It is not recognised. It has no name.

No words, no universal understanding.

The laws that relate to abuse are often not implemented nor understood and most importantly not by children.

Goal was launched in 2006 and the program uses netball, life skills and health education to build confidence, knowledge and skills to empower young women from disadvantaged communities.

The program promotes being yourself, being healthy, being empowered and being money-savvy.

We talk about empowerment.

When we talk about empowerment, they talk about the right for freedom against violence and understanding how to access resources and institutions within their communities.

The program runs over a 10-month period where the girls do an hour of netball and one hour of life skills every week.

So far we have had just shy of 10,000 girls run through the program.

One of the most enjoyable stories that I have that relates to Goal was a young woman that was one of the first to go through the program and who said that the program had taught her not only how to land and change direction on the netball court but also in life.

This young woman is employed by standard charter bank, so that is a significant achievement by the program.

The second is the Pacific partnership program.

It has slightly different objectives but similar outcomes for women.

It aims to support grass root sports and build the capacity of the national sporting organisations while contributing outcomes, and Molly highlighted the obesity issue.

The goal is to support the agreement of the capacity to manage and activate and support women's participation in sport, to help them create more opportunities for women whilst also promoting non-communicable diseases and improving health-related behaviours, ensuring that it creates important environments that make women's potential possible and improving partnerships and information sharing amongst the NSOs.

The learning in this space is whilst men are important to (inaudible), it is not just a women's issue, it is a male and female issue.

If women are going to benefit from community development activities they must be involved in the decision making process.

This aims to ensure that programs know the needs of women and girls and makes them feel safe and supported.

Since the inception of the program in 2010, more than 560 netball teams have taken part in events in Tonga annually involving almost 4,000 women, compared to just 27 team and 215 women prior to that.

As far as we know, this program has created the largest netball carnival in the world and it takes place on a tiny Pacific Archipelago.



**G20 SUMMIT  
BRISBANE 2014**

Independent research has helped to enrich the program year on year and indicate the campaign messages are definitely getting through and obviously with over 4,000 women participating in netball events each year it is definitely getting the people moving and the health outcomes that we need.

So what has all of this got to do with the netball World Cup? We have the lovely trophy sitting here.

The netball World Cup is played every four years and it is the pinnacle of international netball that showcases the best female athletes in the world.

It not only provides an important opportunity to maximise the commercial return for the sport, it also provides a platform from which we can improve our media profile which is extremely important and make the sport more appealing for women or promote the sport so it is such that it is more appealing.

In 2015 Australia will have the opportunity - and we are proud to be hosting the 14th edition of the netball World Cup, albeit the first under the title of World Cup.

The last time it was hosted in Australia was 1991, so it has been a generation and we are hoping that next year's event will inspire the next generation of netballers.

I retired early from netball because there was quite a significant young player coming through by the name of Liz Ellis who went onto to be quite iconic - well not quite, iconic in the sport – and Liz tells a story fondly of being in the crowd for the 1991 World Championship Australian victory and that definitely inspired her to take more steps to achieve her dream of being an Australian netballer, and so she was. In fact, an Australian captain.

Next year we will have 16 teams participating that will represent the INF's five regions. (Inaudible) In Africa, we have Four Nations competing – South Africa, Malawi, Zambia and Uganda – so it will be an amazing opportunity for women of Uganda and African countries who have only participated once.

(Inaudible) Samoa, Asia, New Zealand and Australia, Singapore and Sri Lanka.

Australia will host the INF Congress, the forum in which arguably the leading sports administrators will come together, not only with a shared passion for the game, but with a vision of how the sport can continue to grow and develop.

As the netball World Cup Organising Committee, we are working closely with Netball Australia to deliver not only strong outcomes for the INF but also a lasting legacy for the sport, as all major events are aspiring to do.

I really don't need to go into detail about how this event is going to impact on the lives of women from Malawi, Uganda, Zambia, Sri Lanka and even Trinidad and Tobago.

It will provide Netball Australia with diverse populations in this country, there is a place for them within our sport and hopefully this encourages them to seek out their local associations and find their joy in playing our great game.

The federal and state governments of Australia have made significant contributions to legacy funding, both internationally and nationally.

Internationally, the focus, as Molly mentioned, is building the capacity of our national sporting organisations in the pathways of coaching and officiating, which are the fundamentals of the game.

Here in Australia our focus will be on building the capacity of our people and supporting the great volunteer workforce that makes netball happen week in and week out.

Developing and launching new netball products that will actually bring more people to the game, year on year.

Building and including welcoming environments at grass roots that match the changing and diverse population of this great country and providing resources for teachers to make sure that netball remains embedded in schools.

There is considerable evidence highlighting the fact that women who play team sports develop stronger leadership and are more effective in business.



**G20 SUMMIT  
BRISBANE 2014**

Global consulting firm Ernst & Young recently reviewed a link between women's sport and leadership across four continents and found that women who participated in sport had stronger work ethics, they were better team players and much more determined.

So there is no doubt that there are many netballers in key leadership positions around the globe.

I keep reminding our small but passionate netball World Cup team that sport in Australia won't have another opportunity like this for some time so we need to be clear and focused on what we want to achieve here and it is much more than delivering a 10-day event.

The netball World Cup will bring together an extraordinary group of women and men from around the world to innovate, (inaudible) and celebrate this sport, a sport that is largely played by women.

We won't be able to do this effectively without your support as members of the media.

You all play such a critical role and we appreciate all of the support that you provide us.

A couple of weeks ago the Australian Financial Review and Westpac recognised and celebrated the top women of influence in this country.

It was ultimately the sex discrimination figure Liz Broderick who took out the final award and in accepting the award she states if gender equality was my birth right why would I accept anything less? Whilst it is easy for me to stand here as an Australian and it is possible for me to believe in that statement, we know this is not the case in many countries around the world.

This is a massive challenge which our sport is tackling with many other brilliant organisations.

There is no question that our sport and sport in general is taking a leadership role in the empowerment of women.

However, we all just need to remember that the only way we can eat this elephant is bite by bite.

Some of you may be aware of the recent passing of the iconic Australian Prime Minister Gough Whitlam.

Whilst I was too young to take in the Whitlam era - just - and whether you agree with his politics or not, his passing in the subsequent media coverage highlighted to me the importance of leadership and vision and empowerment and change.

It is his words "maintain your rage, but more importantly your enthusiasm" that provide the ongoing inspiration to continue to make a difference in our sport, no matter how big or small.

So we thank you for your time today.

We are more than happy to answer any questions about what the sport is aiming to achieve or what netball World Cup will look like in 2016 but it is extremely exciting and we thank you for coming along today.

I am going to moderate as well, which will be fun. If anyone has got any questions, perhaps raise your hand. We have got microphones at the back.

**Cameron Atfield:** Thank you. Cameron Atfield from Fairfax Media. A question for Molly. We have a lot of world leaders ready to arrive in Brisbane. What can they learn from sport?

**Molly Rhone:** They can learn from sport, I think sport is one thing that brings everybody together, really. It knows no barriers, you know, regardless of race, gender, whatever. That is one thing that brings everybody - it is the most unifying thing. If there is one unifying thing in the world, I think it is sport. (Inaudible).

**Marne Fechner:** Any other questions?

**Mark Chester:** Hello, Mark Chester from the Host Broadcast. Marne, the Trans-Tasman Championship has been getting huge crowds. Are you confident there will be big attendance at the World Cup?



**G20 SUMMIT  
BRISBANE 2014**

**Marne Fechner:** We are super excited about what will happen in 2015. We launched our fan packages in May and last World Championships in Singapore there was a total of 3,200 packages sold, predominantly from Australia and New Zealand. Netball World Cup sold 2,500 in first the week and we are marching onto 10,000 fan packages by the end of the year. So we are really excited about that. We have a 17,000-seat stadium. So not like you will hear a bit more about the Asian Cup and Cricket World Cup, we have slightly smaller venue to fill, but to be heading into the ticket release, which will happen next March and know we have sold 10,000 fan packages already, it does make our job a lot easier and the great story for us is that over 75% of those are coming from outside NSW.

So, for a World Cup that will be played in NSW in Sydney in one precinct, being Sydney Olympic Park, we are very confident that the momentum that the likes of the ANZ Championship and our also our International Test Series such as the Constellation Cup has really been providing a fantastic event product to actually attract a crowd. You know, the last time it was here was 1991, that event changed the face of netball. It was the first tournament for the World Cup to be played indoors, there was a lot of change. So I think the excitement and anticipation of Netball World Cup coming back to Australia has been building. It has had a long gestation and we are just under nine months to go so we are very excited.

**John Pearson:** John Pearson, also from the Host Broadcaster. Marne, you touched on media coverage and improving the media coverage of the sport and this, no doubt, will help next year. You have been chipping away for a number of years. You have lost sponsors, gained new ones. Are you happy with where your media coverage is at the moment?

**Marne Fechner:** The likes of the ANZ Championship and if we look at the media coverage prior to the championships, for a female sport it was definitely doing wonderful things, but the ANZ Championship has given us a window of 14 weeks of regular competition and then you put the Diamonds, arguably the world's most successful international team on the stage and they shine every time. So we are really pleased with where the media has been going. It gets better year on year. Within the next month we will make some exciting announcements around netball and our host broadcast for that event and there is some brilliant interest in taking the event internationally, too. That is very important for the global growth of the game and we are seeing, I think after the Commonwealth Games, they are definitely switching on for wanting their content for next year.

**Mark Chester:** This generation is the first generation to have been able to play netball professionally and make a living out of it. Mostly Australians and New Zealanders, some of the elite players from other parts of the world. What is the status there now and what do you think the future is for young players to be able to make a living out of playing the sport?

**Marne Fechner:** Molly and I were having this conversation on the flight up to Sydney today. Molly was talking about the fact that Jamaican television often says how can Jamaica compete against the likes of Australia and New Zealand when you have fully professional players playing the game there. Look, we are making inroads, in terms of professionalism and the payment of players globally. It does still, primarily come out of Australia and New Zealand, but I think the sport's leaders have some significant aspirations for this game and I think that every time we do something new and put something out there, such as the ANZ Championship and the Fast5 International Netball Series, it creates more interest in the sport and something more for young players to aspire to.

In terms of payment, I think there is a long way for female sports to go, in terms of reaching the status of some men that I was listening at a conference the other day who was talking about what female road cyclists get paid compared to male world cyclists. Netball is in a fortunate position where we don't have a male sport that we will be compared to and it is a brilliant product.

In terms of corporates coming to the sport, we have seen growth year on year on year in terms of significant brands being attracted to our game. Our challenge now is to take that beyond Australia and New Zealand and support the International Netball Federation globally. There are global brands out there. We have 20 million women who make the purchase decisions within a household. We have a defined market which is good.

**Molly Rhone:** Can I just add, the ANZ Championship has been a real model. We have other countries thinking, I know that South Africa this year have run a sort of semi-professional league. I know that Jamaica has plans. They have started a league. So eventually you will see more and more netballers earning a living from the sport.





**G20 SUMMIT**  
BRISBANE 2014

**Marne Fechner:** I think also in England, for the first time coming this year it will be the first time they have actually received broadcast rights fees. So small steps, but they are important steps for the sport.

Any more questions? Fantastic. Thank you so much for coming. We hope you enjoy G20. We certainly have been excited to launch proceedings. Thanks very much.

