

MEDIA RELEASE



10 more NSOs join collective stand on youth sport

Another 10 national sporting bodies have joined NZ Cricket, NZ Football, Hockey NZ, Netball NZ and NZ Rugby NZ in backing the Balance is Better Statement of Intent first announced in September 2019.

They will join the collective and individual action underway to keep young people in sport by putting a stronger focus on fun and development, reviewing existing competition structures and encouraging youth to play multiple sports rather than specialising too early.

The new sports are Athletics NZ, Badminton NZ, Basketball NZ, Golf NZ, Gymnastics NZ, NZ Rugby League, Softball NZ, Touch NZ, Volleyball NZ and Waka Ama NZ.

Sport NZ Chief Executive Raelene Castle says it is great to see these sports formally commit to these important changes.

“We need to change what is offered and how we engage with young people. There needs to be quality opportunities for all participants, not just the best players.”

“Sport is a huge part of our society and important for the wellbeing of so many New Zealanders, however the way sport is delivered has not kept up with what young people are looking for. We know that because they’re telling us and many are also walking away.”

“The original five sports have done some excellent work and we now have ten more making this important commitment. This is another encouraging day for youth sport in New Zealand,” says Raelene Castle.

Volleyball New Zealand Chief Executive, Toni-Maree Carnie explains that for Volleyball, it is always critical to put the athlete at the centre of the sport and work with them to determine their needs. “The Youth Advisory Group is just one form of communication that VNZ uses to assist with youth development opportunities” says Carnie.

“The number of rangatahi (young people) playing volleyball for their school has increased in this past year by a phenomenal 26%”, explains Carnie “so volleyball has a different issue than many traditional sports but must still continue to work hard at listening to the voice of young people so we continue to adapt our offerings to suit the ever-changing expectations of young people”.

The commitments outlined in the Statement of Intent are:

- Ensuring all young people receive a quality experience, irrespective of the level at which they compete.

- Leading attitudinal and behavioural change among the sport leaders, coaches, administrators, parents and caregivers involved in youth sport.
- Providing leadership to support of changes to competition structures and player development opportunities.
- Working with within their sports and schools to keep minds open while identifying talent throughout the teen years, including reviewing the role and nature of national and regional representative tournaments to ensure that skill development opportunities are offered to more young people.
- Supporting young people to play multiple sports.
- Raising awareness of the risks of overtraining and overloading.

To join the collective stand, national sports organisations must commit at executive and board level, and put resources behind making changes to how they deliver youth sport.

“This is an important step, but it is not their first. They’ve all been on a journey to get to this point, as are many other national sporting bodies,” says Raelene Castle.

“There is real momentum behind these changes – a widespread recognition that we need to work hard and work differently to create quality and fun experiences that will keep kids in sport. This is great for participants, future talent and for our sector.”

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