

Playing to win

The 8th IWG World Conference on Women & Sport will be a game-changer.

EXISTING AS A catalyst for change is to place yourself against the odds. The obstacles are many and each win is hard-fought. Ideally, equity would exist and there wouldn't be a need to strive for transformational change. However, the playing field for women in sport has not been a space of equal footing, which is why Aotearoa is on the cusp of hosting one of the most significant sporting conferences in the world. Now that's a win.

The 8th IWG World Conference on Women & Sport brings the brightest minds in the sector together in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland this November. "This makes them accessible to our sport and recreation sector in a way that they could never have accessed before," says Rachel Froggatt, CEO of Women in Sport Aotearoa (WISPA) and Secretary General of the International Working Group (IWG) on Women & Sport.

When WISPA launched on International Women's Day in 2017, Aotearoa didn't have a women-in-sport movement and the volunteer organisation was "a lonely voice" in an empty stadium, says Froggatt. Four years on, much progress has been made and that sole voice is now part of a vibrant community of people and organisations transforming society through innovative leadership. "There has been a real shift in attitude and perception towards women in sport and a change in investment strategies, which have a knock-on effect," she says.

A clear indication of that shift is the consortiums bidding for rights to host major sporting events, such as the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup, which was held here this year, as well as the 2022 Rugby World Cup (in October), and the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup (to be hosted in Aotearoa and Australia). "With the IWG conference here, we now have the big four events, which should be transformative," says Froggatt. "If we get to the end of 2023 and haven't made permanent change we've missed a once-in-a-generation opportunity."

The 8th IWG World Conference on Women & Sport is key to ensuring that will never happen. Recognising the far-reaching societal benefits the conference can deliver, Tourism New Zealand's Business Events team provided WISPA with strategic funding and support to win the event. The conference will also bring an estimated



1. One of the social learning principles of the IWG World Conference is leadership and empowering women to lead systems change.



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1200+ delegates and \$2.5m to the economy.

"The conference will enrich New Zealand socially and culturally, giving our country the benefit of insight from around the world to further advance equity of opportunity and access for women and girls in sport, active recreation, and society," says Bjoern Spreitzer, Tourism New Zealand General Manager New Zealand & Business Events.

The innovative hybrid event brings together nearly 500 speakers across four days and more than 200 sessions, which range from punchy, 10-minute TED-style talks through to intensive 45-minute workshops. "There are very few stand-up

keynotes and very little sitting and watching – it's interactive and about building expertise and networks," says Froggatt.

The conference is built on social learning principles, and with guidance from WISPA's rōpū of eight wāhine toa, the five conference themes are now represented by the sacred kāhui whetū (star cluster) of Matariki. Navigating the way forward for women and equity in sport under the auspices of Matariki, which heralds good fortune, positive change and prosperity, lends the event a unique and authentic platform on the international stage, says Froggatt.

The 8th IWG World Conference on Women & Sport will be held in Auckland, November 14-17, 2022. For more information, visit iwgwomenandsport.org
To find out more about bid support for international conferences that will benefit New Zealand, visit businesssevents.newzealand.com