

Lower Clarence Suns AFL Club

STRATEGIC PLAN

2025-2030



Date Approved: 1/06/2025

Contact: Richard Sansom
Email: lowerclarencesuns@gmail.com

Lower Clarence Suns AFL Strategic Plan

Signature Page

The Strategic plan has been developed, agreed to and signed off by the following stakeholders of the Lower Clarence Suns AFL:

Board Members	Position	Signature
1. Richard Sanson	President	
2. Brandon Bourke	Vice President	
3. Simon MacGregor	Director of Coaching	
4. Deacon Spicer	Chairperson	
5. Heather Morris	Secretary and Treasurer	
6. Henry Fenner	Sponsorship	

Date: 1/06/2025

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land, the Yaegl people, on which we train, play, and connect through sport. We pay our respects to Elders past, present, and emerging.

Lower Clarence Suns AFL Strategic Plan

Executive Summary

The Lower Clarence Suns AFL Club Strategic Plan 2025–2030 outlines our commitment to fostering a sustainable, inclusive, and community-focused Australian Rules Football environment in the Lower Clarence region.

Building upon our strong community foundations, we align our strategic objectives with key planning frameworks, including the Clarence Valley Open Space Strategic Plan (May 2012) and the AFL Preferred Community Facility Guidelines (2024). These alignments ensure our facilities and programs meet contemporary standards for accessibility, sustainability, and community engagement.

Our focus encompasses the development and maintenance of quality facilities at the Ngayundi Yamba Sports Complex, enhancing participation across diverse age groups and backgrounds, and strengthening partnerships within our community.

We are dedicated to building a financially resilient club, supported by strategic planning, effective governance, and active volunteer engagement.

Progress will be monitored annually, with the strategic plan updated as needed to reflect evolving goals and community needs.

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Major Assumptions

- 1. Facility Development:** The Ngayundi Yamba Sports Complex will continue to serve as the club's primary venue. Recognising the challenges posed by regular heavy rainfall leading to ground unavailability, the club assumes that necessary upgrades, including raising the playing field and implementing proper drainage systems, will be prioritised. These enhancements aim to ensure consistent playability and align with the AFL Preferred Community Facility Guidelines (2024) and the Clarence Valley Open Space Strategic Plan (May 2012).
- 2. Community Engagement:** The local community's support through volunteering, attendance, and participation is expected to remain strong, fostering a robust grassroots foundation for the club's activities.
- 3. Demographic Trends:** Anticipated population growth in the Lower Clarence region is expected to provide opportunities to increase player registrations across all age groups, supporting the club's expansion and development goals.
- 4. Funding Opportunities:** The club anticipates continued access to government and private sector grants, including those from the AFL, to support infrastructure projects and program development, facilitating the club's strategic initiatives.
- 5. Volunteer Resources:** The club assumes the sustained availability of a dedicated volunteer base to support its operations, events, and governance activities, which are crucial for the club's success and community engagement.
- 6. Environmental Conditions:** Given the continuous disruptions caused by adverse weather conditions, the club acknowledges the need for infrastructure improvements to mitigate such impacts. It is assumed that with the planned facility enhancements, future weather patterns will have a reduced effect on the playing season, allowing for more consistent scheduling and participation.

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Critical Success Factors and Key Issues

1. Facility Resilience and Upgrades

Key Issue: Frequent ground closures due to heavy rainfall have significantly disrupted training and match schedules.

Critical Success Factor: Securing funding and completing essential upgrades to the Ngayundi Yamba Sports Complex, including raising the playing field, installing proper drainage systems, installation of lighting, installation of changerooms (including toilets and showers), installation of a sealed entry road and car parking. These improvements align with the AFL Preferred Community Facility Guidelines (2024) and the Clarence Valley Open Space Strategic Plan (2012) to ensure consistent playability and safety.

2. Inclusive and Culturally Responsive Programs

Key Issue: Ensuring equitable access and participation opportunities for all community members, including women, juniors, and indigenous populations.

Critical Success Factor: Developing and promoting programs that encourage participation from diverse community segments. This includes implementing initiatives that are culturally sensitive and inclusive, fostering a welcoming environment for all.

3. Financial Sustainability and Diversified Revenue Streams

Key Issue: Reliance on limited funding sources may hinder the club's ability to invest in infrastructure and program development.

Critical Success Factor: Establishing diverse revenue streams through sponsorships, fundraising, and efficient financial management. This approach will ensure the club's long-term viability and its capacity to support ongoing and future initiatives.

4. Volunteer Recruitment, Development, and Retention

Key Issue: The club's operations heavily depend on volunteers, and challenges in recruitment and retention can impact program delivery and governance.

Critical Success Factor: Implementing strategies to recruit, train, and retain volunteers by recognising their critical role in club operations. Providing support and development opportunities will enhance volunteer engagement and satisfaction.

5. Strategic Partnerships and Community Engagement

Key Issue: Limited collaboration with local organisations may restrict the club's outreach and resource-sharing opportunities.

Critical Success Factor: Building and maintaining relationships with local schools, businesses, and government entities to support club initiatives and growth. These partnerships will enhance community engagement and provide additional support for the club's programs.

6. Effective Governance and Strategic Planning

Key Issue: Inadequate governance structures can lead to inefficiencies and hinder the club's strategic objectives.

Critical Success Factor: Ensuring transparent, accountable, and strategic decision-making processes within the club's leadership structure. Developing and adhering to a comprehensive 5-year strategic plan, with bipartisan support and approval from all stakeholders, will guide the club's direction and priorities.

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Organisation History

The Lower Clarence Suns AFL Club was officially incorporated on 23 November 2022 to reintroduce Australian Rules Football to the Lower Clarence region of Northern NSW, launching our first playing season in 2023 with a clear vision for long-term sustainability through a robust succession plan.

The club was born out of strong local interest, sparked by an AFL-run Auskick program delivered through local schools, which saw around 100 children participate. This overwhelming response confirmed the region's enthusiasm for the game and laid the foundation for the club's formation.

In our inaugural season, we fielded an Auskick program along with Under-10 and Under-12 teams, marking the beginning of a renewed era of Australian Rules Football in the Lower Clarence region.

Driven by community enthusiasm and the leadership of the Board, the club rapidly expanded its programs. In 2025, the club further expanded its youth development by introducing Under-14 and Under-15 girls' teams, reflecting its commitment to fostering inclusive participation.

Additionally, the club launched an all-ages AFL 9s social competition, providing a non-contact, flexible format of the game suitable for players of all skill levels and backgrounds. This initiative aimed to engage a broader segment of the community and promote lifelong participation in the sport.

Initiatives such as hosting school gala days and 'come try' days, have further strengthened the club's commitment to community involvement and cultural inclusivity.

Operating from the Ngayundi Yamba Sports Complex, the Suns have become a cornerstone of community sport in the region.

The Lower Clarence Suns AFL Club operates under the framework of the AFL and maintains a close relationship with both the AFL and AFL North Coast, who strongly endorse the club's activities and development.

Vision of the Organisation

Mission Statement

To cultivate a welcoming and inclusive environment that promotes the growth of Australian Rules Football in the Lower Clarence region.

We are committed to developing players of all ages and backgrounds, emphasising community engagement, cultural inclusivity, and personal development through sport.

Vision Statement

The AFL hub for the Lower Clarence that grows local leaders on and off the field.

Our Purpose

Welcome everyone to Australian Rules Football, nurturing growth, unity and lifelong community pride.

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Our Values

Value	Live-it Behaviours
Strength	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Back your team and the people around you.● Speak up against disrespectful language and encourage your mates.● Finish every task you start and follow up.● Show courtesy to officials, opponents and volunteers every game.
Unity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Share your knowledge across age groups.● Solve problems with “we”, not “they”.● Celebrate wins and losses together.● Invite community—family gala days, council partnerships—into everything we do.
Nurture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Feedback is constructive. We don’t put people down.● We mentor, not neglect.● We provide a safe space for cultural expression and personal growth.
Strive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● We strive to be the best on and off the field.● We are professional in all we do.● Provide the best programs and facilities possible to service our community.

Management Framework

The S.U.N.S. Management Framework embodies the core principles guiding the Lower Clarence Suns AFL Club's operations and governance. Rooted in our commitment to excellence, unity, and community engagement, this framework ensures that every decision and action aligns with our mission and values.

By focusing on Strategic Guidance, Unified Leadership, Navigating Risk, and Supporting Our People, we aim to foster a resilient, inclusive, and forward-thinking club environment.

S – Strategic Guidance

We provide steady leadership and clear governance, implementing prudent financial practices to secure the club's long-term viability and steer it confidently towards a sustainable and successful future.

U – Unified Leadership

We foster a cohesive environment where board members, coaches, players, umpires, and volunteers collaborate with shared purpose and mutual respect, ensuring alignment across all facets of the club.

N – Navigate Risk

We proactively identify and manage risks to safeguard the club's assets, reputation, and members, adhering to all legal and regulatory requirements and maintaining high ethical standards in all operations.

S – Support Our People

We are committed to supporting our members, volunteers, and the broader community, fostering an environment where everyone feels valued, connected, and empowered to contribute to the club's success.

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Goals and Objectives

1. Administration

Goal: Enhance organisational efficiency and governance.

Objectives:

- Produce agendas and minutes for all meetings.
- Develop and implement a governance manual.
- Conduct an annual organisational health survey to monitor member satisfaction.
- Monitor strategic plan implementation through milestone achievements outlined in the 5-year strategic plan.

2. Marketing & Communications

Goal: Strengthen the club's visibility and stakeholder engagement.

Objectives:

- Achieve an increase in fundraising revenue.
- Increase sales of branded merchandise.
- Distribute registration flyers annually to boost player registrations.
- Publish regular updates on social media to enhance stakeholder engagement.
- Measure communication effectiveness through frequency and reach metrics, including community feedback.

3. Participation & Athlete Development

Goal: Expand player base and elevate coaching standards.

Objectives:

- Organise an annual gala day to engage the community.
- Increase player numbers annually.
- Ensure five Bronze and two Silver accredited coaches are part of the coaching staff.
 - Track retention rates of returning players and volunteers annually.
 - Monitor new player and volunteer sign-ups each season.

4. Finance

Goal: Ensure financial stability and transparency.

Objectives:

- Produce an annual operating budget.
- Produce annual balance sheets and profit/loss statements.
- Implement EFT facilities at the club to improve financial transactions.
- Monitor financial sustainability through budget adherence, fundraising growth, and sponsorship acquisition.

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5. Facilities

Goal: Upgrade and maintain club facilities to meet community needs.

Objectives:

- Resurface playing field by 2026 to improve field usability.
- Enhance drainage systems by 2027 to improve field usability.
- Install compliant lighting by 2028 to enhance training and match facilities.
- Develop inclusive changerooms by 2029 to ensure facilities are accessible to all.
- Install a sealed entry road and sealed car parking by 2030 to enhance accessibility, safety, and overall user experience for all club members and visitors.
- Track progress on infrastructure projects, such as drainage enhancements and facility upgrades.

6. Community Engagement

Goal: Foster strong community relationships and cultural inclusion.

Objectives:

- Formalise partnerships with Lower Clarence schools by 2026 to strengthen youth engagement.
- Host annual community events with growing attendance to increase local involvement.
- Collaborate with local organisations on programs to promote cultural inclusion.
- Measure program participation in initiatives like 'Play Your Way' and Indigenous programs.
- Assess diversity metrics through demographic breakdown of participants to ensure inclusivity.

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Strategic Success Measures

Focus Area	Goal/Objective	Actions
1. Administration		
Office Administration	Maintain effective meeting documentation	Produce agendas and minutes for all meetings
Corporate Governance	Enhance governance practices	Develop and implement a governance manual
Organisational Health	Monitor member satisfaction	Conduct annual organisational health survey
Strategic Plan Monitoring	Track strategic plan implementation	Monitor milestone achievements outlined in the 5-year strategic plan.
2. Marketing & Communications		
Sponsorship	Secure financial support	Obtain sponsors annually in all tiers of sponsorship
Fundraising	Increase fundraising income	Achieve an increase in fundraising revenue
Merchandise	Promote club identity	Increase sales of branded merchandise
Promotions	Boost player registrations	Distribute registration flyers annually
Communications	Enhance stakeholder engagement	Publish regular updates on social media
Communication Effectiveness	Measure communication impact	Assess frequency and reach metrics, including community feedback.
3. Participation & Athlete Development		
Community Events	Engage community through events	Organise an annual gala day
Player Development	Grow player base	Increase player numbers annually
Coaching	Improve coaching quality	Ensure five Bronze and two Silver accredited coaches are part of the coaching group
Retention	Maintain player and volunteer engagement	Track retention rates of returning players and volunteers annually
Volunteer Recruitment	Expand volunteer base	Monitor new volunteer sign-ups each season
Auskick Program	Introduce young children to AFL fundamentals	Host AFL Auskick sessions to teach basic skills and foster enjoyment
AFL 9s	Offer social competition opportunities	Organise AFL 9s tournaments to encourage casual participation as a lead into the season
Senior team development	Establish a senior team (dependant on facilities)	Develop infrastructure and recruit players to form a competitive senior team
Diversity and inclusions	Promote inclusivity within the club with focus on growth of female participation	Focus on the development of women's sport and inclusive programs
Pathway Programs	Sydney Swans Academy and North Coast AFL (Heat and Force)	Establish clear progression routes for players
Gala Ball and Presentation Day	Strengthen club camaraderie and community ties	Host an annual Gala Ball and Presentation Day to celebrate

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		achievements, foster relationships, and enhance community engagement.
Season Opener	Enhance community engagement and encourage new player registrations	Host an annual Season Opener event featuring activities and information sessions to welcome the community and encourage new player registrations.
4. Finance		
Operational Budgets	Ensure financial planning	Produce an annual operating budget
Financial Reporting	Monitor financial performance	Produce annual balance sheets and profit/loss statements
Banking	Improve financial transactions	Implement EFT facilities for the club use
Financial sustainability	Ensure long-term financial health	Monitor budget adherence, fundraising growth, and sponsorship acquisition
5. Facilities		
Drainage	Improve field usability	Enhance drainage systems by 2027
Lighting	Upgrade training and match facilities	Install compliant lighting by 2028
Accessibility	Ensure inclusive facilities	Develop inclusive changerooms by 2029
Infrastructure Development	Track facility upgrades	Monitor progress on infrastructure projects, such as drainage enhancements and facility upgrades
6. Community Engagement		
School Partnerships	Strengthen youth engagement	Formalise partnerships with three local schools by 2026
Community Events	Increase local involvement	Host annual community events with growing attendance
Cultural Inclusion	Promote cultural inclusion	Collaborate with local organisations on programs to promote cultural inclusion
Program Participation	Deliver authentic community programs	Measure participation in initiatives like 'Play Your Way' and Indigenous programs
Diversity Metrics	Assess inclusivity	Evaluate demographic breakdown of participants to ensure inclusivity

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Implementation Plan

KEY AREA	GOAL	OBJECTIVE	STRATEGY	DATE	RESPONSIBILITY	PROGRESS REPORT
Administration	Enhance organisational efficiency and governance.	Produce agendas and minutes for all meetings.	Ensure agendas and minutes are prepared and distributed prior to and following all official meetings.	Monthly	Secretary – Heather Morris	
Administration	Enhance organisational efficiency and governance.	Develop and implement a governance manual.	Draft and adopt a governance manual to guide board processes and club operations.	30th Sept 2025	Secretary – Heather Morris	
Administration	Enhance organisational efficiency and governance.	Conduct an annual organisational health survey to monitor member satisfaction.	Design and distribute a yearly survey to assess club culture and satisfaction.	30th Sept 2025	Secretary – Heather Morris	
Administration	Enhance organisational efficiency and governance.	Monitor strategic plan implementation through milestone achievements outlined in the 5-year strategic plan.	Track and report on strategic goal progress quarterly.	30th Sept 2025	Secretary – Heather Morris	
Marketing & Communications	Strengthen the club's visibility and stakeholder engagement.	Achieve an increase in fundraising revenue.	Coordinate annual fundraising campaigns and seek new sponsorship opportunities.	Ongoing	Sponsorship	
Marketing & Communications	Strengthen the club's visibility and stakeholder engagement.	Increase sales of branded merchandise.	Expand product offerings and promote merchandise at events and online.	Ongoing	Director of Coaching – Simon McGregor	

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Marketing & Communications	Strengthen the club's visibility and stakeholder engagement.	Distribute registration flyers annually to boost player registrations.	Print and distribute flyers to schools and local businesses each pre-season.	Ongoing	President – Richard Sansom	
Marketing & Communications	Strengthen the club's visibility and stakeholder engagement.	Publish regular updates on social media to enhance stakeholder engagement.	Maintain active and scheduled posts across platforms to inform and engage.	Ongoing	President – Richard Sansom	
Marketing & Communications	Strengthen the club's visibility and stakeholder engagement.	Measure communication effectiveness through frequency and reach metrics, including community feedback.	Track post engagement and conduct feedback polls quarterly.	Ongoing	President – Richard Sansom	
Participation & Athlete Development	Expand player base and elevate coaching standards.	Organise an annual gala day to engage the community.	Plan and host a gala day featuring games, clinics, and club presentations.	Annually	President – Richard Sansom	
Participation & Athlete Development	Expand player base and elevate coaching standards.	Increase player numbers annually.	Promote through schools and community networks and run 'come and try' sessions.	Annually	Director of Coaching – Simon McGregor	
Participation & Athlete Development	Expand player base and elevate coaching standards.	Ensure five Bronze and two Silver accredited coaches are part of the coaching staff.	Support coach development through AFL accreditation programs.	30th Sept 2026	Director of Coaching – Simon McGregor	
Participation & Athlete Development	Expand player base and elevate coaching standards.	Track retention rates of returning players and volunteers annually.	Maintain a database and analyse participation year over year.	Director of Coaching	President – Richard Sansom	
Participation & Athlete Development	Expand player base and elevate coaching standards.	Monitor new player and volunteer sign-ups each season.	Track and evaluate registration trends and sources.	Director of Coaching	President – Richard Sansom	

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Finance	Ensure financial stability and transparency.	Produce an annual operating budget.	Prepare and approve budget aligned to strategic goals.	July annually	Treasurer – Heather Morris	
Finance	Ensure financial stability and transparency.	Produce annual balance sheets and profit/loss statements.	Report financial position and performance annually to the committee.	July annually	Treasurer – Heather Morris	
Finance	Ensure financial stability and transparency.	Implement EFT facilities at the club to improve financial transactions.	Introduce EFTPOS systems at the clubhouse for improved payments.	July annually	Treasurer – Heather Morris	
Finance	Ensure financial stability and transparency.	Monitor financial sustainability through budget adherence, fundraising growth, and sponsorship acquisition.	Review income/expenditure quarterly and adjust fundraising strategies.	July annually	Treasurer – Heather Morris	
Facilities	Upgrade and maintain club facilities to meet community needs.	Resurface playing field by 2026 to improve field usability.	Liaise with council and AFL to fund and implement surface improvements.	31st Oct 2025	Facilities Committee	
Facilities	Upgrade and maintain club facilities to meet community needs.	Enhance drainage systems by 2027 to improve field usability.	Develop and implement a staged drainage improvement plan.	31st Oct 2026	Facilities Committee	
Facilities	Upgrade and maintain club facilities to meet community needs.	Install compliant lighting by 2028 to enhance training and match facilities.	Apply for grants and work with engineers to install lighting.	31st Oct 2027	Facilities Committee	
Facilities	Upgrade and maintain club facilities to meet community needs.	Develop inclusive changerooms by 2029 to ensure facilities are accessible to all.	Design and seek funding for modern, inclusive change facilities.	31st Oct 2028	Facilities Committee	

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Facilities	Upgrade and maintain club facilities to meet community needs.	Install a sealed entry road and sealed car parking by 2030 to enhance accessibility, safety, and overall user experience for all club members and visitors.	Partner with council and funding bodies to deliver improved access.	31st Oct 2029	Facilities Committee	
Facilities	Upgrade and maintain club facilities to meet community needs.	Track progress on infrastructure projects, such as drainage enhancements and facility upgrades.	Maintain a timeline and report quarterly to the board.	Ongoing	Facilities Committee	
Community Engagement	Foster strong community relationships and cultural inclusion.	Formalise partnerships with Lower Clarence schools by 2026 to strengthen youth engagement.	Create and sign MOUs with three local schools.	Ongoing	President – Richard Sansom	
Community Engagement	Foster strong community relationships and cultural inclusion.	Host annual community events with growing attendance to increase local involvement.	Organise inclusive club-wide events to promote visibility.	Ongoing	President – Richard Sansom	
Community Engagement	Foster strong community relationships and cultural inclusion.	Collaborate with local organisations on programs to promote cultural inclusion.	Deliver community-led programs with Indigenous and cultural groups.	Ongoing	Director of Coaching – Simon McGregor	
Community Engagement	Foster strong community relationships and cultural inclusion.	Measure program participation in initiatives like 'Play Your Way' and Indigenous programs.	Track participation and impact of diversity programs.	Ongoing	Director of Coaching – Simon McGregor	

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Community Engagement	Foster strong community relationships and cultural inclusion.	Assess diversity metrics through demographic breakdown of participants to ensure inclusivity.	Use registration data to assess and report on inclusion annually.	Ongoing	President – Richard Sansom	
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Monitoring and Review of the Strategic Plan

The strategic plan is to be monitored and reviewed on a monthly, quarterly, and yearly basis by the Board.

The yearly review will take place at the end of each playing season in September.

Strategic planning	Update	Total Review	Responsibility
Values, vision, mission	Annually	Annually	Board
Targets	Quarterly	Annually	Board
By laws, rules & Constitution	Annually	Annually	Board
Financial plans	Monthly	Annually	Treasurer/Board
Entire Strategic Plan	Annually	Annually	Board