

MEDIA RELEASE

Central Coast Mariners women to take the field after Holman Barnes Group steps in



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The Central Coast Mariners women's team will compete in the upcoming Ninja A-League Women 2026/27 season following a successful eleventh-hour bid from Holman Barnes Group, working with APIA Leichhardt FC to secure the club's participation.

The new agreement between Holman Barnes and APIA to take on the operation of the Mariners' women's team preserves one of Australia's top women's football programs, ensuring the Central Coast retains an elite pathway for female footballers throughout NSW while providing certainty for players, coaches, staff and supporters ahead of the new season.

Since returning to the A-League Women competition, the Mariners have re-established themselves as one of Australian football's success stories, reconnecting the Central Coast with elite women's football and inspiring a new generation of female players.

The investment by Holman Barnes reflects the group's long-standing belief that strong sporting clubs build stronger communities. As majority shareholder of the Wests Tigers and now an operator of the Central Coast Mariners Women's team, the Group has consistently invested in sporting organisations that create opportunities from grassroots participation through to elite competition.

Holman Barnes Group Chairman Dennis Burgess said, "We're proud to have played a leading role in securing the future of the Central Coast Mariners' women's team.

"Our Vice Chair Frank Primerano, with decades of strategic involvement in football administration has played a key role in bringing this together and broadening our sporting footprint which has been a key strategy of our CEO Daniel Paton and the board this year"

"Our board believes thriving sporting clubs strengthen communities by creating pathways from grassroots participation to elite competition."

Central Coast Mayor Lawrie McKinna welcomed the news with optimism for the future of women's football on the Coast, highlighting both the community and economic benefits of retaining an elite women's sporting team on the Central Coast.

"This is fantastic news for the Central Coast, and I'm excited about what it means for the future of women's football in our region. The Central Coast Mariners Women's team is a source of enormous community pride and plays an important role in attracting visitors, supporting local businesses and showcasing our region on a national stage," Mayor McKinna said.

"This announcement comes as we celebrate 50 years of women's football in the Central Coast. It gives players, supporters and young footballers across the Coast renewed confidence and hope for the future. Securing the future of the Mariners' Women's team

ensures the next generation of female footballers can continue to aspire to play at the highest level while representing their community with pride."

As the architect of the deal, **Holman Barnes Group CEO Daniel Paton** said, "We are delighted to be entering into this new venture supporting women's football."

"What started with a partnership between Holman Barnes Group and APIA to enter the Wests APIA team in the inaugural Australian Championship last year has opened the doors to set up a truly global pathway. One of the very reasons we entered into that partnership was due to the high level of women's participation across every age group and division at the APIA Club. It's something we at Holman Barnes Group are very passionate about."

"The board of Holman Barnes Group have unanimously supported this investment with a view that it protects the pathway between community sport and the elite game that inspires the next generation," he said.

"Whether it's rugby league, football or any other sport we support, the principle is the same. Strong elite teams inspire participation, strong grassroots participation builds stronger communities, and stronger communities produce stronger sporting clubs. You simply can't have one without the other. Young players - girls and boys - need something to aspire to. They need to know that if they work hard and dream big, there is a pathway from local fields to the highest level of the game internationally."

"In fact, I think it's outstanding that the under 13 boys and under 15 girls have won their respective titles and are champions in the recent Football NSW Association championships. This also led to Central Coast Football being named the highly coveted Association of the tournament. The future is extremely bright for this region and community."

APIA Leichhardt FC Chairman Mario Raciti said, "At APIA we see every weekend what football means to young players and their families. This partnership helps ensure talented girls can continue progressing from community football, through the NPL system and ultimately to the professional game. That's a pathway worth protecting."

"Football has always been at its best when clubs work together for the benefit of the game. APIA and Holman Barnes have shared a relationship spanning more than four decades, and seeing that partnership help secure the future of the Mariners women's team is something we're incredibly proud of."

"The biggest winners today are the players and the next generation of young girls who can continue dreaming of one day playing at the highest level."

Preparations will now turn to the upcoming Ninja A-League Women season, with players and coaching staff able to focus on pre-season knowing they will once again represent the Central Coast on the national stage.

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