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MECCA funds access to school program across Australia and New Zealand to help girls stay in sport

28 May 2026 – MECCA M-POWER has partnered with Dr Stacy Sims, a global leader in women’s health research, and education platform [Cool.org](https://www.cool.org), to provide access to the groundbreaking education program *Bodies, Bias and Belonging* for all students across Australia and New Zealand.

Backed by a \$250,000 investment from M-POWER, MECCA’s social impact program, the evidence-based education program equips girls, and the adults who support them, with the knowledge and tools to navigate puberty, build confidence, and stay active and engaged in sport during the years they are most likely to drop out.

Bodies, Bias and Belonging was developed by Dr Stacy Sims, a globally recognised exercise physiologist, nutrition scientist and author, in collaboration with education specialists at [Cool.org](https://www.cool.org).

Dr Sims is known for her pioneering research into female-specific sports nutrition and training, popularised by her mantra "women are not small men", and is also one of the recipients of the inaugural 2025 MECCA Prize.

The program brings critical but often overlooked topics, including growth and development, sociocultural influences, hormonal changes, nutrition and training, into everyday conversations.

Dr Stacy Sims said that, as both a researcher and a mother of a teenage daughter, she created the program to help girls to better understand their bodies.

“My goal is to help girls stay engaged in sport with tools that build confidence, connection, and a strong sense of self, while highlighting the powerful benefits of movement,” Dr Sims said.

“I’m thrilled to be working with MECCA to make sure my research reaches more girls, as well as their teachers, coaches and mentors, so we can cut through the taboos around puberty, periods and performance, and empower girls to thrive and keep loving the sports they play.”

In Australia, around 60% of girls drop out of organised sport during adolescence – significantly more than their male peers – with dropout rates peaking at age 15.¹ Research identifies body image concerns, low confidence and concerns about the menstrual cycle’s impact on participation as key contributing factors. *Bodies, Bias and Belonging* directly addresses this gap, giving girls, teachers

¹ Sources: Kay et al., *Sport in Society (2025)*; Flinders University, *Alarming gap in girls’ sport* (13 February 2025).

MECCA

and coaches the evidence-based tools they need at exactly the moment girls are most likely to walk away from sport.

Jo Horgan, MECCA Co-Founder and CEO said MECCA had long believed in the confidence that comes from truly understanding your body, your strength, and your potential.

“Every girl deserves to feel strong, capable and comfortable with who she is and right now, too many girls are navigating puberty without the knowledge or support they need – and that’s simply not good enough,” Ms. Horgan said

“Supporting this program is one way we can play a small role, helping girls build that understanding and confidence, so they stay in the game, trust their bodies, and back themselves every step of the way.”

Bodies, Bias and Belonging gives young people simple, evidence-based tools to understand their changing bodies, how to move, how to fuel themselves, and how to build confidence through puberty – areas often missed in mainstream sport and health advice.

Alexandra Pavlidis, Senior Health and Physical Education Teacher at Canterbury Girls' Secondary College, praised the resources as an invaluable tool for educators that supported young women in their learning journey.

"These resources will help us continue to deliver high-quality lessons grounded in up-to-date, relevant information aligned to the Victorian Curriculum," Ms. Pavlidis explained.

“The lessons empower students to understand everything from how nutrition fuels their body to exploring the factors influencing women’s participation in sport, helping build lifelong healthy habits.

“They’re also highly adaptable across year levels, making them a versatile addition to any HPE program.”

The resources were recently brought to life at Canterbury Girls' Secondary College, in a Unit 1 Health and Human Development lesson focused on nutrition for young women, where student engagement was outstanding.

Canterbury Girls' Secondary College Students Alana, Theodora, and Chloe shared their enthusiasm for the program saying, "we all loved the Pick Your Plate game the most – we got to explore and compare the nutrients our bodies need while enjoying some friendly competition with each other for the medals!"

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Students Genevieve and Sophie added, “being able to visually see how food fits into our daily intake makes it feel real, making it easier for us to apply what we learnt to real life.”

This initiative builds on MECCA M-POWER’s broader commitment to girls’ sport and health, including backing the *Trailblazers* documentary, which has reached more than 100,000 students through classroom materials, supporting emerging female tennis players through the Australian Open, and launching the *Momentum* podcast by Missing Perspectives, celebrating women in sport.

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For more information about MECCA M-POWER, Dr Stacy Sims, and the *Bodies, Bias and Belonging* program see below.

About MECCA and MECCA M-POWER

Since opening the doors to its very first store in Melbourne in 1997, MECCA has completely redefined the Australian beauty landscape, championing retail innovation and delivering the ultimate beauty experience to customers. MECCA has grown to become Australia’s largest prestige beauty retailer, serving more than four million customers each year. With over 110 stores across Australia and Aotearoa (New Zealand) and online, MECCA offers an exclusive edit of the best in beauty from more than 200 brands. Today, MECCA has a growing team of 7,000 spread across its Support Centre, Distribution Centre and store network, all working towards a shared purpose of helping people to look, feel, and be their best. From the very beginning, MECCA’s team has shared a passion for education and equality. MECCA’s social change program, MECCA M-POWER, was established in 2017. With a focus on philanthropic giving and impact across three pillars – education, women’s health and the arts – MPOWER exists to advance gender equality.

For media enquiries: pr@mecca.com.au.

About Dr Stacy Sims

A global leader in female physiology and exercise science, New Zealand-based Dr Stacy Sims is transforming how we understand and support women’s bodies, from adolescence through to menopause. A former Stanford researcher and accomplished author, her bold, evidence-based approach challenges outdated assumptions and is empowering women and girls to better understand their bodies, build confidence, and make informed decisions about their health and performance.

Visit drstacysims.com for more.

About Cool.org

Cool.org is a leading Australian not-for-profit equipping educators with high-quality, curriculum-aligned resources on real-world issues. With a community of over 220,000 educator members, its platform supports engaging teaching in sustainability, wellbeing and social justice at scale. Independent research shows improved student knowledge, confidence and engagement, helping young people feel more hopeful and take action on issues affecting their lives and futures.

Visit Cool.org to access the [Bodies, Bias and Belonging](#) educational materials (and more!).