
Basketball WA Confirms 2026 State Team Head Coaches

Basketball WA is pleased to confirm the appointment of Head Coaches for Western Australia’s 2026 State Teams, reflecting a renewed focus on enhancing the environment in which WA athletes prepare and perform.

This year’s appointments have been made with the clear intent to create greater stability, alignment, and support across the state team program. This ensures athletes are surrounded by high-quality coaches who not only develop talent but also foster the professional standards and habits needed to succeed at the national level.

The 2026 coaching group reflects a deliberate balance between experience and opportunity, with a mix of proven leaders who have delivered national success with a new generation of emerging coaches progressing through the Basketball WA pathway. This approach strengthens WA’s high-performance system by developing coaching depth, continuity, and consistency across national championships.

Trials are already underway for the Under 20 and Under 18 programs, with Wheelchair and Ivor Burge trials to commence shortly, and Under 16 programs beginning in January. Together, these programs form a critical part of Western Australia’s state representative pathway, preparing athletes and coaches for future state, national, and international honours.

Among the 2026 appointments are several standout stories that underline Basketball WA’s ongoing commitment to sustained performance and the professional development of its coaches.

Veteran coach Alan Black transitions to lead the Under 16 Metro Girls after a historic 2025 campaign with the Under 16 Country Boys, where he guided the team to country's first-ever (since digital records began in 2007) national semi-final, a milestone for WA Country basketball. Michael Van Lit returns to the Under 18 Metro Boys after delivering a bronze medal in 2025, with his group again expected to contend strongly at the 2026 Championships.

Adam Gunnis continues to build his reputation as an emerging coach, returning for his third campaign leading the Under 16 Metro Boys, while Keely O’Brien steps into her first State Team Head Coach role with the Under 16 Country Girls following several years of development through assistant and Southern Cross Challenge appointments - a clear demonstration of the opportunities embedded in BWA’s coaching pathway. Darren Winterbine also returns to the Under 16 Country Boys, drawing on past experience coaching WA Country and assisting Australian national junior teams.

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Continuity remains a central theme across the 2026 program. Dan Donaldson resumes as Under 18 Metro Girls Head Coach after a much-improved 2025 campaign, while Aaron Edwards moves to lead the Under 18 Country Girls, bringing valuable experience from his previous leadership in the country boys program. Tyrone Thwaites returns to the state coaching fold to lead the Under 18 Country Boys, following a 2023 NBL1 championship and a previous bronze medal (2016) with WA Metro.

At the senior end of the pathway, Jamie O’Loughlin and Shane McDonald return to guide the Under 20 Men and Under 20 Women respectively, each bringing elite-level expertise through WAIS and professional environments.

BWA also continues to strengthen its wheelchair and Ivor Burge programs, with Michelle Fletcher and Pete Stone returning to lead the Ivor Burge Men and Women following notable progress in 2025, and Phil Turner joining the Black Ducks Wheelchair Program to bring further leadership and experience to the state’s para-athlete pathway.

These appointments align closely with the upcoming release of Basketball WA’s Performance and Pathways Strategy, which will outline the long-term vision for developing and sustaining talent across Western Australia. The strategy reinforces the state’s commitment to building a unified system that overachieves by design - one that supports both athletes and coaches to thrive within an environment of shared standards and opportunity.

Basketball WA congratulates all appointed Head Coaches and acknowledges the continued collaboration of its associations, WAIS, and the broader coaching community in supporting the ongoing growth of the sport.

See below list of 2026 State Team Head Coaches:

U20 MEN	Jamie O'Loughlin
U20 WOMEN	Shane McDonald
IVOR BURGE WOMEN	Pete Stone
IVOR BURGE MEN	Michelle Fletcher
UNDER 18 COUNTRY BOYS	Tyrone Thwaites
UNDER 18 COUNTRY GIRLS	Aaron Edwards
UNDER 18 METRO BOYS	Michael Van Lit
UNDER 18 METRO GIRLS	Dan Donaldson

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WHEELCHAIR	Phil Turner
UNDER 16 COUNTRY BOYS	Darren Winterbine
UNDER 16 COUNTRY GIRLS	Keely O'Brien
UNDER 16 METRO BOYS	Adam Gunnis
UNDER 16 METRO GIRLS	Alan Black

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