

FFV Men's and Boy's Football Competition Review

Senior Men's and Junior Boys' 2020 Competition Structures and Start Up Rules

The Football Competition Review into Men's and Boys' football has recommended re structures to the Senior Men's and the Junior Boys' competitions. All changes, startup rules and subsequent 2019 season impacts are detailed in this document.

1. The Senior Men's Competition Structure in season 2020

Recommendation 3.1 of the Football Competition review proposes that the Senior NPL competition be restructured to a three-tier, hierarchical model.

This will mean that the current NPL 2 East and West leagues will be removed.

Three vertically aligned divisions will replace the current NPL and NPL 2 structure with the top league to remain the NPL. A second and third league will then be created with the naming and branding of these leagues to be determined. For the purpose of this document, these leagues will be referred to as 'Tier 2' and 'Tier 3'.

From 2020, the NPL, Tier 2 and Tier 3 Senior club program will include as mandatory U18s, U20s and a Senior team.

These teams will be 'decoupled' from the NPL junior programs for the purpose of promotion and relegation.

The current State League 1 NW & SE structure will remain the same being 2 division of 12 teams (24 teams in total)

A diagram of the 2020 Senior Men's competition structure is below.



The three leagues will start by utilising the finishing positions from the 2019 FFV Senior Men's competition. The rules governing the start up of the new competition structure will be;

- 1.1. The current promotion and relegation rules between NPL and NPL 2 East and West will remain in 2019. The bottom 2 teams of NPL at the end of the season will be relegated. The league premiers of NPL 2 East and West will both be promoted (subject to meeting the current NPL criteria). A 3rd position in the NPL league will be up for contention in the play off game between the 3rd bottom team in NPL and the winner of the NPL 2 2nd place play off.
- 1.2. When these positions are settled, the top 6 teams by ladder position (including the teams relegated from NPL) in NPL 2 East and West – 12 teams in total – will form the newly branded 2nd tier of Senior football in Victoria.
- 1.3. The remaining teams in NPL 2 East and West or the bottom 4 in each league (8 in total) will form a newly created league currently referred to as 'Tier 3'.
- 1.4. To fulfil the requirements of a 12 team league in 'Tier 3', the top 2 teams from State League 1 NW & SE (4 teams in total) will be promoted into 'Tier 3'. ***This is 1 additional team in each State League 1 division from the current rules.*** To fulfil the requirements of both State 1 NW & SE leagues remaining with 12 teams, ***there will be no relegation from State 1 NW & SE in season 2019.***
- 1.5. In addition to the changes for FFV State 1 leagues in 2019, State League 1 NW & SE will have a player Visa restriction placed on the competition in season 2019. This restriction will be that FFV State 1 clubs will ***only be eligible to list 4 Visa players on their Senior team match day team sheet from season 2019*** and beyond. A club will be entitled to sign more than 4 Visa players should they choose to however the Senior team match day team sheet can only list 4 Visa players.
- 1.6. FFV State 2 NW & SE and State 3 NW & SE leagues will remain with the current promotion rules which are the top two teams are promoted to the league above.
- 1.7. FFV State 2 NW & SE and State 3 NW & SE will also have no relegation for season 2019 to ensure these leagues remain 12 team competitions.
- 1.8. **Note:** There is a possibility that a 3rd Victorian based HAL team will be granted entry into the A-League soon. Should this be the case, it is recommended that this team start on the Victorian senior football pathway in 'Tier 3'. This may mean that 'Tier 3' will run with 13 teams, include a 'bye' in the fixture and have revised relegation rules for one year. It may also mean that State 1 NW & SE have a revised promotion rule for one year being that both State 1 clubs that finish in 2nd place will have to play in a 'play off' match to determine who is promoted into 'Tier 3' when/should this change occur.

2. Distinguishing between the Senior NPL league (League 1) and Senior Tier 2 and Tier 3 leagues

Recommendation 3.1 of the Football Competition review proposes that the 2nd and 3rd tiers of Senior football in the State be rebranded from National Premier League (NPL) to the Victorian Premier League (VPL). Whilst this recommendation will be implemented structurally, the name and branding for this tier in the Senior Men's pathway is still to be determined.

The key reasons for this change are;

- 2.1. The creation of one top tier of competition with 14 teams as its own premium brand (NPL) provides more value to the top tier of Victorian football pathway.

- 2.2. Reducing the number of NPL branded teams by 20 teams (from the current 34 to 14) will enable the FFV to manage NPL teams and ensure accountability to the FFA mandated eligibility criteria.
- 2.3. Most NPL 2 clubs do not meet the current mandated minimum NPL criteria. A rebranded 'Tier 2 and Tier 3' league structure enables the FFV to reduce the eligibility criteria for this tier of the pathway and as such make the 'off field' qualification for participation in the leagues more attainable for clubs.
- 2.4. By reducing the eligibility criteria for participation in this tier of the pathway, FFV removes some cost associated with running an NPL senior program.
- 2.5. By running a 12 team competition, 6 games are removed from the current NPL 2 fixture which provides current NPL 2 clubs with reduced club running costs and a shorter playing season.
- 2.6. Whilst NPL 2 clubs will 'give up' the use of the NPL brand for their Senior programs, all NPL 2 clubs will be invited to continue with their junior NPL programs should they meet the minimum criteria for entry into the new 2020 junior NPL competition.
- 2.7. By rebranding this tier of the competition, the FFV can independently commercialise this league property as it will not be governed by minimum operating criteria (including branding and commercialisation) from FFA.

3. The Junior Model for football in 2020

Recommendation 4.2 for the Football Competition Review that

....'the steering committee further develop and refine the optimal model for the junior competition, prior to making recommendations to the board.'....

This work has now been completed and a new competition structure has been confirmed for season 2020.

The junior NPL competition in the State is;

- 3.1 That the junior NPL be decoupled from the senior NPL for the purpose of promotion and relegation;
- 3.2. That the junior NPL include U13, U14, U15 & U16 teams only;
- 3.3 That current NPL U12s be included in the current FFV U12 community competitions and that these community competitions be adjusted to ensure a 'like v like' competitive structure is created (revised qualification/grading process, potential to realign community 'A' leagues);
- 3.4 That current NPL junior clubs be eligible to have unrestricted Mini Roos and Small Sided Football teams. This initiative both has enabled and will enable current NPL clubs to increase their revenue generation opportunities. There is an expectation from FFV that this will result in junior NPL playing fees being decreased;
- 3.5 That current NPL clubs be eligible to have additional under age teams that can participate in community competitions should;
 - 3.5.1) they have the access to facilities to support this ask; and
 - 3.5.2) they significantly reduce the cost of playing junior football at their clubs.

This initiative both has enabled and will enable current NPL clubs to increase their revenue generation opportunities. There is an expectation from FFV that this will result in junior NPL playing fees being decreased.

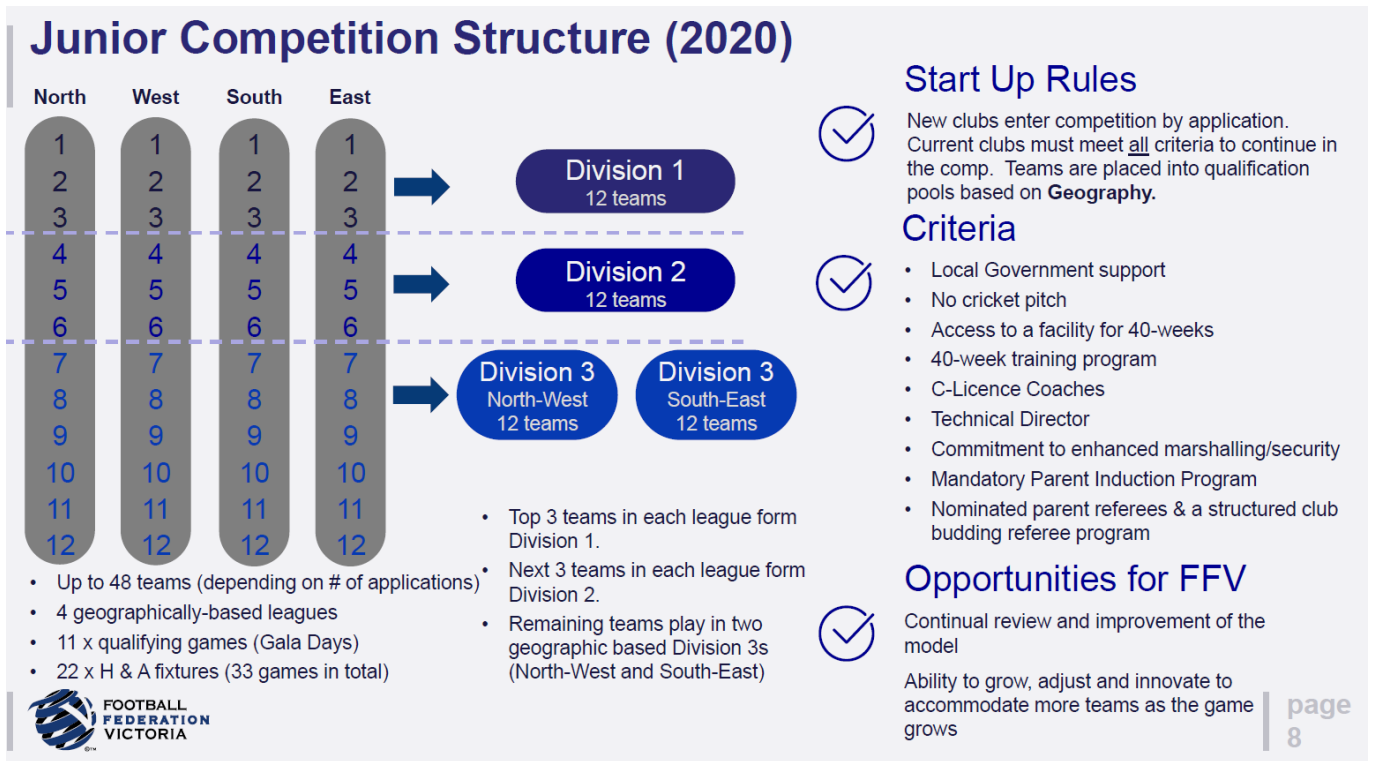
- 3.6 That current community clubs can get access through successful application to the NPL junior tier of the competition and not have to forgo their current community club programs (no requirement to 'shed' community teams if they receive approval to enter the NPL junior program in 2020);

3.7 That Victoria's HAL teams will be eligible to enter junior teams at U13, U14, U15 & U16 from season 2020 (subject to meeting the minimum criteria for participation in the competition. Should a 3rd HAL licence be granted to Victoria, this club will also be entitled to enter an U13, U14, U15 & U16 team in the junior NPL competition.

3.8 The junior competition model will start with up to 48 junior NPL programs (subject to the FFV receiving and approving enough applications that meet the NPL junior licencing criteria) being;

- All current NPL junior clubs will be eligible to begin in the newly formatted NPL competition in 2020 should they agree to all competition rules and meet all entry criteria for the competition. This is currently 35 clubs;
- Additional (current) community clubs will be selected to participate in the competition by submitting and successfully meeting approval by FFV;
- Should a 3rd HAL club receive a Victorian A-League licence, this club will be entitled to participate in the junior competition at U13, U14, U15, U16 age levels;
- Geography or club location will be a key selection criteria in the application process;
- A key selection criteria is also 'club investment' being a commitment to a minimum standard across 4 junior teams at the club (U13s – U16s) and the development of players in all teams;
- Once the up to 48 clubs are confirmed, 4 geographically determined pools of 12 clubs will be created. Each pool will play 11 qualification games to determine a finishing position on each pool's ladder. Teams that finish in the same band of positions on the ladder across all 4 pools will subsequently be re graded into newly formed 'like v like' leagues where they will then play a further 22 home and away games;
- At the end of the season, all teams return to their original geographically determined qualification pools and the following season begins in the same way as 2020 starts (i.e the season always begins with the same teams in qualification pool subject to teams both remaining compliant with their licence and any new team applications)

The structure, key criteria and start up rules for the junior NPL competition is below.



The FFV has also received feedback that in making the changes to the NPL tier of the junior competition, further work needs to be completed to ensure the current 'Community A' junior leagues remain competitive. This work can be completed outside of the Football Competition Review and may include merging 'Community A' competition regions and an enhanced qualification phase at the start of the Community Competition season.

Note: the criteria above includes but is not limited to this list. FFV reserves the right to have specific criteria requirements listed in the expression of interest document to be released in 2019.

4. Club increased revenue and cost reduction initiatives

The below table lists the club increased revenue and cost reduction initiatives set out in the Football Competition review recommendations and new Senior Men's and Junior Boys' competition structures.

Initiative	Cost / Revenue
Enabled NPL clubs to have teams in SSG/Miniroos generating additional revenue for NPL clubs (This is complete)	Revenue
Enabled NPL clubs to have additional junior teams to play in community competitions	Revenue and Cost
Decoupled the Senior and Junior programs	Cost
Reduced the complexity and administrative requirements of running an NPL Junior program with the main feature being the need to focus on 4 junior teams (13-16). This means a requirement on a Junior TD and 4x C-Licensed coaches.	Cost
At the Senior level, re classified NPL 2 (currently 20 Clubs) to Tier 2 & Tier 3 (2 divisions of 12 teams) and reduced the costs associated with running these programs. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced the season by 6 weeks (estimated club saving on average of \$48k per year) Reduced the requirement to have a Senior TD Reduced the coaching qualifications required for senior coaches Reduced the administrative requirements associated with running a current NPL program (No PPS enhanced Visa eligibility) Reduced the facility requirements to participate in this tier of the competition 	Cost

5. Junior NPL current and new club assessment criteria and time frame

The below table lists the new assessment criteria and weighted/mandatory classification for each. The process and the criteria have been based on the successful process utilised by FFV when determining the additional WNPL license in 2016.

Area	Criteria	Criteria Type
LGA Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application must demonstrate support from the Local Council 	Mandatory
Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Club has 40-week access to a facility Primary match facility has no cricket pitch 	Mandatory Mandatory
Youth Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track record within current junior competition Submission of a 40-week training program 	Weighted Mandatory
Personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nominated Club Technical Director Nominated C-Licensed Coaches 	Mandatory Mandatory
Governance / Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Club Constitution and evidence of incorporation Submission of a Business plan submitted with application, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revenue Expenses Cash Flow 	Mandatory Weighted
Licence Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application must demonstrate ability to meet all license criteria 	Mandatory
Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of existing NPL clubs with the applicant's region 	Weighted

Mandatory Criteria
Weighted Criteria

Must be met for the application to be considered by the Assessment Panel
Used by the Assessment Panel to assess and rank applications based on pre-defined metrics. Is not a mandatory criteria.

5.1 Timeframe

The below table lists the timeframe for determining new junior club and completing the assessments required for current NPL junior programs.

Process	Timeline
Publish new competition structure and criteria for new club entry	March 2019
Publish application process information, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment criteria and scorecard Application form Details of all information required for application Details of the assessment panel 	March 2019
Application window is open for a period of 8-weeks	March - April 2019
Applications are evaluated by Assessment Panel based upon the mandatory and weighted criteria	May 2019
Short-listed clubs announced	June 2019
Interviews with short-listed clubs (if required)	July 2019
Assessment panel make recommendations to FFV Board	July 2019
FFV Board approval of recommended new clubs and club communication	July/August 2019

6. Ongoing measurement of junior competition success (KPIs)

The below table details how the ongoing success of the new junior competition model will be assessed.

Area	Measure
Reduces number of player transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over retention of players in football Increase in overall retention of players between seasons Decrease in player transfers between clubs
Reduces the cost to play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall reduction in the player fees charged by clubs
Helps identify top talent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talented players are drawn to clubs in new competition
Increases competitiveness of games	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall reduction in the number of games with a goal difference greater than 5 goals
Clearly defines pathway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Player and parent understanding of pathway
Club football culture (To live and love football)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gala days included in the fixture Clubs cater for players of all abilities Clubs run male and female programs Players can remain at their club for life
Supports regional clubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusion of regional clubs in competition Accommodates for the unique costs incurred by regional clubs Accommodates for the unique travel requirements for regional clubs Provides flexibility to accommodate talented players in regional areas
Is sustainable over time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial sustainability of clubs in the competition Full participation at all approved clubs (enough players to fill 48 programs)
Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satisfaction of Local Government stakeholders in support the competition Effective utilisation of football facilities around the state

7. Consultation on the junior competition model and total Football Competition Review cost

The below slide details the consultation process that has been conducted in completing the Football Competition Review and the total cost of the review.

FFV in conjunction with Sports Business Partners conducted four Optimal Model Workshops with participants representing a broad cross-section of the Victorian football community.



-  Over 200 attendees in total across the four workshops
-  Mix of attendees representing Community Clubs, NPL Clubs, Regional Clubs and FFV Standing Committees
-  Objective to design a competition structure that assists our clubs in creating Victoria's football culture

-  Attendees worked in small groups to review each model
-  2 models presented and workshopped
-  Each model was initially presented as an overview and then workshopped further within each group. Each group then presented each model back to the group.

Total FFV Investment (To date)	
SBP	\$75,000
Steering Committee Costs	\$5,000
Steering Committee Meetings (Catering)	\$3,000
Junior Model Workshops (x4)	\$20,000
Football Stakeholder Consultation (Town Halls x 3)	\$4,500
Regional Forums (x2)	\$750
Total Investment	\$108,250

8. Positive and negative factors identified through our club consultation process on the junior model

The below table lists all positive and negative items raised by the football community in relation to the new junior competition model through our consultation process.

 Positives	 Negatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enables 'best vs best' and 'like vs like' after qualification period. The reset every year keeps players motivated from season to season. No promotion and relegation. Increases the likelihood of player retention. Club's with good culture will be rewarded with high retention, even if they drop to a lower league. Ability to allow for bio-banding of players. Mandated criteria promotes improving the standard of clubs overall. Clubs are able to focus long term on development. Better model for regional clubs. Promotes clubs to focus on long term development. Increases opportunities for more clubs to be involved. Provide the opportunity for Gala Days in the qualification phase. Provides a club pathway rather than a team pathway. HAL clubs can be included Provides access to the pathway for community clubs provided they can meet the criteria. Qualification process will improve the competitiveness of games. Community clubs aren't fully locked out of the pathway. Strong community clubs which are ready to enter pathway are rewarded straight away. Club's don't have to work their way from the bottom through promotion. Places the focus back on club offer and culture, rather than recent performance. Provides an opportunity for NPL clubs to retain Gala Days. Looks to be sustainable overtime. Competition can grow and shrink as required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feels like it is too experimental. Strong teams are 'wasting' the first third of the season. Geographic/travel challenges. What is preventing all regional clubs ending up in the same league? Any metro clubs in this league will have to travel all across the state: Mildura, Shepparton, Gippsland, Bendigo. Need clear criteria or guidelines to protect regional club involvement. Access to the facilities for the pre-qualifiers (if in summer) may be an issue. May conflict with cricket season. Concerns for player welfare having to play multiple games on one weekend, in summer. How does this model integrate with the senior model? Facility criteria may prevent a strong club from accessing the pathway. It's not the club's fault that it shares with a cricket club. 40-week season is too long for some community clubs and access to a facility for this period of time many not be possible for some clubs. May create additional work for FFV staff to fixture. May create internal conflicts within clubs between the pathway and non-pathway teams. This model may create a greater divide between clubs than currently exists between NPL and Community clubs. This model is heavily dependant on the buy-in and support from LGAs. Some clubs may struggle to field four competitive teams across the pathway. Will increase the pressures on volunteers and parents at Community Clubs. Limits Gala Days in the NPL level