

Football Federation Victoria

Football Competition Review 2017/18



FOOTBALL
FEDERATION
VICTORIA

Final Report

Commercial in Confidence

March 2018

SBP

Football at the Crossroads - it's time to work together...

In June 2017, SBP were commissioned to conduct an independent review of Football in Victoria with the primary objective of identifying the optimal model for the future of the game for Football Federation Victoria (FFV). The method for this project was designed to engage a significant and broad cross-section of the Victorian football community, and to work collaboratively with FFV via a Steering Committee made up of experienced stakeholders.

The overall findings of this report will demonstrate that while the game is healthy in terms of participation, football is at a cross-roads and competing interests are pulling in multiple directions. Football urgently requires aligned goals and teamwork from all stakeholders if it is to address some of the critical issues at play.

Alarming, this review has uncovered evidence of unprofessional and at times disrespectful behaviors that exist within the sport. The majority of the examples throughout the review have unfortunately originated from NPL club representatives and been directed toward key stakeholders including other NPL club representatives (including administrators, coaches, players and volunteers), match officials/referees, staff members at FFV and even local council representatives.

The NPL clubs make up a relatively small portion of the overall football community, and should be upholding the highest standards of professionalism. Unfortunately, these negative behaviours are having a detrimental impact on the sport and have damaged its reputation. It is also stretching the resources of the FFV administration team who estimate that approximately 80% of their time, resources, political capacity and emotional thought is consumed by the 35 NPL programs in the state.

If the football community can harness the passion that exists within the hearts of the stakeholders, there are significant opportunities to be leveraged: (1) Football is one of very few organised, club-based sports with growing participation across the country; (2), Victoria's growing and increasingly multicultural population naturally presents the World Game with an opportunity to engage new and expanding markets, and; (3) It has a national professional league which may be on the cusp of expansion, either through more teams or a second tier.

The unfortunate reality is that without a significant improvement in collaboration and teamwork, these great opportunities may pass by the game.

This report provides a detailed analysis of the current structure and performance of the existing football system, benchmarked where possible against other sporting codes. It highlights the most significant systemic and structural issues which are currently holding the game back and provides a series of recommendations to address each of these issues over the coming years.

SBP has also prepared a long-term vision of how football in Victoria should be structured - an Optimal Model for the game.

Establishing and communicating a clear vision may be the first step to inspire the stakeholders of the game to work together.

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Football Structure Background and Context

FFV introduced National Premier Leagues (NPL) in 2014, and over the past four years the competition has evolved to currently include:

- NPL Men's Senior division with 14 teams
- NPL2 Men's Seniors Leagues (x2) - NPL2 East and NPL2 West with 20 teams across both conferences.
- NPL Junior conferences (x2) - NPL2 East and NPL2 West with 35 teams across both conferences.
- For reference, there are 309 Community Football Clubs.

Victoria has the largest number of senior and junior teams participating in NPL competitions in Australia. As can be seen above and is further detailed throughout this report, the NPL in Victoria comprises 10% of all registered players.

Although the scope of this review was to analyse the current situation and environment, continual discussions about the AAFC and the likelihood of a national second division (which would sit between the A-League and the NPL) in the coming years also required consideration. This would have a significant impact on the Victorian football environment.

The following pages outline the Guiding Principles, the members of the Steering Committee and the overall project methodology.

Note: Whilst this project focused on the men and boys competition pathway, FFV has committed to undertake an equivalent review of the women and girls competition pathway, in line with the FFA's review into women's and girl's football.



Guiding Principles

The following principles were provided to guide the Steering Committee on decision making, information analysis and competition design recommendations.

- The overall 'Good of the Game' is the core focus of the review
- The need for clubs to be economically viable
- Support our stakeholders to create a Victorian football culture that drives the sports success
- Design a competition structure that assists our clubs in creating Victoria's football culture
- Making the playing of football in Victoria affordable for all participants
- To be successful on measures of participation and elite player development, Victoria must develop a world class pool of coaches
- Be creative in the development of, and access to football facilities for our participants
- Liaise with State and Local Government for the provision of football facilities
- Consider the child welfare implications of any outcomes (with recommendation to engage organisations such as UNESCO)



Project Steering Committee

The Project Steering Committee (PSC) was charged with the responsibility of identifying the optimum Men and Boy's football competition structure in Victoria with a view to:

- Maximise Men and Boy's football participation
- Providing football participants with the optimum football experience they desire with regards to their capability; and desired engagement with the game.
- Providing the environment for Victorian football clubs to grow, remain economically viable and create a passionate football culture in Victoria
- Understanding the optimum allocation and development of Victoria's sporting facilities
- Understanding the required number and quality of Victoria's football coaches
- Understanding the required number and quality of Victoria's referees

While this process has address all of the above, there is an ongoing requirement for analysis and problem solving by the Steering Committee.

The Project Steering Committee members:

- | | | |
|--|--|------------------------|
| • Gary Cole – Chairperson/FFV | • Pedro Afonso – Regional Football Representative | • Ian Greener – AFCAT |
| • Sezar Jukupi – FFV Board | • Adam Woods – Regional Football Representative | • John Didulica – PFA |
| • Nicholas Tsiaras – FFV Board | • Kon Giannakarios – Chair Junior Standing Committee | • Simon Colosimo – PFA |
| • Emma Highwood – FFA | • Ezel Hikmet – Men's Football Representative/FFV | |
| • Eric Abrams – FFA | • Harry Zaitman – Men's Football Representative | |
| • Joe Luppino – LGA Representative | • Ivan Galjar – Chair Referee's Standing Committee | |
| • Loui Simopoulos – School Sport Victoria | • John Nekić – Junior Football Representative | |
| • Dr Ron Smith – Independent Coaching Expert | • Steve Black – Junior Football Representative | |
| • Will Hastie – FFV Project Manager | • Dean Hennessey – AAFC | |

Methodology Overview



Project Steering Committee (PSC)

The Project Steering Committee will be determined by the FFV and will be involved in overseeing the project at key milestones in order to review, challenge and ensure that a strategically aligned structure and model is pragmatic and supported by all stakeholders.

Note: In practical terms, the above stages overlapped where needed to ensure momentum was maintained throughout the project.



Situation Analysis and Benchmarking

Football in Victoria

Football in Victoria has a strong formal and informal participation base, with 66,302 registered participants and up to 350,000 total participants*. Male players make up approximately 81% of the total playing population.

There are 309 community football clubs and 33 NPL clubs in Victoria. There are also two Hyundai A-League (HAL) clubs base in Melbourne (Melbourne Victory and Melbourne City), both of which deliver partial NPL programs.

At the senior level these clubs compete across three main leagues: the NPL, the State League and the Metro League, with the Metro League also including a Masters League for players over 35 years old.

In addition to the above metropolitan based competitions, there are also 12 regional based leagues which deliver both senior and junior competitions. These are located in:

- | | | |
|------------|----------------|------------------|
| • Ballarat | • Gippsland | • Sunraysia |
| • Bendigo | • Goulburn | • Swan Hill |
| • Cobram | • Moama-Echuca | • Warrnambool |
| • Geelong | • Shepparton | • Wodonga (FNSW) |

Additionally, there are other football pathways and playing opportunities not influenced by FFV. These include:

- | | |
|--|--|
| • Victorian Churches League | • Futsal |
| • Melbourne Chinese Soccer Association | • Private Football Academies |
| • Bayside Football Association | • Private and public school competitions |



*Source: Australian Sports Commission AusPlay sport participation research (June 2017)

NPL in Victoria

The NPL is played across eight age divisions, with each NPL club being required to field one team in each age division. The senior NPL competition is made up of the under 20 and senior division, with the junior NPL competition being made up of the under 12s through to under 16s and under 18s.

The senior NPL competition is split into 3 divisions; NPL with 14 teams, NPL2 East with 10 teams and NPL2 West with 10 teams. The season length for the NPL is 26 weeks, plus 3 weeks of finals, and the season length for both of the NPL2 divisions is 28 weeks with no finals.

The junior NPL competition is split into two conference, NPL East (18 teams) and NPL West (17 teams). The season length for both conferences is 27 weeks with no finals.

The majority of the 35 NPL clubs (including the two A-League clubs) are based within metropolitan Melbourne, with only five clubs coming from regional Victoria:

- Ballarat City FC
- Bendigo City FC*
- Goulburn Valley Suns FC
- Murray United FC
- North Geelong FC

* Bendigo City FC's senior team was relegated to Men's State League 1 North West in 2017. The Club's junior team remains in NPL West.

Community Football in Victoria

There are 309 community clubs across Victoria which play in State, Metropolitan and Regional Leagues administered by FFV.

Senior community football is played across two main leagues; State League and the Metropolitan (Metro) League.

The Men's State League competition consists of 172 clubs across five divisions, with each division split into multiple conferences. Division 1, 2 and 3 have two conference; North-West and South-East. Divisions 4 and 5 have four conferences; North, South, East and West.

A similar structure exists for the next level of competition; the Metro League. The Metro League is played across seven divisions, with each division being split into two conferences, with the exception of Division 1 which only has a single conference. The Metro League also has a Masters League, for players over 35 years old, which is split into four divisions.

Junior football competitions in Victoria (under 12s to under 16s) are primarily divided into age groups, with each age group being divided in to zones of clubs group based on geographical location.

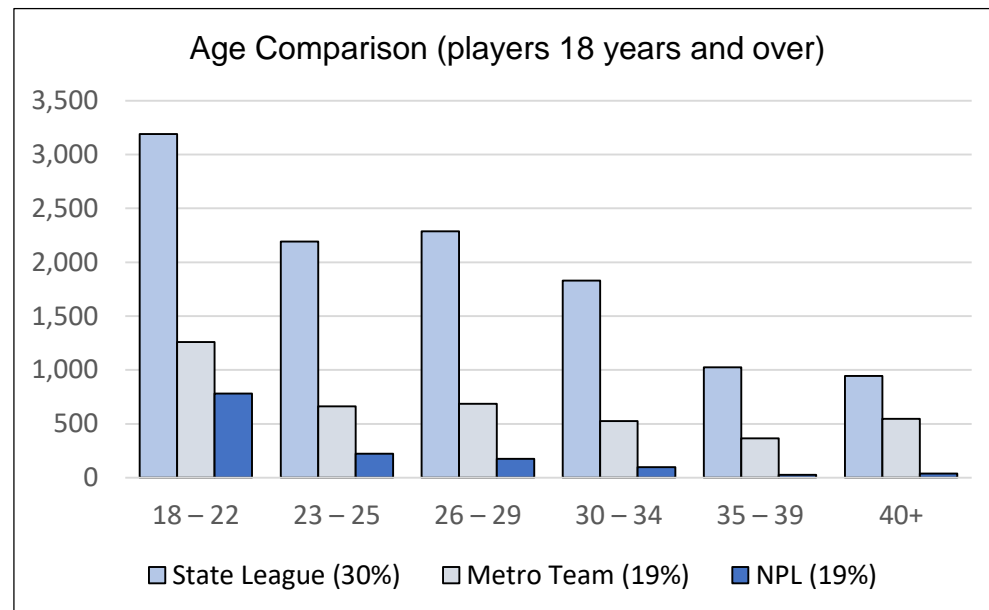
Football Age and Retention Analysis

A detailed data analysis of the FFV registered football player database was conducted to understand the overall level of retention and attrition within the sport.

The below analysis specifically focussed on year-on-year comparisons between the NPL and Community Football in terms of players who change clubs, players who change between the NPL and Community Football divisions, and players who leave the game all together. The results highlight the alarming proportion of players who are leaving the sport from both NPL and Community competitions each year.

The chart to the right demonstrates the number of senior players who fit into each of the age groups identified – and the leagues which they are currently playing in (2017 data).

The detailed tables and analysis can be found in the appendix.



Year	NPL Players in Initial Year			Community Football Players in Initial Year		
	Remained in NPL	Moved to Community Football	No Longer Playing	Remained in Community Football	Moved to NPL	No Longer Playing
2014-2015	43%	36%	21%	66%	3%	31%
2015-2016	64%	18%	18%	63%	4%	33%
2016-2017	63%	19%	19%	64%	3%	33%

NPL - Match Competitiveness Analysis

An analysis of results from four seasons of NPL matches has been conducted to determine the level of competitiveness between teams.

Senior matches tend to be quite competitive, with only 6% of matches having a goal difference of 5 goals or more.

Conversely, within the junior levels the proportion of uncompetitive games increases, with under 13s being the most uncompetitive age group (23% of all games having a margin of 5 goals or more, and 46% of games having a margin of 3 goals or more).

The under 13s, 14s and 15s age groups also have the highest average goal difference at 2.9.



Goal Difference	All Games	Seniors	20s	18s	16s	15s	14s	13s	12s
Average Goal Difference	2.5	1.7	2.1	2.5	2.6	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.7
Draws	14%	19%	15%	14%	13%	13%	12%	12%	13%
Between 1 and 2 goals	35%	57%	53%	49%	46%	44%	45%	43%	43%
Between 3 and 4 goals	35%	19%	23%	22%	23%	22%	23%	23%	26%
5 or more goals	16%	6%	10%	15%	18%	21%	20%	23%	18%
Number of Results included		2,074	2,041	1,650	1,636	1,653	1,652	1,640	1,206

The above table demonstrates the issue of the amount of 'non-competitive' football being played within the current NPL structure. The recommendations of this review seek to increase the proportion of competitive games across the competition.

Benchmarking Principles

The following pages provide a benchmark summary the FFV pathway against the pathways of other Victorian state sport organisations and that of Football NSW. A detailed analysis of the pathway of each sport can be found in Appendix 2.

The purpose of the benchmarking exercise is to provide a supply and demand reference, and a source of new ideas from other sports. Due to the unique and complicated pathway of each sport it is impossible to draw exact comparisons.







The following rationale has been used:

- As the focus of this review is on the men's and boy's competition structures, only the male pathways have been benchmarked. The exception is Netball Victoria where only the female pathway has been benchmarked (being a predominately female sport).
- The benchmarking of the senior pathway focuses on the NPL equivalent in each sport; the top-tier, state based senior competition in each pathway.
- The benchmarking of the junior pathway focuses on the competition which feeds directly into the competition analysed in the senior benchmarking.



State Elite Senior Competition Benchmarking

The table below provides a comparison between the NPL in Victoria and the NPL in NSW as well as other Victorian state-based elite competitions. Descriptions of each of the sport's pathway can be found on the following pages.

						
Pathway Competition	NPL*	NPL*	VFL	VNL	Premier Cricket	Big V
Pathway Type	League	League	League	League	League	League
Number of Clubs (Vic)	34	38	15	10	18	14
Number of Teams/Squads	2	2	1	3	4	3
Player per Team/Squad	18	18	34 ⁺	10	11	15
Total Players in Senior Pathway Competition	1,224	1,368	509	300	792	630
Length of Standard Season (Weeks)	26	22	21	18	17	22
Finals (Weeks)	3	4	3	3	3	4
Total Participation**	53,629	228,605	160,294	114,681	133,004	156,000
Elite Pathway v Total Participation	1 in 44	1 in 167	1 in 314	1 in 382	1 in 168	1 in 248







*NPL Senior and Under 20 only

**Relevant gender only.

+ Excludes AFL Listed Players

State Junior Pathway Benchmarking

The table below provides a comparison between the NPL in Victoria and the NPL in NSW as well as other Victorian state-based junior pathway competitions. Descriptions of each of the sport's pathway can be found on the following pages.

						
Pathway Competition	NPL*	NPL*	TAC Cup	State Titles	State Championship	Big V (Youth)
Pathway Type	League	League	League	Tournament	Tournament	League
Number of Clubs/Regions	35	38	12	20	16	20
Number of Teams/Squads	7	7	1	2	3	3
Player per Team/Squad	18	18	55	12	13	15
Total Players in Junior Pathway Competition	4,410	4,788	660	480	624	900
Length of Standard Season (Weeks)	27	22	18	Weekend Tournament	6	16
Finals (Weeks)	0	4	3		3	3
Total Participation**	53,629	228,605	160,294	114,681	133,004	156,000
Junior Pathway v Total Participation	1 in 13	1 in 48	1 in 243	1 in 239	1 in 213	1 in 173

*NPL Juniors include U12, U13, U14, U15, U16, U17, U18

**Relevant gender only.

Junior Pathway Cost Benchmarking Analysis

Below is a snapshot of the cost-range for junior players to access an elite pathway competition or program across other sports in Victoria. Cost comparisons to the NPL are complicated because it is an elite pathway inside a club system, rather than an additional development stream/tournament which sits outside of the club system. In most of the other sports, the player would become registered as part of their club which reduced the elite program fees.

For comparison, the Australian Sports Commission's AusPlay Survey has the average payment to participate in sport for a child as \$698 (median=\$430).

Sport	Competition or Pathway	Cost Range (actual)	Cost Type	Indicative Comparable Fee*
Cricket	Cricket Victoria State Championships	\$200 - \$250	Player Levy	\$900 - \$1,125
Netball	Victorian Netball League	\$300 - \$450	Club Fee	\$450 - \$675
AFL	TAC Cup	\$400 - \$500	Club Fee	\$672 - \$840
Basketball	Big V Youth	\$500 - \$800	Club Fee	\$840 - \$1,344
Football	NPL	\$1,500 - \$2,200	Club Fee	\$1,500 - \$2,200
Gymnastics	National Stream Gymnastics	\$2,000 - \$2,800	Coaching Cost and Club Fee	\$2,000 - \$2,800

* Season length for each sport extrapolated to be comparable with a 27 week junior NPL season.

	Pros	Cons
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large number of playing opportunities for talented players. • Large number of coaching opportunities. • Highly competitive annual trials process. • Professional playing environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a disconnect between the NPL, Community Football, Talent ID, State Teams and Academies. • Players who are not selected into NPL teams change clubs. • Too many players paying too much to access pathway competitions due to the size of the NPL (FFV only).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited number of teams creates an extremely competitive and genuinely elite competition. • Underpinning player development pathway through regional academies. • Extensive resources available to each team to identify and nurture talent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No underage 'elite' competition outside of TAC Cup. • Competes with private school sport system for elite talent during parts of the season.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative nature of the pathway provides a system of progression for the athlete (and dual registrations is enabled) • Regional/Zone academies identify and develop talent during the off-season. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regionally based structure (juniors) means that there is a cap on talented player from a particular geographical region. • Junior pathway only has a weekend tournament with a modified game format.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal talent identification process from a young age. • System of progression to provide development and competition opportunities through annual tournaments. • Elite pathway runs in parallel with club based competitions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regionally based structure (juniors) means that there is a cap on talented player from a particular region. • Pathway bias toward talent identified at an early age at the expense of late developers. • Lack of alignment between the junior and senior elite competitions.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior and junior pathways are aligned though the same clubs and competition. • The VJBL league table splits half way through the season to increase the competitiveness of games. • Dual registrations enabled. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top talent leave the system for overseas teams/colleges/academies.



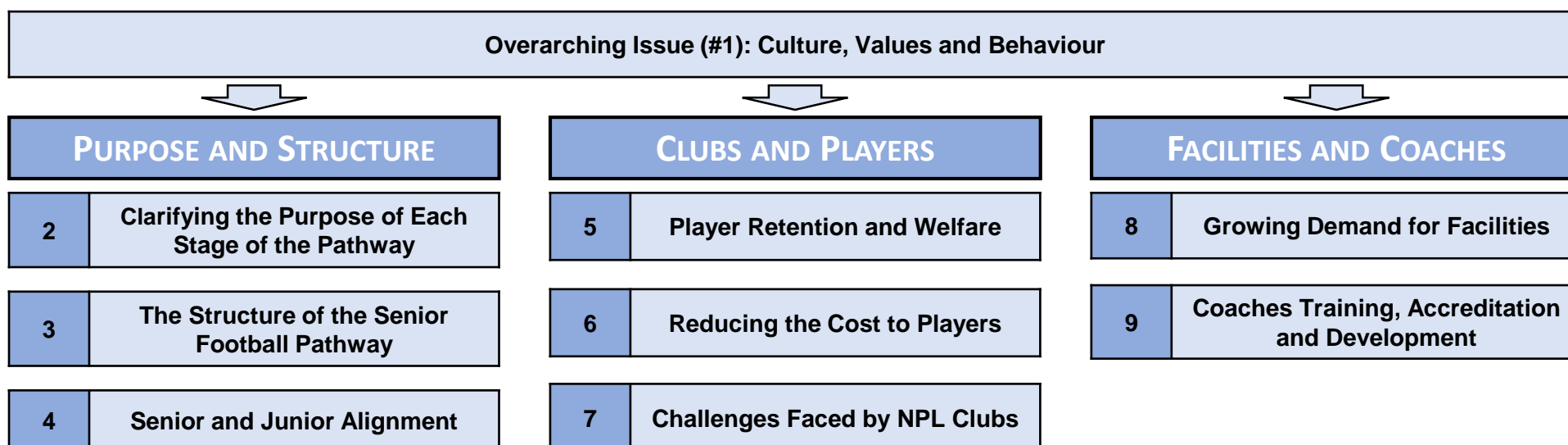
Key Issues

Key Issues

This project and its findings have been built upon a robust consultation process. Engaging and listening to the opinions and attitudes of the Victorian football community has been a significant priority and has been integral to understanding the current issues with the competition structure in Victoria. SBP and FFV engaged a number of key football stakeholders through a variety of methods, including:

- An online survey with 3,670 responses across all segments (Players, Parents, Coaches, Referees, Administrators, Volunteers etc.)
- 28 in-depth interviews completed with FFV Staff, Club Administrators, Players, Parents, Coaches, Referees
- 2 x regional forums in Wangaratta and Ballarat
- 3 x key stakeholder forums with representatives from Local Government, Community Clubs and Coaches
- Detailed review of 53 key documents and correspondence shared with SBP and FFV

From this comprehensive consultation with stakeholders in the Victorian football community, nine key issues across three categories have been identified in regards to the delivery of football within Victoria.



1. Culture, Value and Behaviour

The FFV's core values are: Openness, Performance, Unity, Pride, Integrity and Respect. These are extremely powerful but only if they are actually embedded in the way the organisation, the Board, and all of the game's stakeholders behave on a day-to-day basis.

It is apparent that there are extremely varied standards in the way football stakeholders are communicating with each other including club representatives, coaches, referees, volunteer committee personnel, parents, staff and other key stakeholders such as Local Council representatives.

This has many implications for the way the game is perceived by external stakeholders within Victoria and typically results in a lack of trust with other groups and organisations across the football eco-system.

Part of the issue stems from the complex and differing standards, criteria and processes imposed on clubs by both FFA and FFV. These contain many 'grey areas' which are open to interpretation and often cause confusion between stakeholders. This culminates in great difficulty in the decision making process for both clubs and FFV.

No where is this issue more visible than it is with referees. Sources of tension between referees and other stakeholders often centre around differing interpretations of the rules of the game. The resulting attitudes and behaviors displayed towards referees by coaches, players and even parents was the main concern raised by referees during the consultation process and the intimidating environment which is created. Additional issues raised about referees were in regards to the number and standard of referees available, which is not uncommon for a review of this nature.

Key Evidence and Insights

- The evidence collected throughout this review (and particularly through the one-on-one interviews and LGA consultations) highlights a significant lack of professional courtesy and behavior across all levels of the sport which is restricting trust, collaboration and overall enjoyment of being involved.
- There is a shortage of referees within the state, which is not uncommon for sporting organisations, although the many examples of disrespectful conduct shared through this project would suggest it is having an impact on the willingness of potential referees to want to be involved and the retention of current referees.
- It also appears there is a lack of communication and collaboration between referee branches, with some regions having less problems than others – but the learnings are not being shared between these bodies for the betterment of the game.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1.1	That FFV review and consolidate all the guidelines, standards and criteria that are expected of clubs and clearly articulate them in a way which is easy to understand and which supports FFV staff in their decision making processes.
Recommendation 1.2	That FFV optimise the organisation's systems and processes to create efficiencies and reduce the need for staff to carry out complex manual tasks like fixturing, venue availability and player points calculations.
Recommendation 1.3	That FFV review the referee training session structure to include more interaction with coaches and players at clubs, with the aim of fostering a better relationship between all parties by developing positive interactions outside of a game day environment. This may include refereeing intra-club matches which will also provide additional opportunities for referees to develop their decision making skills.
Recommendation 1.4	That FFV recommend all players, parents and stakeholders involved with the NPL, from under 15 through to seniors, undertake the level 4 online refereeing course. This will improve the understanding of the rules and lead to an increase in the number of qualified referees available to assist the refereeing of junior matches, there by adding an alternate pathway for young players to consider should they finish playing competitively.

2. Clarifying the Purpose of Each Stage of the Pathway

Consultations with key stakeholders identified that there is an inconsistent understanding (and clarity) of the purpose of the NPL. When the FFA initiated the National Premier Leagues (NPL) in 2014, it was intended to be the national second tier competition in Australia. This was a requirement of the FFA's inclusion into the Asian Football Confederation, and was designed to underpin the Hyundai A-League and Westfield W-League competitions.

Although the perceptions of the NPL across the football community appear to be in line with the initial intention to develop an elite pathway, the actual delivery of the NPL has achieved mixed and varying results across the country. The number of teams, competition structure and the connection to community clubs varying from state to state. Many states have completed similar review processes over the past four years.

In Victoria, the largest problem has been the number of clubs which were initially accepted into the NPL. Approximately 10% of all Victorian clubs received NPL status in 2014, and the club administrators have since leveraged this 'status' to enhance the brand of their club. The brand elevation of the NPL programs has created a significant imbalance of perceptions within the football community, and placed a strain on the State League competition, with many now perceiving the State League to be second rate.

Having so many clubs within the NPL has spread the most talented players across too many clubs. This has also increased the difficulty of identifying and tracking the most talented players in the state for the TIDC squads and state teams, and increased the perceptions of subjective selections within these squads and teams.

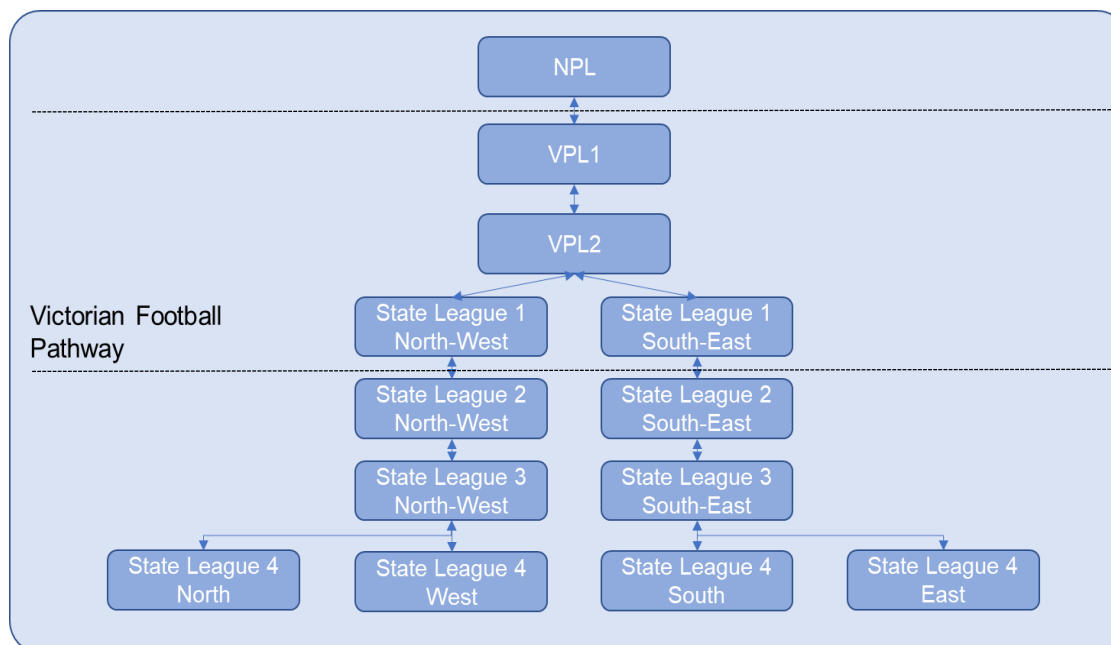
Strong feedback provided throughout this process highlights that players (and parents) now believe the best opportunity at developing as a player (or making a state team) is to join an NPL Club. This is despite the TIDC pathway being open to both NPL and Community Clubs.

Key Evidence and Insights

- The survey results (see Appendix 1 for full results) show the two most common views of the purpose of the NPL in Victoria is:
 1. “To provide an elite pathway for players/ coaches/ referees to reach their potential”
 2. “To provide an accessible, high quality football experience across the whole of Victoria”
- The FFA’s original intent for the NPL; to be the national second tier competition in Australia, was rated the third most important purpose statement from the survey.
- The book *No Hunger In Paradise: The Players. The Journey. The Dream.* by Michael Calvin, presents a statistic that less than 0.01% of all 12 and 13 year old players that enter the European academy system actually go on to play professional football.

Recommendations

Recommendation 2.1	Clearly define, articulate and re-brand the purpose of each element of the pathway, including a range for the cost to participate in each element. This should be published and distributed to all stakeholders. The below framework has been drafted for consideration by the Steering Committee and includes NPL2 and NPL3 being re-branded as Victorian Premier League (VPL) 1 and 2.
Recommendation 2.2	Educate the players (and parents), on the purpose and realities of the NPL, and encourage the NPL Clubs to communicate the same messages.



The purpose of the top tier of the football pathway is provide an elite competition for the most talented and aspirational players in the state. The best competing against the best.

The purpose of the secondary tier of the football pathway is provide a highly competitive environment for the developing players to achieve their potential or develop into elite players. This group of players and clubs are aspirational in their ambition and have invested in the club structure FFA & FFV require in order to enter a higher levels of the pathway.

The purpose of the majority of the football pathway is to facilitate a great environment for people to have fun as they enjoy their participation in our great game for a lifetime. The purpose of the majority of the football pathway is to facilitate a great environment for people to have fun as they enjoy their participation in our great game. This where kids learn to love the game and the social outcomes that the community seeks are delivered.

3. Structure of the Football Pathway

When the NPL was created in 2014, 32 clubs were issued with NPL licenses, with two additional licenses being awarded to the Victorian-based A-League clubs. This created a new 'division' of football for over 5,500 players, which equates to 1 in every 10 male footballers in Victoria, far beyond that of comparable state league competitions in other sports, which are more likely to be between 1 in 150 and 1 in 400 participants (see pages 14 and 15 for detailed analysis).

The consequence of this is that a larger number of players have been branded 'elite'. This has diluted the overall elite talent pool and resulted in a huge disparity in the quality of games and the competitiveness of the teams in the NPL. Additionally, the structure of the NPL in Victoria is two tiered, with NPL2 (the second tier) being divided further into conferences based on geographic location. This structure further compounds the mismatch of skill and talent levels by separating teams based on geography and not performance, resulting in a competition that doesn't deliver opportunities for the best players to play against their peers.

In addition, the community football pathway has no direct link with the NPL, forcing players to decide which pathway they will choose to follow. The current football pathway encourages players to change clubs on a whim and doesn't allow for teams or groups of friends to keep playing together. The consequence of this is players may change clubs multiple times during their first few years in the sport and end up with a disjointed experience in the football pathway. While many stakeholders wish to attribute the blame for this scenario at one-another, it is a systemic issue which is discussed further throughout the following pages.

The large number of teams in the NPL structure also has an impact on the allocation of resources by FFV (and by local Government). With so many teams playing in the premier competition, FFV has to allocate a significant proportion of the organisation's limited resources to running the competition. Local Government face similar challenges around the allocation of resources towards facility maintenance and improvements (this is discussed further in a later section). As a result, FFV believes anecdotally that not one of the NPL license holders would be compliant with 100% of the terms of the club's NPL Participation License. Furthermore, FFV lack the resources to assess, monitor and enforce compliance of these standards which has enabled many NPL clubs to appear to flout the standards.

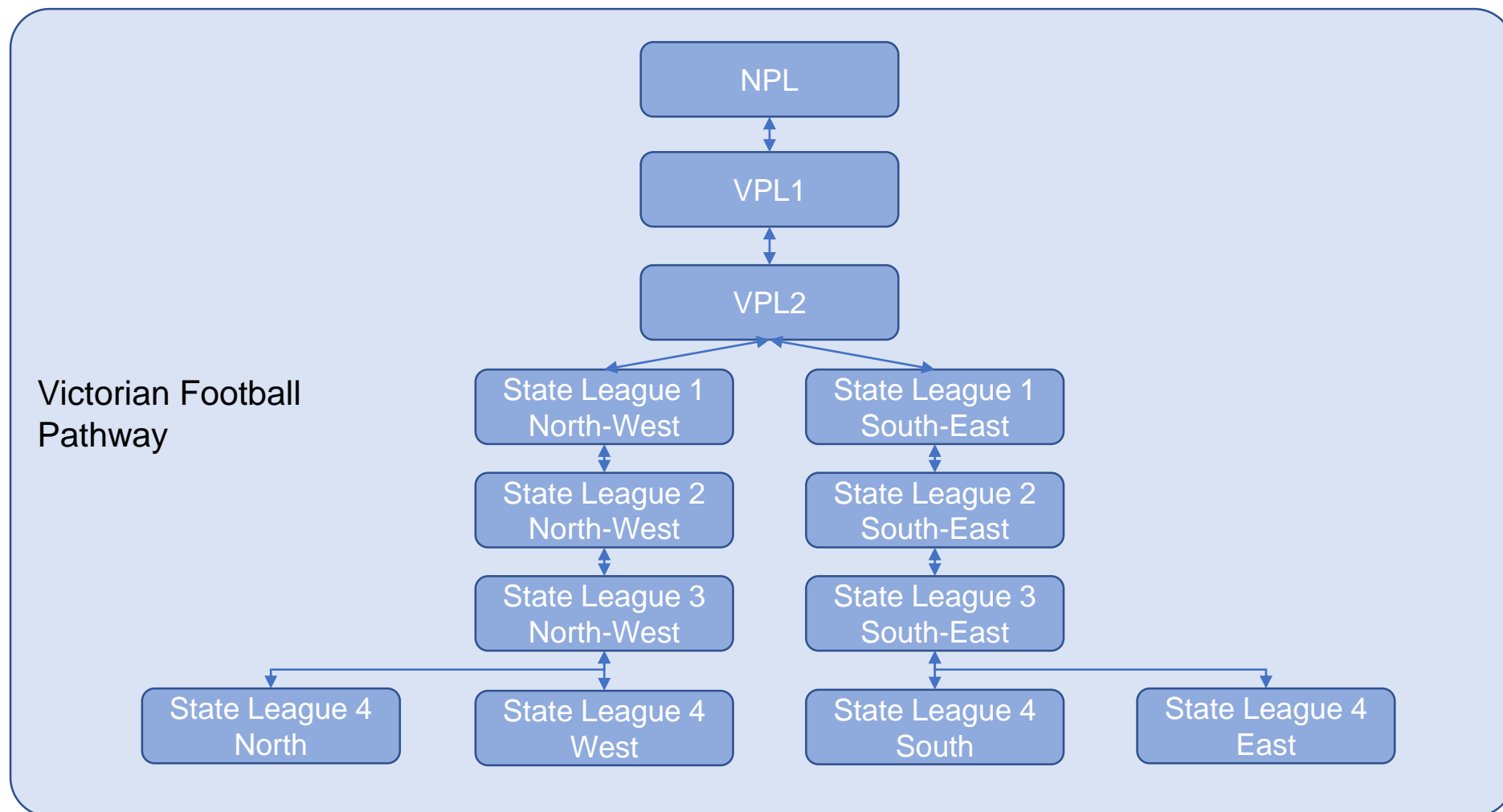
Key Evidence and Insights

- The NPL provides an 'elite' football environment to over 5,500 players. This equates to approximately 1 in every 10 male footballers in Victoria (1 in 48 seniors, 1 in 13 juniors). This is far too generous when compared to other competitions in Australia and overseas.
- The lack of 'elite talent' depth within the NPL does not support the current NPL2 second tier of the structure. The result has been two semi-competitive divisions running in parallel, when it could easily be split based on performance to increase competitiveness across the board.
- Additionally, the number of clubs within the NPL program across the three divisions places a significant strain on the coaching and refereeing resources available in Victoria.
- The Community Football Clubs and State League competition have no link or connection to the NPL, resulting in a fragmented, convoluted and divisive pathway, especially for junior players, their parents and their families.

Recommendations

Recommendation 3.1	That the NPL competition be restructured to a three-tier, hierarchical model with NPL, VPL1 and VPL2 divisions (see diagram on page 28). Each division shall be subject to an annual promotion and relegation system, which includes strict off-field criteria being met before a club can be promoted.
Recommendation 3.2	That the number of teams in each division be modelled based on club performance, compliance with criteria and ability to meet minimum facility standards. The optimum number of teams in each division should be decided prior to publishing any information about the restructure.
Recommendation 3.3	That FFV review, simplify and establish objective and functional on and off field criteria (in alignment with the facilities strategy) for the purposes of eligibility across the whole football pathway. The extent to which these criteria apply can then be reduced for each level of the football pathway (i.e. NPL may be required to comply with 80% of the criteria and State League 1 may be required to comply with 50%).
Recommendation 3.4	That a clear independent dispute resolution process be established for resolving any situations where a club is deemed to be “ineligible” and the club disputes this assessment. It is also recommended that a specific project be completed to establish a framework for this process ahead of implementation in 2019.

Proposed Senior Competition Structure (Recommendation 2.1)



4. Senior Alignment and the Junior Competition Structure

Under the current NPL structure, the division of competition which a club (and all of its teams) competes in is determined by the performance of the senior team. All junior teams within the club are also promoted or relegated with no consideration of the competitiveness of the club's junior teams. As a consequence, the promotion or relegation of a senior team can have a dramatic impact on the junior program, leading to teams or even the whole junior program becoming uncompetitive for entire seasons.

Additionally, the promotion or relegation of a club can have a far reaching impact on player movements across the whole league. When a club is promoted, the level of demand from players to join the NPL pathways means that many of the club's current juniors players end up competing to retain their own positions for the following season. Conversely, when a club is relegated, many players will leave the team in search of a more direct pathway to a higher NPL division and thus forcing the club to recruit new players.

The flow on effect from the changes in the NPL is that many players from Community Clubs leave their clubs in search of an opportunity to be selected for an NPL Club. As result, many junior players do not feel like they have a 'home' club; a club they belong to regardless of annual team selections. This is a very different experience to other sport pathways where the 'elite' sport pathway sits outside of the club system, allowing players to remain at one home club while pursuing an elite sport career.

Key Evidence and Insights

- The significant turnover of players in the off-season is a huge risk for any club. This is particularly because if the club is relegated the following year, the majority of the junior players will likely move on again (to another NPL club) and potentially decimate the club altogether.
- NPL Clubs are so performance driven that being a previous club member offers no guarantees of being selected in subsequent seasons.
- Even with movement of players, the impact of promotion or relegation on a junior teams can still be significant.
- Analysis of results from all NPL games since the start of the league in 2014 shows that over 20% of games in Under 13s, 14s and 15s results in a goal difference of 5 goals or more, and over 40% of games result in a goal difference of 3 goals or more.
- This is compared to only 6% of senior games with a goal difference of 5 goals or more.

Recommendations

Recommendation 4.1	That the alignment of senior and junior programs for the purpose of promotion and relegation be decoupled to allow for independent movement within the competition structure for the 2019 season. Although this happens outside of the NPL, it will be a fundamental shift for the NPL in 2019 which should be carefully monitored with the clubs involved.
Recommendation 4.2	That the Steering Committee further develop and refine the optimal model for the junior competition, prior to making recommendations to the Board.
Recommendation 4.3	From 2020, FFV should target growth in regional areas by working with clubs that could elevate junior teams into the highest divisions of the pathway. This strategy will develop talent in regional areas and improve access to the pathway across the whole state.

5. Player Retention and Welfare

As mentioned in previous sections, there is little loyalty between a club and the players within the current system. This can result in a 'nomadic' experience in the sport, where a player moves from club to club in search of the next playing opportunity. High player mobility within the football pathway means that most players have very little certainty about their playing future. The demand to play in the NPL far outweighs the supply of positions available within NPL Clubs. This places the clubs in a unique position where they can constantly review and rejuvenate all the players in a team at the end of each season. While this may seem common practice for elite sport teams, it is not common practice in junior sport.

Such is the performance-driven nature of NPL clubs, each year existing club members have to compete with new players to secure a position on the team for the following season. This creates cultural dynamics which are not conducive to ongoing player development and high performance outcomes. The data analysis completed demonstrates that of all the players who leave the NPL each year (approximately 2,000 players) only 50% continue to play in Community football leagues, with the remainder leaving the sport altogether.

Further compounding the issues with player retention are the perceptions that the football community have regarding each of the leagues. While many junior players believe the NPL is the best and only pathway suitable for them, many State League players have similar beliefs and refuse to play in the Metro Leagues due the perception that it is an 'old man's league'.

Key Evidence and Insights

- The impact on young minds being told they are “not good enough” cannot be underestimated. Case studies of European Football Academies identify the negative impact that these types of programs can have on the welfare and mental health of young players.
- Research suggests that players who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to be detrimentally impacted from a negative trialing and/or selection experience. Intrinsically motivated players have a strong connection between the game and their self-identity and interest. They are more likely to reach higher levels of success in the long term than those who are motivated by extrinsic factors (i.e. fame, money or notoriety). This highlights the important role clubs and coaches should play to keep players involved in the game, even if not at their club.
- The trialing process of very young players (11, 12 and 13 years of age) can have a detrimental impact on their long term retention in the sport. Between the 2016 and 2017 season, 62% of under 12 players, and 51% of under 13 players who left their NPL club at the end of the season also discontinued with the sport altogether.
- Additionally, there needs to be a more structured process for coaches and technical directors to provide feedback to unsuccessful junior players. This process should include consulting with the player’s parents, as they have the best understanding of most appropriate way to discuss these subjects with their child.
- The length of the season and the amount of training expected of adolescent players is also a common point of contention for parents. International case studies will suggest that future elite football players need to be developing their football skills and techniques 4-5 times per week - all year round. This is a contrast to typical junior club-based sport in Australia where seasons last 5-6 months, training takes place once or twice per week and representative formats exist outside of clubs. In Victoria, some believe developing players need to be following international examples while others believe we need more balance with other non-football activities.

Recommendations

Recommendation 5.1	That FFV establish a clearly defined process for trialling, including the communication of results to young players. This process shall establish a minimum standard of care for the welfare of the player and must be adopted by all affiliated FFV clubs holding trials. FFV should also engage professional guidance to analyse the overall training load and annual trial processes - and the impact these have on young players.
Recommendation 5.2	That FFV implement changes to the number of Visa players allowed to play within a State League team for that team to be eligible for promotion into the NPL divisions (i.e. only State League teams which conform to the Asian Football Confederation's "3+1" rule for foreign players will be eligible to be promoted into the NPL. This means clubs can continue to have as many Visa players as desired but will be ineligible to be promoted).

6. Reducing the Cost to Players

One of the most consistent issues raised by the football community throughout this review is the cost of playing junior NPL (between \$1,500 to \$2,200 plus additional costs per season mandated by the club up to \$800). There are a variety of contrasting views which exist amongst the football community:

“The NPL is for the best players who can afford to play... not just the best players.”

“If a player who is good enough genuinely can’t afford to play, the clubs will support them.”

“If you break it down per training session and games played, it’s much cheaper than most other sports.”

The reviewer’s independent assessment is that player costs are too high for an elite junior competition, and the cost structures and club administrative processes need to be reviewed to identify operating efficiencies (e.g. technologies/software systems/automation etc.).

However, the main issue here is the lack of transparency provided by many clubs with regards to the use of junior players fees. There is a perception held by many parents, and other stakeholders, that a large component of junior players fees go towards the payment of the senior players. Many believe this money would be better served being invested either back into the junior program, or into club facilities and infrastructure. From the reviewers analysis, it would appear the surplus is much smaller than current perceptions would indicate – but this needs to become much more transparent across all clubs for perceptions to change.

Key Evidence and Insights

- There is a common perception that junior NPL player fees are used to subsidise senior player payments. This is a particularly strong point of contention for junior parents.
- Equally, more club support initiatives focused on alternative revenue opportunities should be developed to assist club administrators manage club budgets and reduce costs for junior players.
- Many players (and their families) make significant financial (and time) sacrifices to pursue their football development.
- Unfortunately, for many talented players from low socio-economic areas, the cost (both time and money) of playing in the NPL is too high. Many of these players do not have the opportunity to reach their complete potential.

Recommendations

Recommendation 6.1	That the Steering Committee gives consideration to the optimal model for the game in the future is to not have restrictions placed on clubs as to the number of teams they are allowed to have at any age group.
Recommendation 6.2	<p>That in the medium term (following the 2019 season when state league clubs will be eligible to apply for teams to be entered into NPL divisions) consideration be given to allow NPL clubs the opportunity to increase the maximum junior squad size to allow for a second team in each age level. This team shall play in a community football league and be subject to an application to FFV detailing (as a minimum):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Availability of pitches to accommodate the additional team.2. A binding commitment to significantly reduce player fees for all junior club members.
Recommendation 6.3	That FFV initiate a requirement for all NPL Clubs to publish annual financial information which explains the proportion of surpluses derived from the junior program and how it intends to re-invest these surpluses within the club to improve transparency and increase the accuracy of perceptions. FFV should also benchmark and publish the percentage of junior membership revenue that is re-invested back into the development of junior programs across the competition.

7. Additional Challenges Faced by Regional NPL Clubs

Ongoing sustainability due to financial pressures and player retention issues is a key issue for regional NPL clubs. The operating costs in a regional setting are even more complex than in the metropolitan area, due to significantly higher travel costs which can be in excess of \$25,000 per year. Additionally, localised socio-economic implications can reduce demand from junior sport participants when the costs of playing are high and cheaper options are offered by rival sport codes. Additionally, regional NPL clubs face challenges around the recruitment and retention of players due to limited size of talent pool regions.

Providing concession to regional clubs through the player points system was suggested as a way to address the constraints regarding the depth of talent and the challenge to recruit players from outside of their regions. However, feedback from a broad range of stakeholders throughout the consultation process identified the current player points system does not work as it is widely misunderstood by all and regularly a source of tension between FFV and clubs.

As an aside, the original intention of the player points system was to encourage clubs to select and play talented players from within their own development pathway. However, the criteria used in the system is vague, ambiguous and often flawed, leading to some clubs, intentionally or unintentionally, incorrectly calculating player points. This results in friction between clubs and the FFV when attempting to resolve the discrepancy between the calculations. Ultimately, the player points system is broken, no longer serves its original intended purpose and places a significant administration burden on both club administrators and FFV staff.

Key Evidence and Insights

- The economic market pressures (less dense population catchments and other socio-economic factors) on regional clubs prevents these clubs from charging participant fees which would be comparable to metropolitan clubs. E.g. some regional community clubs charge junior members as little as \$200 per season.
- Regional NPL clubs incur additional travel costs which can equate to over \$25,000 per year for a club in bus hire and travel reimbursements. This is in addition to the long distances many players already travel from their homes to their home clubs throughout the week.
- Coaches, Technical Directors and Referees are required to travel to Melbourne to attend education and accreditation sessions, further adding to the financial pressure of the sport in regional areas.
- Regional clubs would also like to see more flexibility for Technical Directors to be able to coach teams and/or potentially work with other clubs in the region as well.
- The (un)competitiveness of some teams is also a greater concern in regional areas than metropolitan areas.
- Regional clubs also face the challenge of retaining players after the age of 18. At this life stage, many players relocate to Melbourne for university studies or work where they join metro based teams.
- NPL license fees are currently the same for Metro and Regional clubs despite the above inequalities and constraints.

Recommendations

Recommendation 7.1	That FFV review the license fees and requirements for regional clubs to ensure their ongoing participation in the NPL is sustainable.
Recommendation 7.2	That FFV, in consultation with the Steering Committee, establish a small working group to investigate options to simplify, improve and automate the FFA player points system and include concessions for regional clubs. FFV should present these findings to the FFA (and the state member federations) for consideration.

8. Growing Demand for Facilities

The inconsistency and overall quality of facilities available for football in Victoria has been a consistent statement from stakeholders during this review. This is of particular concern for the sport, given football's ongoing participation growth and a current undersupply of infrastructure to support the growth of the game. Additionally, both LGA stakeholders and Community Club representatives identified that the allocation of grounds to clubs could also be improved by identifying opportunities and specific times when existing facilities are not being used to capacity.

Football at a community level has traditionally been played during the winter months. The heavy usage of football pitches throughout the season, combined with wet weather and use of summer turf species leads to the deterioration of the pitch over the course of the season. This often requires regeneration works to be carried out in-season to prevent further deterioration, which can limit access to pitches during the peak season time.

Key Evidence and Insights

- Ideally, FFV should play a lead role in lobbying to both state and local government with data, evidence and long-term strategic facility priorities which align with government priorities. These include economic, health and social benefits of football, anticipated future demand mapping, and long-term (20 years plus) facilities plans for the state. It should also have a firm position on the need for more synthetic pitches which can treble the usage capacity of a field.
- Given the extremely high levels of competition for community sport and recreation facilities within Victoria, and council priorities to create multi-purpose facilities, seeking partnerships with potential co-tenants would be a good strategy to increase the chances of positive outcomes for football.
- Local government representatives commented that they continually face the challenge of balancing support for football facilities that benefit the wider community versus those that just benefit the elite NPL clubs.
- This is exacerbated by NPL clubs being issued with licenses without the support of its local council. This has led to some councils having to also balance facility upgrades for multiple NPL teams.
- NPL clubs could do more to improve their standing in the local community. Clubs need to be seen to be providing a benefit to the local community by 'giving back' through the delivery of programs and clinics that develop players outside of their current playing group.

Recommendations

Recommendation 8.1	Given the extremely high levels of competition for community sport and recreation facilities within Victoria (across all sports), FFV must urgently prioritise building stronger relationships with local Councils and other stakeholders which may include schools, co-tenants or other funding partners.
Recommendation 8.2	That FFV develop and publish a Football Facilities Plan that provides the minimum facility standards for clubs in each level of the football pathway. This document should include guidelines with regards to additional infrastructure requirements (e.g. changerooms, toilets, grandstands, etc.), playing surfaces, maintenance standards and practices, and a tool for LGAs and clubs to accurately audit the standard of their facilities.
Recommendation 8.3	That FFV mandates the support of the Club's local Council for all future NPL license agreements. This shall include an acknowledgement of the required facility standards.
Recommendation 8.4	That NPL and Community clubs work alongside FFV, and more closely with LGAs and the local community, to enhance the delivery of local policy outcomes.
Recommendation 8.5	That FFV investigate the optimal time of year for all football competitions in Victoria, to ensure that the clubs, and the sport in general, has access to the required facilities for the duration of the football season. This process should take into consideration the feedback from LGAs regarding the optimal maintenance window for grass pitches.

9. Coach Training, Accreditation and Development

Like any sporting pathway, the quality of coaching is critical to the development of all players. A good coach must understand the need for accreditation, education and experience and work toward achieving a balance of all three. They should hold the required/suitable level of accreditation for the team they are coaching, constantly upskilling themselves through education and professional development opportunities and importantly, they should have developed an understanding and sense of the game through years of experience in the sport.

Throughout the consultations, parents and club representatives expressed frustrations regarding the skills, knowledge and experience of some of the coaches. Many clubs expressed concern at the shortage of C level coaches in the state. This has resulted in many coaches being employed by clubs simply because they hold the required C level license, with an expectation that the skills and quality of the coach matched their level of accreditation and experience. Unfortunately, too much emphasis by clubs and coaches has been placed on the level of accreditation/license and consequently the value of the coach's experience and commitment to ongoing professional development has been, in many cases, ignored.

Coaches themselves blame this on two key factors; club's short term performance expectations, and the cost of coach education. Many coaches feel that if they don't have an immediate impact on a team's performance they will be replaced. This leads to many coaches employing short-term strategies for success (such as recruiting senior players over developing youth players) and places too much emphasis on the 'win at all costs' mentality.

Key Evidence and Insights

- Numerous stakeholders have commented that there are many “experienced footballers” who are not coaching due to the requirements of obtaining a specified coaching license.
- The lack of clarity in the purpose of the NPL has led to a divergence in the approach taken by clubs, especially at junior level. Some clubs approach the NPL as a player development pathway, where the aim is to develop the players technical and tactical skills, where as other clubs approach the NPL as an elite competition where the primary focus is on winning.
- Feedback from numerous stakeholders identified that many highly experienced players and coaches are “lost to the system” because they do not hold a coaching accreditation.
- The current processes do not offer reaccreditation points for practical coaching experience.

Recommendations

Recommendation 9.1	That FFV, in consultation with the FFA and clubs provide a pathway and learning system for individuals with significant football experience to be fast tracked into an appropriate level of coach accreditation. The overall aim is to improve the depth of coaching experience available to all clubs.
Recommendation 9.2 (a)	That FFV, in consultation with FFA, investigate the use of new technologies, channels and mediums (such as webinars, podcasts and online videos) to deliver coach education and coach accreditation courses, in order to improve the accessibility of courses and reduce the cost of participation to coaches.
Recommendation 9.2 (b)	That FFV, in consultation with FFA, investigate the use of new technologies, channels and mediums (such as webinars, podcasts and online videos) to deliver referee education and referee accreditation courses, in order to improve the accessibility of courses and reduce the cost of participation to referees.
Recommendation 9.3	That FFV and FFA partner with organisations like the Association of Football Coaches and Trainers (AFCAT) to deliver broad spectrum coach education and development opportunities. This may also include a mentoring program for 'up and coming' male and female coaches to be mentored by experienced football coaches.

Recommendation 10.1

Strategic and Structural Changes

- Senior and junior pathways are decoupled and independent of each other.
- Clubs are not restricted to a single league and can enter teams across the pathway.

Compliance with Standards/Criteria (notional targets)

Tier 1

The purpose of the top tier of the football pathway is provide an elite competition for the most talented and aspirational players in the state. The best competing against the best.

Socceroos A-League

NPL

>90%

Tier 2

The purpose of the secondary tier of the football pathway is provide a highly competitive environment for the developing players to achieve their potential or develop into elite players. This group of players and clubs are aspirational in their ambition and have invested in the club structure FFA & FFV require in order to enter a higher levels of the pathway.

VPL1

VPL2

>70%

State League 1 North-West

State League 1 South-East

Tier 3

The purpose of the majority of the football pathway is to facilitate a great environment for people to have fun as they enjoy their participation in our great game. This where kids learn to love the game and the social outcomes that the community seeks are delivered.

State League 2 North-West

State League 2 South-East

50%

State League 3 North-West

State League 3 South-East

State League 4 North

State League 4 West

State League 4 South

State League 4 East



Appendix 1: Stakeholder Consultation

Stakeholder Consultation

Engaging with and listening to the viewpoints of the Victorian football community is integral to understand the current issues with the competition structure in Victoria.

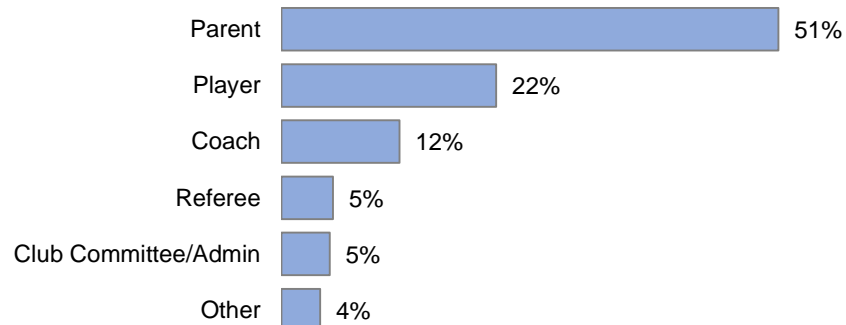
To date, SBP and FFV have engaged a number of key football stakeholders through a variety of methods. These include:

- An online survey with 3,670 responses to date
- 28 in-depth interviews completed with FFV Staff, Club Administrators, Players, Parents, Coaches, Referees
- 2 x regional forums in Wangaratta and Ballarat
- Local Government, Community Club and Coaches Forums

The following pages provide a summary of the responses received via the online survey between 1st November and 18th December 2017.

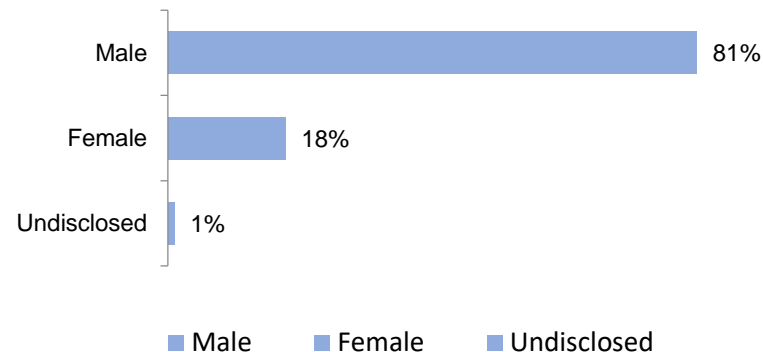


Current Involvement in Football



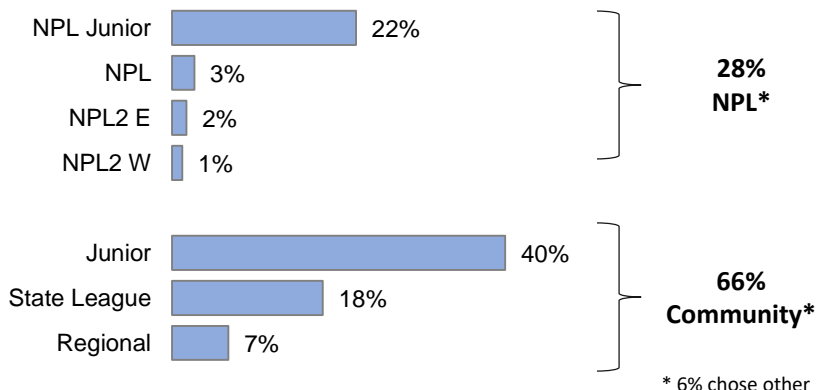
Q1. Which of the following best describes your main role in football?

Gender



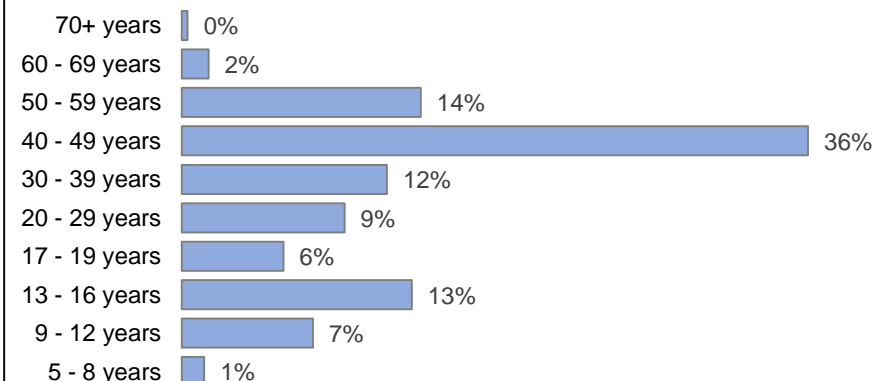
Q2. What is your gender?

Current Competition



Q5. Which of the following male Competitions were you involved in throughout 2017?

Respondent Age



Q3. In which age bracket are you currently in?

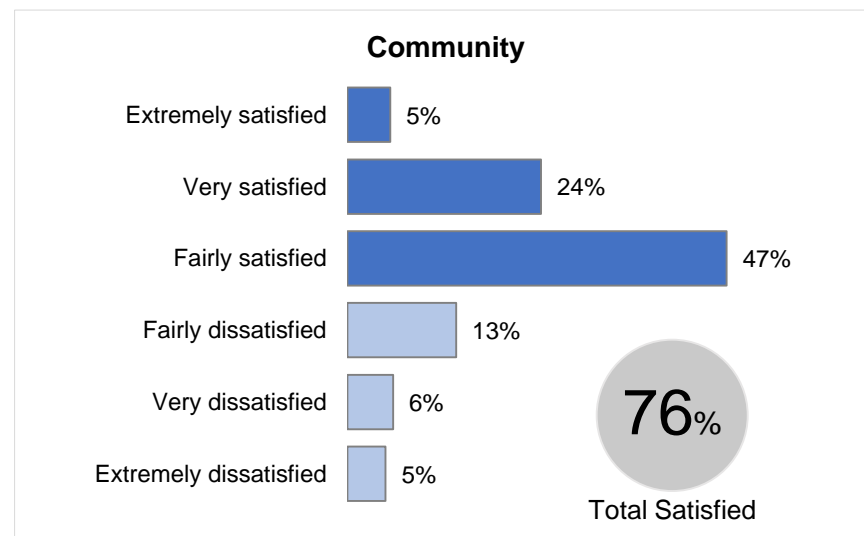
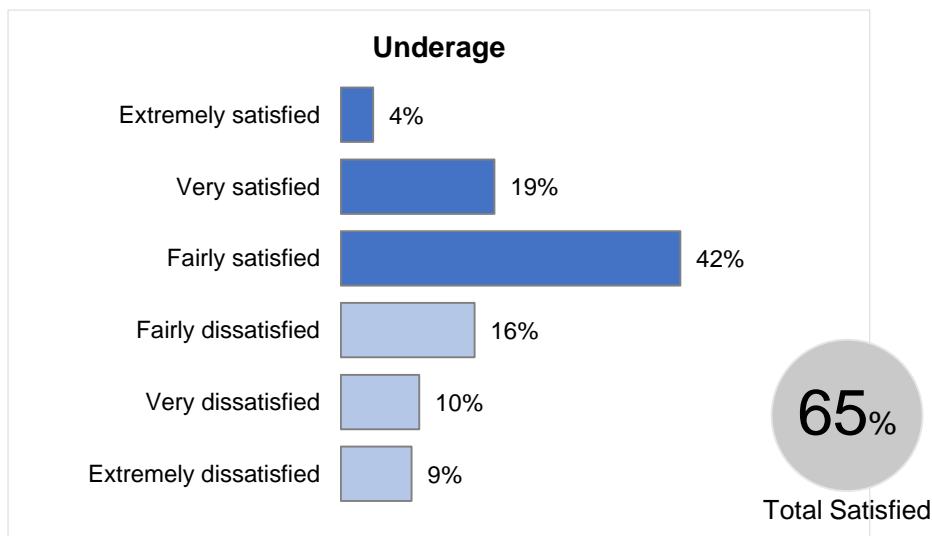
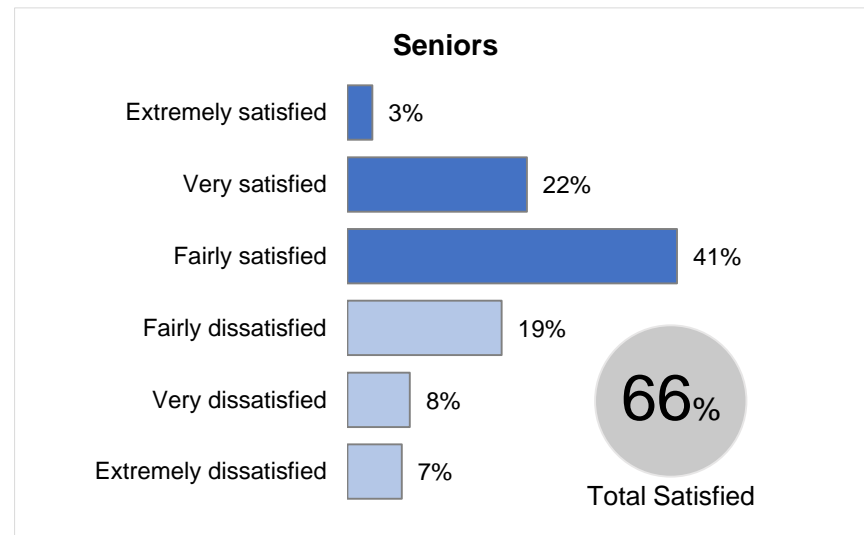
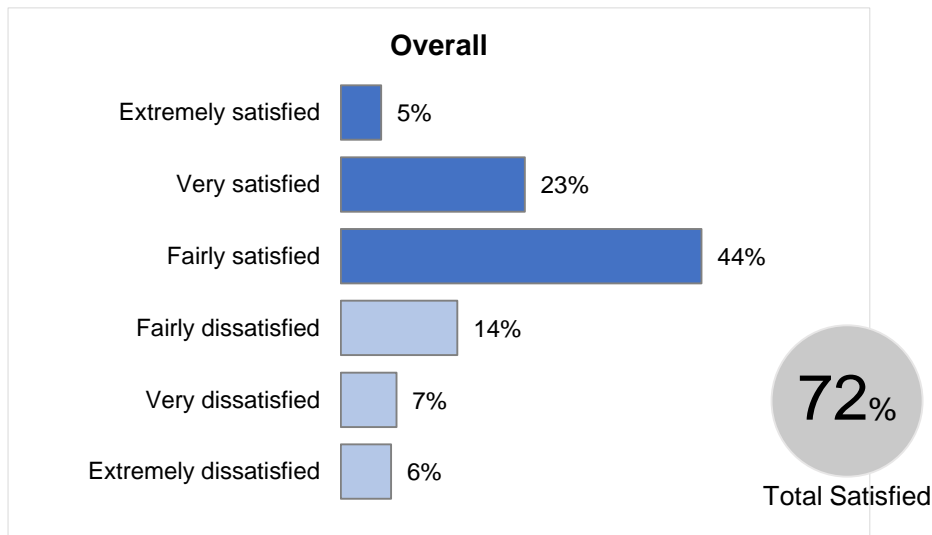
Below is a snapshot of the key themes raised by the various respondent segments through the online survey – regarding the **NPL**

NPL	Strengths	Weaknesses	Improvements
Coaches n=448	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standard and professionalism of competition and players. Qualification and experience of coaches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Too expensive, especially for juniors. Some talented players can be priced out of the competition. Too many teams for the pool of talent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion and relegation system. Reduce the playing fees. Connection or link to community clubs.
Referees n=196	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standard and professionalism of competition and players. Well organised. Player development opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Too expensive, especially for juniors. Lack of respect towards referees from players, coaches and spectators. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the cost. Greater respect of the referees. Reduce the number of teams.
Players n=2,699 (includes 1,883 parent responses)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standard of competition. Quality of coaches. Pathway for players. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Too expensive. No promotion or relegation system for juniors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce fees. Separate juniors from NPL structure.
Administrators n=185	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standard and professionalism of players. Development opportunities and player pathway. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Too expensive, especially for juniors. Some talented players can be priced out of the competition. Too many clubs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the fees. Reduce the number of clubs/teams. Remove or restructure juniors.

Below is a snapshot of the key themes raised by the various respondent segments through the online survey – regarding **Community Football**

Community	Strengths	Weaknesses	Improvements
Coaches n=448	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong overall participation in the game. Community involvement and connection Accessibility for players of varying ability. Focus on Player Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Club culture. Varying standard of refereeing. Qualification and education of coaches. Standard and consistency of competition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove NPL Juniors Create alignment between community football and NPL clubs. Better coaches and referees.
Referees n=196	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of people participating Organisation of competition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of respect towards referees from players, coaches and spectators. Insufficient amount of referees. Tribunal not supporting/respecting referees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve facilities for players and referees. Greater support and respect of referees. Better education of coaches and players on the rules of the game.
Players n=2,699 (includes 1,883 parent responses)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community support and environment. Focus on participation. Quality of coaches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behaviour of coaches. Qualifications and experience of coaches. Cost. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve coaching standard (qualifications and experience). Improve referee standard. Better pitches.
Administrators n=185	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community involvement and engagement. Accessibility for players of varying ability. Affordable cost. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Varying standard of refereeing. Lack of referees. Communication and support from FFV. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater engagement and support of community clubs from FFV. New or improved facilities.

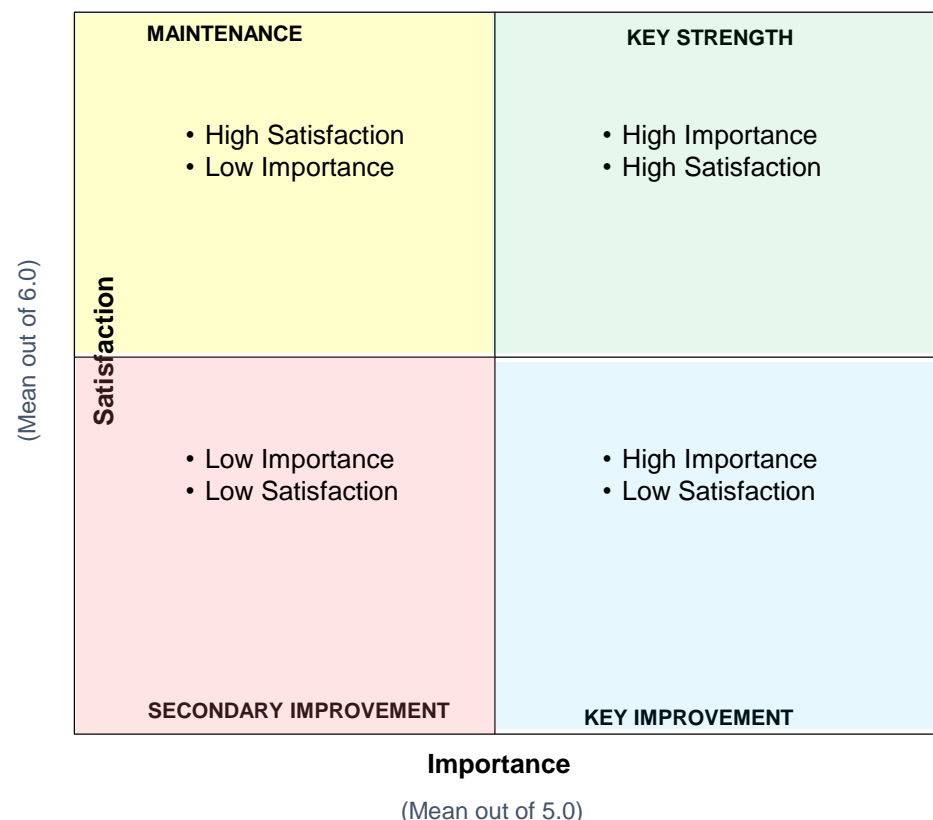
Below is the overall satisfaction scores from the online survey (reflecting on 2017 season).



Strategic Mapping - Explanation

Strategic mapping involves charting the ratings for satisfaction and importance across a number of different aspects to provide a broad strategic indicator of the key areas of focus for Football Federation Victoria.

How to read the strategic map



The Strategic maps on the following pages demonstrate:

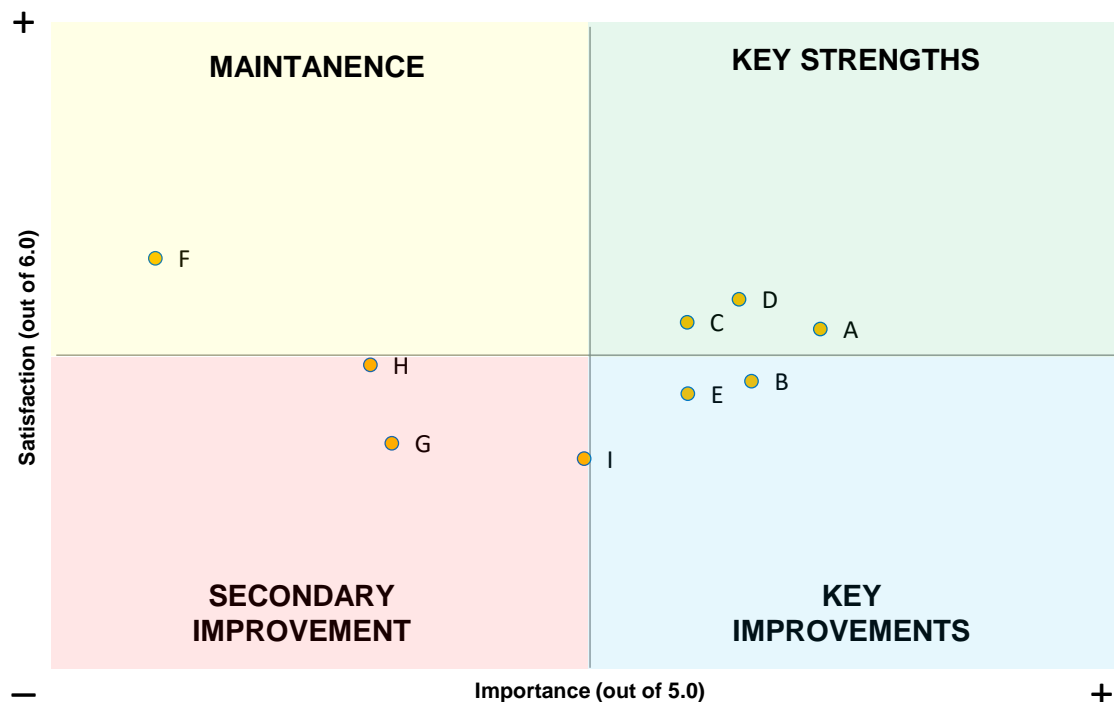
1. The levels of satisfaction amongst a specific group of attributes relative to those attributes
2. The levels of importance amongst the same group of attributes relative to those attributes
3. The axis represent the “mid-point” weighted average of the results, and not necessarily the mid-point of the scale (i.e. the satisfaction scale is out of 6 but the mid-point of the results may be 3.6)

Caution: It is important to note that results from the survey demonstrate a rational response from a series of ‘tick-box’ options and may not represent the complete picture of consumer sentiment and decision making.

The results are an important input for consideration in conjunction with all of the consultations, interviews, forums and workshops to enable evidence-based decision making.

Strategic Mapping

The following strategic map displays the ratings for satisfaction and importance across a number of different aspects. The letter references are provided to the right.



KEY STRENGTHS

- Technical skills or knowledge of coaches (A)
- Club/competition environment/culture (D)
- Quality of club administration and organisation (C)

KEY IMPROVEMENTS

- Quality of Referees/officials (B)
- Quality of pitches and facilities (E)

SECONDARY IMPROVEMENT

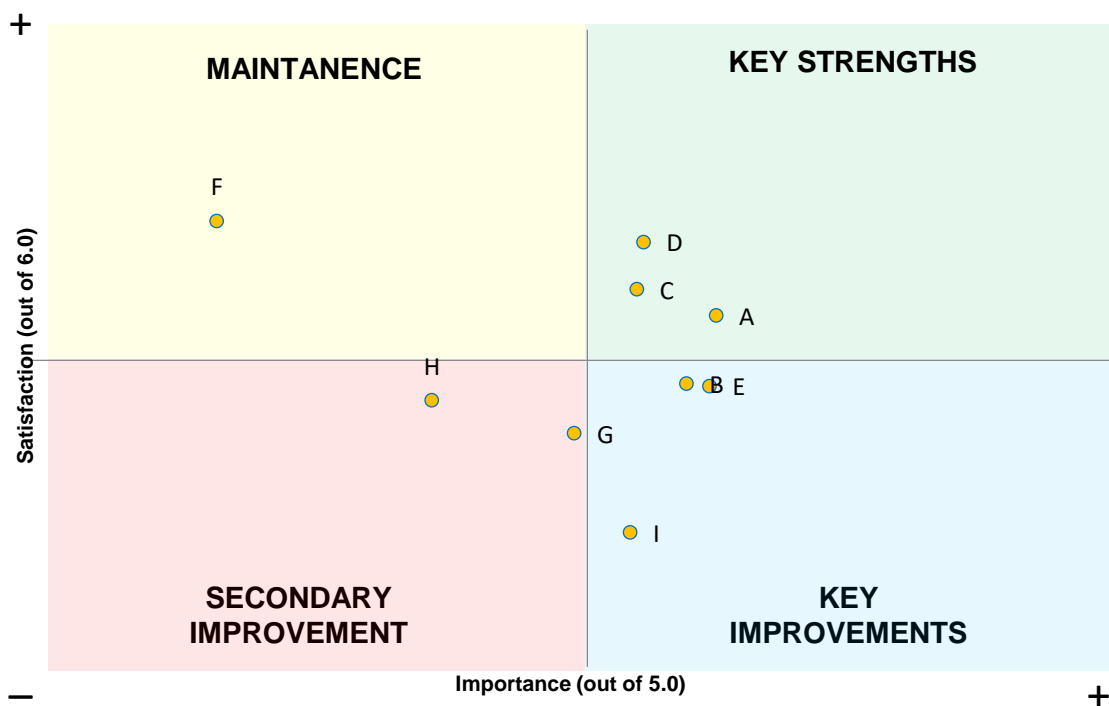
- The price point for players (club fees, coaching etc.) (I)
- Access to support services, such as doctors and physiotherapists (G)
- Personal costs of participating (equipment, travel etc.) (H)

MAINTENANCE

- Time required to travel to games/training (F)

Senior Experience

The following strategic map displays the ratings for satisfaction and importance across a number of different aspects. The letter references are provided to the right.



KEY STRENGTHS

- Technical skills or knowledge of coaches (A)
- Quality of club administration and organisation (C)
- Club/competition environment/culture (D)

KEY IMPROVEMENTS

- Quality of pitches and facilities (E)
- Quality of Referees/officials (B)
- The price point for players (club fees, coaching etc.) (I)

SECONDARY IMPROVEMENT

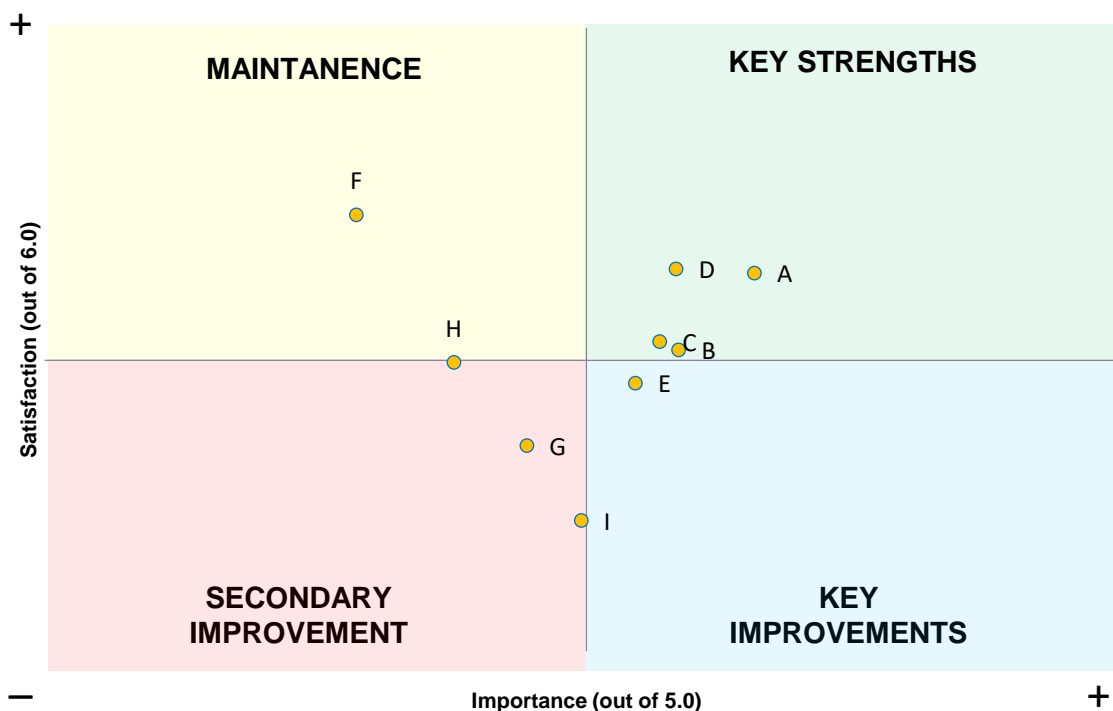
- Access to support services, such as doctors and physiotherapists (G)
- Personal costs of participating (equipment, travel etc.) (H)

MAINTANENCE

- Time required to travel to games/training (F)

Junior Experience

The following strategic map displays the ratings for satisfaction and importance across a number of different aspects. The letter references are provided to the right.



KEY STRENGTHS

- Technical skills or knowledge of coaches (A)
- Quality of Referees/officials (B)
- Club/competition environment/culture (D)
- Quality of club administration and organisation (C)

KEY IMPROVEMENTS

- Quality of pitches and facilities (E)

SECONDARY IMPROVEMENT

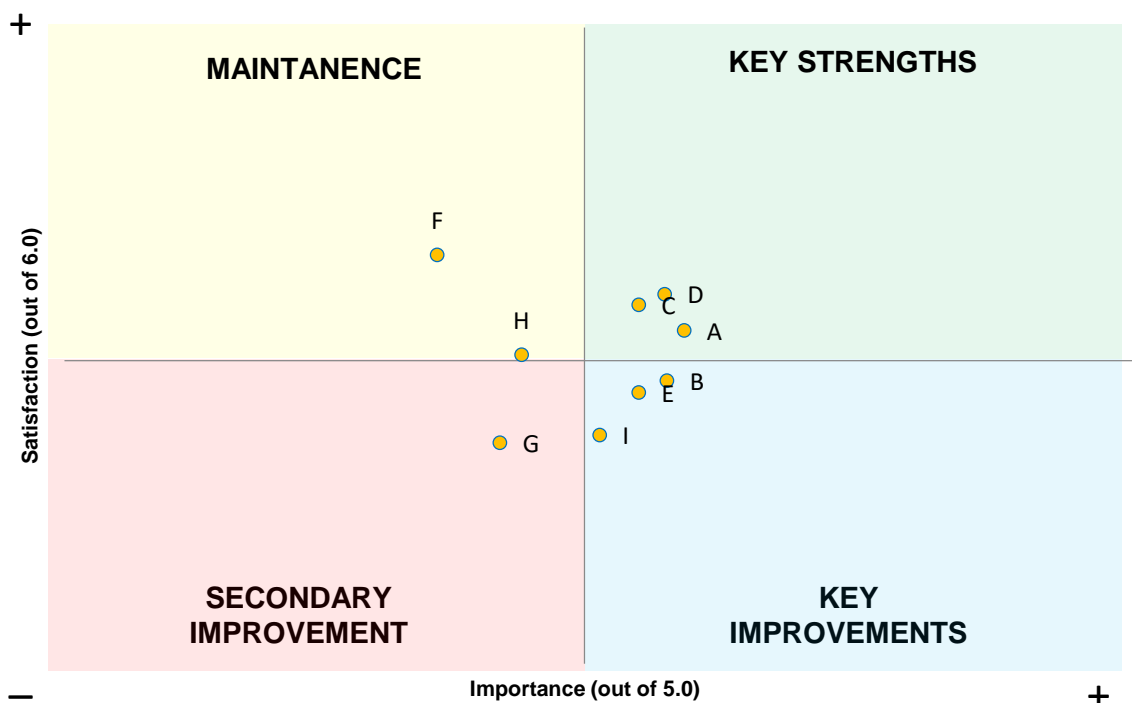
- The price point for players (club fees, coaching etc.) (I)
- Access to support services, such as doctors and physiotherapists (G)
- Personal costs of participating (equipment, travel etc.) (H)

MAINTENANCE

- Time required to travel to games/training (F)

Community Experience

The following strategic map displays the ratings for satisfaction and importance across a number of different aspects. The letter references are provided to the right.



KEY STRENGTHS

- Technical skills or knowledge of coaches (A)
- Club/competition environment/culture (D)
- Quality of club administration and organisation (C)

KEY IMPROVEMENTS

- Quality of Referees/officials (B)
- Quality of pitches and facilities (E)
- The price point for players (club fees, coaching etc.) (I)

SECONDARY IMPROVEMENT

- Access to support services, such as doctors and physiotherapists (G)

MAINTANENCE

- Personal costs of participating (equipment, travel etc.) (H)
- Time required to travel to games/training (F)



Appendix 2: Player Retention Analysis

2014 To 2015	Remained in NPL system 43%		Left NPL system 57%		Remained in NPL system 2,284		Left NPL system 3,022	
	Same Club 71%	New Club 29%	Still Playing 64%	Not Playing 36%	Same Club 1,618	New Club 666	Still Playing 1,929	Not Playing 1,093
2015 To 2016	Remained in NPL system 64%		Left NPL system 36%		Remained in NPL system 2,940		Left NPL system 1,676	
	Same Club 82%	New Club 18%	Still Playing 51%	Not Playing 49%	Same Club 2,185	New Club 486	Still Playing 854	Not Playing 822
2016 To 2017	Remained in NPL system 63%		Left NPL system 37%		Remained in NPL system 4,080		Left NPL system 2,380	
	Same Club 81%	New Club 19%	Still Playing 50%	Not Playing 50%	Same Club 3,285	New Club 795	Still Playing 1,190	Not Playing 1,190

Players who have left the NPL

Category	2014 - 2015		2015 - 2016		2016 - 2017		2014 - 2015		2015 - 2016		2016 - 2017	
	Still Playing	Not Playing	Still Playing	Not Playing	Still Playing	Not Playing	Still Playing	Not Playing	Still Playing	Not Playing	Still Playing	Not Playing
U12	54%	46%	41%	59%	38%	62%	315	265	95	134	169	277
U13	74%	26%	70%	30%	49%	51%	172	60	111	48	71	74
U14	82%	18%	57%	43%	63%	37%	181	40	56	43	81	47
U15	77%	23%	67%	33%	61%	39%	189	55	63	31	97	62
U16	76%	24%	58%	42%	58%	42%	187	59	62	45	87	64
U18	60%	40%	50%	50%	51%	49%	342	227	148	150	218	209
U20	52%	48%	48%	52%	50%	50%	224	204	141	154	215	211
Senior	64%	36%	45%	55%	51%	49%	319	182	178	217	252	246

2014 To 2015	Remained in Community system 66%		Left Community system 34%		Remained in Community system 32,082		Left Community system 16,841	
	Same Club 84%	New Club 16%	Still Playing 9%	Not Playing 91%	Same Club 26,919	New Club 5,163	Still Playing 1,463	Not Playing 15,378
2015 To 2016	Remained in Community system 63%		Left Community system 37%		Remained in Community system 35,924		Left Community system 20,970	
	Same Club 86%	New Club 14%	Still Playing 11%	Not Playing 89%	Same Club 31,026	New Club 4,898	Still Playing 2,315	Not Playing 18,655
2016 To 2017	Remained in Community system 64%		Left Community system 36%		Remained in Community system 37,763		Left Community system 21,305	
	Same Club 87%	New Club 13%	Still Playing 9%	Not Playing 91%	Same Club 32,775	New Club 4,988	Still Playing 1,835	Not Playing 19,470

Players who have left Community Football

Category	2014 - 2015		2015 - 2016		2016 - 2017	
	Into NPL	Not Playing	Into NPL	Not Playing	Into NPL	Not Playing
U12	8%	92%	9%	91%	9%	91%
U13	17%	83%	17%	83%	17%	83%
U14	14%	86%	17%	83%	12%	88%
U15	16%	84%	19%	81%	12%	88%
U16	20%	80%	21%	79%	14%	86%
U18	11%	89%	17%	83%	9%	91%
U20	8%	92%	10%	90%	6%	94%
Senior	2%	98%	4%	96%	3%	97%

Category	2014 - 2015		2015 - 2016		2016 - 2017	
	Into NPL	Not Playing	Into NPL	Not Playing	Into NPL	Not Playing
U12	321	3,948	486	5,105	515	5,246
U13	172	823	248	1,253	296	1,443
U14	155	992	259	1,277	201	1,481
U15	158	812	246	1,082	161	1,178
U16	189	780	254	982	184	1,138
U18	233	1,818	434	2,151	224	2,229
U20	121	1,347	161	1,422	94	1,365
Senior	114	4,858	227	5,383	160	5,390



Appendix 3: Forum Notes



2017 Competition Review Workshop/Regional Forum



MEETING	
Date and Time:	Thursday 26 th October 2017, 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm
Location:	South Wangaratta Soccer Reserve, Shanley St, Wangaratta VIC 3677

ATTENDING	
Football Community	Paul (GV Suns), Pedro (Murray United), Steven (Murray United), Adam (GV Suns), Craig (GV Suns) Nick (via phone) (GV Suns)
FFV	Will Hastie
SBP	Ben Manning and Tim Murdoch

Opening comments/items for further discussion:

- The tyranny of distance... not just 270 km from Melbourne once you factor in how far away all of the players live from our clubs as well
- GV Suns/Shepparton travel over 9,000 km in a season. Metro teams travel between 1500-1,800 km per season but the reality is metro clubs are not hiring buses for the majority of games.
- The whole team has to travel on the bus, each way. This results in 14-15 hr day for the whole traveling team (U20, seniors, coaches, physio, etc).
- Junior equalisation policy has been good. (17 home games/10 Away).

Strengths of the NPL (and discussion)

- Level of competition is fantastic for the kids. They are developing a lot quicker because they have to keep up with the standard of the competition. It forces us to up-skill our coaches.
- Created an environment to provide the pathway.
- Exclusivity is crucial - no rival club will pop up next to regional club.
- Junior fixture is a positive. The gala days works "fantastic" for the clubs in the region and the more the better. They result in more people hanging around the club. This format seems to be consistent with how the sport is normally delivered in the area. "In the country we have always had a one club culture. Our whole club always plays on the same day."
- The NPL brand is really good, for regionals centres. So is the NPL pathway, which is highly valued in the regional areas. It gives us good leverage with the government to get funding. Local councils are starting to realise the value of the NPL.
- NPL is a controlled environment. Our officials are lining up to be involved in the NPL. They are not ostracised like they are in community football. Shepparton struggle with referees... hard to find 3 independent referees at junior games. At times, senior club officials have to step in.
 - Two FFV referee bodies don't seem to communicate. There are referees in Wangaratta that don't ref in Shepparton because they haven't been asked. Communication between ref branches in Albury/Wodonga and Shepparton is an issue.
 - Referees (in Melbourne) are calling in sick for metro games because they have to travel across town. Regional teams are already on the bus and we arrive with no refs, no canteen, toilets locked. It's not a good look for the competition.

Weaknesses of NPL (and discussion)

- There need to be a real end to the season.
 - Offset the start of the senior and junior competitions by 4 weeks. It is the same volunteers who work every weekend from start to finish.
 - Everyone is tired and fatigued by the end of the season. People are on edge but they don't realise why. As soon as the season finishes, they want the next match.
 - Season start no earlier than mid-Feb. Has to end in late August, first 2 weeks in September, to avoid AFL finals.
 - There are facility issues that need to be consider in the season length.
 - If the NPL is just going to be a feeder to the A-league then we need to fit into their calendar. Why have a longer season, for no purpose?
- A complete review of the whole structure of the junior competition is required.
 - Junior competition has no tiering. In the UK, they have a promotion and relegation style system based across 4 divisions, don't pick on a single division and relegate them.
 - Fixturing not fair. In a 34 team competition, you don't play every team twice.
 - "Give the kids clarity. Show them the pathway."
 - It has got to be some type of a tiered system for development.
 - There has got to be a finals system. It's our culture. Look at the AFL.
 - The kids haven't been nurtured in a win/lose environment. Look at the Socceroos, 50% of that team have come through under this new model. Some of them have never faced this type of scenario in their career.
 - "We put a line down the middle and we thought that was the easiest thing to do."
 - Hume is the closest club to Murray but we don't play them because they are on the other side of the 'line'.
 - It could be three conference of juniors that are ranked.
- Regional challenge cup. A finals structure for regional teams.
- "There are clubs here that don't exist here anymore, in the King Valley, they started football in Victoria."
- There need to be alignment from the national model. The FFA cup is an example, Sydney FC can have 5 visa players, South Melbourne can only have 2.
- Study, academic, employment are factors in the movement of players. Most players leave because they get a job in Melbourne, go to higher levels of study, etc.
- They are not lost to the games, they just go down to lower levels and get \$500 or \$800 a game.
- There is no university in Shepparton and this has an impact of GV Sun's ability to retain players after they hit 18.

Additional Issues and Discussions

Purpose

- Murray United – we exist to provide further opportunities for our people.
- Are we developing kids to go into national teams, or are we developing kids to go overseas and then come back to the national team?
- We don't get contacted from A-league clubs (outside of Melbourne Victory and Melbourne City) who are asking who are our best 6 players. Not all A-league clubs are searching the whole of Australia consistently for talent.

Club Sustainability

- The travel policy has given more sustainability to the junior program.
- The travel cost that regionals clubs have put the club's sustainability and viability at risk.
- Regional areas are up for \$27,000 in bus hire. No metro clubs have to pay that.

Equalisation

- Request reduction of licences fee for regional clubs.
- Player recruitment: Players from Melbourne want \$1,000 per game. If we can increase the VISA players for regional clubs, we can get 6-8 visa players tomorrow for \$200/week. They bring their qualifications and experience, open us to new networks, they bring their partners to town. Extra 2 visa players for regional clubs would be great.

Points System

- Point system, providing additional points for concession. Our U-20 roster gets raided by other clubs. We can't fill the spots and we are forced to fill the spots with under 15s and 16s.
- We look at other teams and don't understand how they get in under the points.
- Regional clubs are at their limit and we aren't aiming that high.
- Loyalty points need to be addressed. They might not be for loyalty, might be for geographical. Archie Thompson was 25 points (5 because of a transfer from another club Heidelberg). He was developed here!
- You can't penalise clubs for elite players who want to return to their regional clubs.
- Review the eligibility criteria on where you get points and where you get penalised.
- Loyalty point for clubs who come from community clubs in the area/region.

Fees

- Metro have the ability to add a fee to their juniors, mini-ros, etc to pay for their seniors and say they have no senior fee. They have the luxury of volume at the base.
- Clubs in this region have to get player sponsorship from local businesses to cover fees.
- Cost of participation in regional areas is a massive barrier.
- We are missing good players because they can't afford to play.
- Refugees are leaving our clubs. The fee for community football is \$200. The community clubs subsidise refugee players.
- Refugee players selected to go to Japan, couldn't go because they didn't have a passport.
- We have heard of 14 year old kids (refugees) being offered money to play for with metro club.
- AFL players don't have to pay at the higher level. Cost of participation is a huge issue.
- Metro clubs don't need to reduce fees because they have an over demand.

NPL and Community Football

- There needs to be a better connection with community football. A player isn't good enough, we can send them down, say "if you work of this, then maybe you'll be back next year".
- A comparison is made between TAC cup and NPL. TAC cup can send players back to their community/junior club to develop further... NPL is trying to put elite into a club environment.
- When we cut a player who isn't good enough, we don't just lose a player we also lose their parents too. They might be a good volunteer, worked in the canteen, even a committee member.

Closing Remarks

- Clubs are starting to get disillusioned with the process/pathway, etc.
- We have to have a viable product (the NPL) for regional areas.
- Seniors and juniors need to start closer together.
- More gala days we can have against particular teams, better fixturing Seniors Saturday juniors Sunday. We would like a minimum of 6 Gala days. The community comes together more to support junior and senior club.
- There needs to be something to dream towards; finals, onward competition/progression, a national club championship.



2017 Competition Review Workshop/Regional Forum



MEETING	
Date and Time:	Thursday 9 th November 2017, 7:15 arrival for 7:30 pm start – 9:15 pm finish
Location:	Morshead Park, Ballarat
ATTENDING	
Football Community	Glenn Walker (Bendigo City), Steve Robinson (Bendigo City), Darly Tucker (Bendigo City), Ivan Dugandzic (Elcho Park Cardinals), Ivan Perse (North Geelong), Vlad Dzajkic (North Geelong), Laurelle Sommers (BDSA), Herman Bogers (BDSA), Michael Busija (Ballarat City), Rod Oppenhuis (Vikings FC), Marcus Lynch (Vikings FC), Mathew Schepers (Eaglehawk FC), Shane Eleveld (Eaglehawk FC/BASL), Rebecca Fahey (BASL).
FFV	Gary Cole (Chair Steering Committee), George Angelopoulos
SBP	Martin Hiron, Ben Manning and Tim Murdoch

General Strengths of NPL/local football

- Growing competition
- Having the NPL in the regional area provides a pathway for players in regional areas.
- Pathway opportunities are currently better in Ballarat than previous. Game is accessible to anyone, of any age no matter their ability. Currently cater for all levels from grassroots participation through to the elite.
- There is better exposure and coverage of local football through media in Ballarat (note – FFV social media has decreased)
- Junior Gala Days are working well
- Anti-gambling position of the league is a strength.

General Weaknesses of NPL/local football

- Some juniors don't want to play in the NPL because the local teams get consistently beaten by Melbourne teams. Some players are moving to city clubs, others are going back to community clubs.
- Standard of football at the top level has gone backwards in Bendigo. The depth of talent is not there.
- NPL promotion/relegation is too reliant on the performance of the senior team. If the seniors have a bad season (due to injury, etc) the team can be relegated.
- Everyone is just chasing (recruiting, paying) good players just so they can stay in the top division which places a lot of financial pressure on clubs

Division System

- Too many uncompetitive games. The competition potentially needs to be remodelled to have divisions, so teams are playing other teams of similar standards. Potentially a state-wide competition, with multiple divisions based on standard is the best way.
- Fixturing Gala days will still be possible in a 'divisional league', it will just make it more difficult.
- Gala days create the big picture, the kids can physically see the pathway.
- Burden of travel. Travel equalisation has worked well and made a difference to the clubs. Equalisation was well supported by all clubs in the room (including the clubs who aren't eligible for it).

- Promotion/relegation would need to look at the whole junior program, not an individual team. Too much pressure on individual team and potential logistics issues.
- When a coach leaves a club, sometimes the whole team of players follow the coach to another club.

Juniors/Age Groups/Pathway/Costs

- Club results vs development tensions - bettering a small number of talented athletes vs developing the whole team
- Club/player/spectator behaviour is an issue with some clubs
- Tribunal issues not being dealt with quick enough. Penalties handed down are not solving issues with players and clubs
- Disciplinary/Respect courses features cartoons and may need to be reviewed. Not serious enough for the message it was trying to convey. It became a joke around the club instead of communicating a serious message
- We can't just take from the pathway and not give back. There needs to be a way for players to go back to community football for a season or two and develop more.
- Players need to be told that success doesn't start and finish with the NPL. "If you don't make an NPL team it is seen as a failure". Need to be show that it is alright to be a good player in community football if you don't make it at NPL level.
- Lose players because they just choose to leave the sport rather than go back.
- Transparency for parents to see the pathway.
- Junior fees are \$2,000-2,500 per player to play football. Anecdotally, TAC Cup players pay \$0.
- \$1,600 difference to play football (NPL vs Community). How do you sell that to parents?
- Question asked if increasing the price finds the best players to play in the NPL or just the people who have the most money/able to afford to play at a NPL club
- Some clubs wear cost, don't pass the full cost on to players. This is not sustainable.

Coaching/Technical Director

- Lack of good coaches in regions. There are always issues with perception (from parents) of what a good coach is
- Good coaches are a necessity to develop players to keep pace with Melbourne clubs
- Cost of a C-License seems to be excessive for what it is – particularly for community coaches who do not get paid to coach. The time commitment is also a barrier.
- Coaching has changed over the years (much like teaching), new coaching styles are different to what parents expect (shouting at players, telling them what to do, commenting every move). Now more supportive.
- Technical director costs are an imposition on clubs. Does every club need a full-time/part-time technical director/could regions share one with other clubs? Too much of their time gets taken up managing parents. They aren't really doing what they are there to do.
- Anecdotally, some clubs are paying their Technical Director upwards of \$40,000pa.
- Suggestion: Technical director (Full time – FFV Employee) shared across 4-5 clubs, spending 1 day a week with each club. Focus on coaching club coaches. They would have a greater understanding of the game, not just training drills.

Referees

- The number of referees who are available is very small. Only 3 or 4 different referees for the whole season. Forces parents to have to step up and fill the gaps. Some parents are not comfortable doing this.
- Players can be more brazen when the referees are 'fill-in' referees. "Not real referees" "Can't get a red card" etc.
- Referees are not at the standard, not because they are no good, they haven't had the experience. There are 15-year-old kids refereeing kids of the same age.
- Some referees not wanting to ref against particular teams, due to poor player/spectator behaviour. They just don't turn up.

- At times referees are assigned to matches but they don't turn up. No accountability with referees actually attending matches.

Points System/Club Compensation

- "The system is farcical"
- How some of the clubs are able to keep all of their players under the cap is beyond belief
- The intelligent clubs have found a way to exploit the system and have made a mockery of it. Little clubs are left to pick up the pieces
- Is the system still functioning in the spirit of what it was designed for?
- If you spend six years developing a player, they make it into your senior team and then an A-league team picks them up, you get a small amount of compensation. It doesn't even allow you to replace them for the season. Where is the incentive to develop your own players at the club?
- Some clubs are picking up A-league destined players for one season and getting the full compensation for that player. What about their original club that did all the hard work.
- The club that developed the players the most should get the compensation or at least pro rata.

Closing Issues

- FFV being more proactive with behavioural issues. Helping grassroots, volunteers, etc.
- Greater assistance from FFV to lobby local councils. Up against other sports that have full time staff in the region.



Football Competition Review Local Government Forum



MEETING	
Date and Time:	Tuesday 6 th February 2018, 8:15am arrival for 8:30 am start – 10:00 am finish
Location:	FFV Head Office: Level 3, 436 St Kilda Rd
ATTENDING	
LGA's	Christy O'Shea (City of Greater Dandenong), Joe Luppino (Moreland City Council), Ben Gross (City of Hobsons Bay), Matthew Wood (City of Darebin), James Carbone (City of Darebin), Ben McManus (Banyule City Council), Tom Van De Ven (Brimbank City Council), Paul Battaglia (Brimbank City Council), Grant Smethurst (City of Stonnington), Kendal Sinclair (City of Whitehorse), Heath Chasmore (Greater Shepparton City Council).
FFV	Will Haste, Gary Cole, Ezel Hikmet
SBP	Ben Manning and Tim Murdoch
Apologies	

Key Objectives for this Session

- Provide an overview of the Competition Review Project
- Engage with local government on the key issues identified in the Football Competition Review
- Understand other issues and opportunities for LGA's
- Establish a process for further contact and information sharing as required

Agenda

1.	Welcome and Introduction	8:30 am
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome – FFV and SBP • Overview of Competition Review Process and current status • Introduction - Attendees 	
2.	Discussion of Key Issues	8:45 am
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facility Usage and Requirements • LGA's Relationship with Football Community and FFV 	
3.	Additional Discussion	9:30 am
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any other key issues impacting LGA's 	
4.	Wrap up and close	10:00am
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview and closing comments 	

Meeting Notes

Common Issues

Season Creep – Trials, pre-season training and post-season tournaments appear to be starting earlier and finishing later each year, encroaching on maintenance periods and time allocated to other sports.

Fees – Council receive complaints regarding the cost of fees at NPL and Community Clubs although LGAs all agree there is very little they can do to address this. High fees impact of the accessibility of the sport, especially in low socio-economic areas, and can lead to the sport appearing to be exclusive. This can also lead to the perception that some clubs are utilising public land for commercial gain through charging such high fees.

Support of Elite vs Supporting Participation – Councils have a responsibility to provide facilities for all residents. It can be hard to justify investing in a capital works project for an NPL club which serves a small segment of the community over investing into a community use facility.

Sense of Entitlement – Many council representatives commented that from their interactions, there seemed to be a false sense of entitlement from NPL clubs. These clubs expected Council to upgrade or build new facilities to support because of the Club's status as an NPL Club, not because of any broader benefit to the community.

Governance and Club Debt – Concerns were raised regarding the level of governance at some clubs (both NPL and Community). There are concerns around the accumulation of significant debt owed to the council by some clubs. It is not until the councils threaten to restrict access to facilities that all or part of the debt is eventually paid off. LGAs would like greater support from FFV in dealing with these clubs.

Mindset of Clubs – Many LGAs commented that clubs seemed to approach discussions with the mindset that the council (and the FFV) were the enemy. Clubs should be seeing council as a key/major partner in the club's success.

Staff and Relationship Changes at FFV – Collectively the group agreed that over time, relationships between LGAs and FFV have broken down due to high staff turnover (mainly at FFV). LGAs commented there had been little communication from FFV on the incoming staff members and their roles.

Communication – Some LGA representatives commented that there has been inconsistency in the communication coming from different staff at FFV, as well as from different club representatives.

Club Growth – Concern was expressed that there didn't seem to be a limit to the number of players a club could have. This was particularly an issue from Council's perspective as the increasing number of players and teams places increasing pressure on the limited number of pitches a club has access to. This is leading to the over use, and degradation of some pitches. Equally, other facilities can be underutilised resulting in growth opportunities for the sport being missed.

"Game Only" Pitches – Some clubs (especially those with private facilities) are saving the main pitch for games only and concentrating all of the Club's training sessions on one or two secondary pitches, which generally belong to Council. Clubs need to be educated that facility allocations are made based on the utilisation of all the pitches available to them.

Interactions with Other Sports

The representatives discussed their interactions with other sports. AFL and Tennis appeared to have the best relationships with LGAs. Qualities that improved relationships with local government include:

- Being proactive and engaged in the long-term planning and discussions around facilities for their sports.
- Having clearly documented strategies which all parties can rely on for policy and decision making
- Running regular local government and regional forums to develop relationships between key staff and local clubs.
- Assisting clubs to gain grants and funding towards facility upgrades.
- LGAs knowing who to contact when there is an issue with a club.

AFL Victoria's commission structure and regionally based staff allows it to have the best engagement with local government. Many LGAs commented that AFL Victoria staff are in contact with local government staff at least once per week. AFL Victoria also have designated Local Government Liaisons who have an understanding of local issues and act as a first point of contact.

Facility Standards

A source of a lot of tension and conflict between LGAs, Clubs and the FFV is the standards and requirements for football facilities. Many club representatives are over ambitious with respect to the standard of facility they expect for the size and level of their club. Clubs are always demanding more, bigger or better facilities without justification or rationale for the requests.

In the past, there has been no guidance from FFV in the form of a Facility Plan or Strategy, leaving Councils and clubs to negotiate. There is also little direction from FFV on what the current facility priorities are, making it hard for LGAs to plan and assess capital works projects for football.

Some council representative expressed frustration with the FFV changing standards for lighting, without consulting or communicating with councils.

Behaviour of Clubs

Discussion regarding the behaviour of football clubs in general was positive. The behaviour of most football clubs is comparable to clubs from other sports, although there are still incidents of poor behaviour amongst football clubs.

Some LGAs expressed concerns with the attitudes of some NPL clubs who refuse to listen to, or meet with council staff and insist on only meeting with a manager. Additionally, some club representatives seem to have a lack of respect for who they are talking with, especially when talking to senior council staff or at forums or meetings.

Clubs 'shopping' around different staff or escalating decisions to Councillors in order to get the answer they want, is also an issue that LGAs were concerned about. This is taking time and resources away from other key issues and priorities, and resulting in a further break-down of relationships between Council and the clubs. FFV suggested that they had a similar problem within the organisation and that this was a behaviour that needs to be improved within the sport.

Summer Football

The concept of summer football received a mixed reception. Common sentiment in the room was that this would only be suitable for a fixed number of facilities which are allocated to football 12 month of the year.

Summer football could also open up some more facilities to be used by community clubs during the winter season. The additional day light hours in summer would also mean that the training load on some pitches could be shared to facilities without lighting.

If this was a direction the FFV was considering there would need to be extensive consultation with LGAs before a decision could be made.

Next Steps

- FFV to establish a regular forum to continue to engage with local government.
- FFV to finalise and publish the State Facilities Plan to support and guide LGAs when having discussions with clubs.
- LGAs to contact FFV with any issues they are having with Football clubs in their municipality.



Football Competition Review Workshop Community Forum



MEETING	
Date and Time:	Tuesday 13 th February 2018, 6:15 arrival for 6:30 pm start – 8:30 pm finish
Location:	FFV Head Office: Level 3, 436 St Kilda Rd
ATTENDING	
Football Community	Lesly Gemmell (Ashburton FC), Hannah Charman (Ashburton FC), Rocio Castro (Banyule City FC), Jose Paz (Bundoora United FC), Sarah Iacono (Collingwood City FC), Ivan Della Costa (Eltham Redbacks FC), Stuart Howe (Glen Eira FC), Rob Marino (Mazenod Victory FC), Zak Gruovski (Preston Lions FC), Kate Foley (Ringwood City)
FFV	Sezar Jakupi (Board Member), Gary Cole, Will Hastie, Ezel Hikmet, Steph Leondidis, Josie Petrentsis
SBP	Ben Manning and Tim Murdoch

Key Objectives for this Session

- Provide an overview of the Competition Review Project
- Engage with state league and community football clubs
- Understand the issues and opportunities for community football clubs
- Establish a process for further contact and information sharing as required

Agenda

1.	Welcome and Introduction	6:30 pm
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of Competition Review Project and current status • Opening comments and issues/themes to cover 	
2.	Review of current strengths and weaknesses	6:40 pm
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-level group discussion 	
3.	Discussion of issues and opportunities	7:15 pm
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the top 4-5 issues and opportunities • Full group/smaller groups working activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Discuss potential solutions for top issues • Group discussion – sharing of discussions and solutions 	
4.	Wrap up and close	8:30 pm
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview and closing comments 	

Meeting Notes

Key Issues Raised by Community Clubs

- Number of visa players in State League competitions and the impact this is having on youth development.
- Engagement of youth players with the Community Clubs and maintaining their interest in playing the game.
- Facility allocation and usage.
- Clarity on the roles of Community and NPL Clubs for each stage of the pathway.
- How can Community Clubs be rewarded for doing the right thing by the sport rather than in self-interest? (e.g. investing in youth players to create longer term sustainable teams vs recruiting visa players to win the league)
- How can junior teams from Community Clubs access top level/more competitive competitions without leaving their clubs?
- Football development pathway compared to other sports, including value and cost structure of football compared to other sports.
- Retention and playing pathway for 16-18 year old players.
- Starting the player journey at a Community Club. Why are NPL Clubs allowed to run mini-ros programs?
- Development of a social competition to retain youth players in the sport.
- Geographic distribution of the NPL Clubs. Why are so many clumped together?
- Establishment of a 7-a-side competition for men.

Discussion

The 'Branding' of the Leagues

- The sentiment that good players need to play in the NPL is strong within Community Club football, and this is an implication of having NPL Clubs continually reinforcing the NPL brand image.
- All Community Club representatives in the room felt that each of the leagues possess a unique and distinct 'brand' within the football community.
- There was agreement that the "Community Club" brand has 'cheapened' the image of Community Clubs while elevating the NPL Clubs.
- "It has given NPL Clubs a golden ticket to go and spend a lot of money on the senior team."
- Even at a community level there is a perceived brand associated with the Metro and State League competitions. Players who don't make a State League team do not want to play in the Metro league, despite this potentially being the best option available to them, as it is perceived in the football community as being an "old man's league". Many players simply choose to not play at all.
- The NPL Clubs are exploiting the NPL brand to attract young players.
- NPL Clubs are branding Mini-ros program as "NPL Mini-ros" to try and attract parents to the program.
- NPL is seen by young players as the "only way to make it in the sport".
- There seems to be a fear of missing out on something for the players who don't make it to the NPL.

Visa Players, Player Payments and the Impact on Youth Development

- Anecdotally there are a number of State League teams that have 10 or 11 visa players in the senior men's team.
- It makes it really hard to find opportunities for youth players to progress in the pathway when some teams prefer to take a high skilled visa player over locally developed youth players.
- There is very short term thinking by some clubs. They recruit lots of visa players, win the league, get promoted and then all the visa players become ineligible the following year.
- Generally, all visa players receive some form of payment to play at their club. This can vary greatly from small monetary remuneration to substantial packages (including free accommodation).
- Some visa players don't "demand" as much money as local players.
- Some Community Club representatives said they have had really positive experiences with some visa/backpacker players. They tend to give back to the club by getting involved with coaching junior teams.
- There are three types of visa players; backpackers who come out for a working holiday, those from refugee/immigrant communities, and professional footballers.
- The group discussed the need to cap the number of visa players per team/club, although there would need to be further investigation into this issue to understand the types of visa players, which visa subclass they hold and their actual impact on the pathway.
- One suggestion was, rendering teams ineligible for promotion if it has more than a certain number of visa players.
- There was concern that any restriction on visa players in Australia might end up restricting Australian players wanting to play overseas.
- The group discussed the potential for Community Clubs to have a second state league team. This team would play 2-3 leagues below and provide opportunities to players who don't want to play in the Metro League.
- Additionally, the group discussed that the reserve division for State League 1,2 and 3 should be made an U20 or U23 team to provide greater opportunity to locally developed youth players.

Movement of Players

- If a team is successful, it's players end up being recruited by NPL Clubs and it can be a whole group of players which were part of a successful the Community Club team.
- "It is hard to celebrate the success of a player at a Community Club. You end up fearing for them when they eventually go off to the NPL".
- There is a steady flow of junior players from the Community Clubs to the NPL. There isn't the same number of players flowing back to Community Clubs.
- It is difficult to establish a good culture at a club when there is a constant flow of players to NPL Clubs.
- Some youth players are being enticed to change clubs for a match payment of \$50 per game.

Facility Allocation and Usage

- There was discussion on the need to better allocate and optimise the use of facilities within the sport.
- There are small clubs that have two or three teams and two pitches, while there are also growing clubs with many teams that only have one pitch.
- Facilities need to be allocated to those Community Clubs that are doing the right thing by the sport. "If you are investing in youth development you should have priority over clubs only field a couple of men's teams".
- Some Community Clubs have to turn juniors away because there is not the pitch capacity available for them to have another team.
- FFV needs to start having discussions with local government and smaller Community Clubs to ensure that there is maximum utilisation of pitches currently available, in order to keep up with the growth of the sport. Maybe some smaller clubs could be encouraged to merge with other clubs in the area.

Clarity on Pathway Role

- There is confusion over the role of Community Clubs within the pathway.
- NPL Clubs are now engaged in running Mini-roos and junior programs. This is seen as the domain of Community Clubs along with community engagement and player development.
- The role of the NPL Clubs was supposed to be that of talent identification and elite development, and therefore "why are NPL Clubs running Mini-roos programs?"
- There is a perception that the only reason the NPL Clubs are running junior programs is to generate additional revenue to support the Club's senior team.
- "They [NPL Clubs] take the payer not the player".
- There needs to be more accountability and transparency into the amount of junior player fee revenue that is reinvested back into the junior program.
- There are strong misconceptions about the proportion of junior fees which are used to pay senior players. These misconceptions need to be dispelled by clearly communicating the costs of running junior NPL programs.
- There is no way that the player payments to senior players could ever be successfully audited or regulated by FFV, but it could be possible to regulate or monitor the amount/percentage of revenue reinvested back into junior development.

Community Club Access to the NPL

- Some Community Clubs would like to have access for junior teams to access higher level, more competitive games, including playing against teams from NPL Clubs.
- Some Community Clubs also questioned why is promotion to the NPL tied to the performance of the senior men's teams. The only way for a club to be successful in the State League is to spend a lot of money on paying players. This money could be better spent on developing juniors, which the club ends up losing anyway because the club cannot provide its players with access to the NPL.

Suggested Solutions

- A separate NPL top-level league and consider having an external/independent body manage it.
- De-couple juniors/seniors/clubs from promotion and relegation and instigate it based on team performance.
- Re-align regions with a set number of NPL Clubs per region.
- Allow more than one State League team per club.
- Change the State League Reserve divisions to an under 20 or under 23 competition to create more opportunities for young players.
- Clarify and communicate the role of each component of the football pathway.
- Reduce and regulate the number of visa players in teams.



Football Competition Review Workshop Coaches Forum



MEETING	
Date and Time:	Wednesday 21 st February 2018, 6:15 arrival for 6:30 pm start – 8:30 pm finish
Location:	Veneto Club, 191 Bulleen Rd, Bulleen
ATTENDING	
Football Coaching Community	Aaron Healy (Bulleen Lions), Ian Greener (AFCAT), Frank McGrellis (Bentleigh Greens), Rick Mensink (Former Richmond FC), Peter Groidis (Banyule SC), Doug Hodgson, Jeff Olver (Heidelberg United FC), Ron Smith, Franz Weimper, Dean Sacchetta
FFV	Will Hastie, Gary Cole, Boris Seroshtan, Annick Fokchak
SBP	Ben Manning and Tim Murdoch

Key Objectives for this Session

- Provide an overview of the Competition Review Project
- Engage with the coaching community
- Understand the issues and opportunities for football coaches
- Establish a process for further contact and information sharing as required

Agenda

1.	Welcome and Introduction	6:30 pm
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of Competition Review Project and current status 	
2.	Review of current strengths and weaknesses	6:40 pm
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-level group discussion • Determine the top 4-5 issues and opportunities 	
3.	Detailed review of key issues and opportunities	7:00 pm
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smaller group working activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Describe the issue or opportunity ◦ Discuss potential solutions • Group discussion – sharing of information and outcomes 	
4.	Wrap up and close	8:30 pm
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview and closing comments 	

Key Issues Raised by Coaches

- The current direction of the game... has the sport lost some passion at the grassroots?
 - The challenge of getting kids off the couch and playing football.
- Coach quality
 - Quality of coaching throughout the system.
 - Minimum coaching accreditations for club coaches (at all levels). How do you incentivise clubs to adopt them? How can FFV assist Community Club coaches to gain accreditation?
 - Cost and accessibility of coach education across the state.
 - Ongoing development and education of Community Club coaches. What are some incentives for clubs to recruit and educate coaches?
 - Mentoring of coaches.
- Club issues
 - Female coach recruitment, how can we improve our practices?
 - How can Committee/Board members be educated on the value of good coaches?
 - Facility access and readiness issues for clubs.
 - Pathways for Community Clubs to access the NPL.
 - The current sustainability of NPL clubs.
- Player issues
 - Talent ID – how does the sport bridge the gap with 15, 16 and 17 year old players?
 - The cost of NPL limiting access to talented players.
 - The (un)competitiveness of the NPL2 division among some teams.
- Critical success factors for the sport.

General Discussion

- Coaches in the room felt the word 'elite' was being overused.
- Many in the room felt that coaches are being lost to the sport due to lack of recognition/acknowledgement and a breakdown in relationships over the years. These individuals have significant experience in the game and would make great mentors.
- There is a general feeling that once you have left the sport, you don't come back. There is no follow up or contact with coaches once they finish coaching. The AFL Coaches Association (AFLCA) contacts AFL coaches and encourages them to stay active in the sport by applying their expertise and knowledge in other ways and in other roles.
- The sport needs to find a way to get kids playing the sport for the love of it, not because of the winning or performance element. Too many kids today play the sport for the wrong reasons (think they will become professionals) and then walk away when their dreams are dashed.
- Some coaches commented that community football is in a "really bad way" with players and volunteers leaving the sport.
- Volunteers no longer have the passion that used to exist in clubs 20 years ago.
- Every club has its own agenda. Many of which aren't aligned to the "good of the game".
- This has compromised the short-term decision making in the sport leading to the position of the sport today.
- The meeting discussed the events that have led to the current NPL structure. The question was asked whether the best clubs are currently in the NPL?
- The current player points system is perceived poorly by many coaches, with too many clubs abusing the system and bending the rules.

- Coach education and coach accreditation should not be confused as the same thing. Accreditation is focused on a qualification built around a foundation level of skill and knowledge. Coach education is primarily the ongoing professional development of coaches between levels of accreditation. There needs to be greater opportunities for ongoing coach education and professional development opportunities.
- There are many external providers making use of podcasts and other new technologies to deliver coach education. There is an opportunity here for these to be adopted by FFA/FFV.
- There is a need to go back to basics with coach education and focus on the "principles of play".
- There is a hunger in the football community to improve coach education and development.
- Many coaches are racing through the accreditation/licence courses to get as high a level of accreditation in the shortest time possible. Previously there was a mandatory 12 months between courses, which doesn't appear to be the case anymore. Gaining practical coaching experience between levels of accreditation is essential to the development of a coach.
- Currently coaches don't receive re-accreditation points for practical coaching experience.

The following notes capture some of the specific ideas and initiatives discussed by the group. These should be considered within the broader context of the Football review.

Critical success factors for the sport

- The culture of the sport and the behaviours of all the people involved can often be unprofessional. A code of conduct for the sport needs to be developed and enforced.
- There needs to be a clear vision and strategy for the game.
- Stakeholder engagement and relationships must be improved at all levels of the sport (FFV, Clubs, Coaches, Players, etc.)
- Strong leadership is a must.
- There is a need for clarity on the role of each element in the football pathway.

Quality of coaching throughout the system

- Coach education is not merely the provision and completion of courses. It is ongoing professional development.
- FFV should investigate the use of new technology/channels/mediums to deliver coach education.
- There is a need for more flexibility in the style of coaching taught, including access to other points of view on how the game can be played. It is also important to acknowledge that a coaching course is similar to a toolkit which needs to be practiced and applied to truly improve.
- Developing a working partnership with AFCAT would assist in increasing the delivery of coach education.
- **There needs to be more coach instructors in Victoria. There is only three with a fourth soon to commence. The quality of instructors is just as important as the number of instructors, and they can't be rushed through the course.**
- Recognition of prior learning/experience for coaching licenses would help experienced coaches re-engage with the sport.
- Reinstate accreditation points for practical coaching experience to increase the value of gaining practical coaching experience.
- There is an opportunity for FFV to develop a coaching handbook that provides support and resources to coaches outside of license/accreditation course.

Educating club Committee/Board Members on the value of good coaches

- An understanding of governance is critical which starts by having the right people involved, both as coaches and Committee/Board Members.
- Building good relationships between key individuals is a starting point to building a good club culture. This involves everyone understanding their role at the club.
- Committees/Boards need to better understanding the role of the coach and how they contribute to the culture and performance of the club.
- Committees/Boards must recognise the long term success gained from investing in the coach rather than the players.
- Committee/Board Members need to also better understanding the role of Technical Directors.
- A framework or consistent foundation for the role of the Technical Director is required.
- The titles Technical Director, Director of Football, Head Coach are interchangeable at community level.



Appendix 4: Benchmark Modelling of Other Sports

Football NSW

Broad Purpose: Develop players to play professional football and ultimately represent Australia.

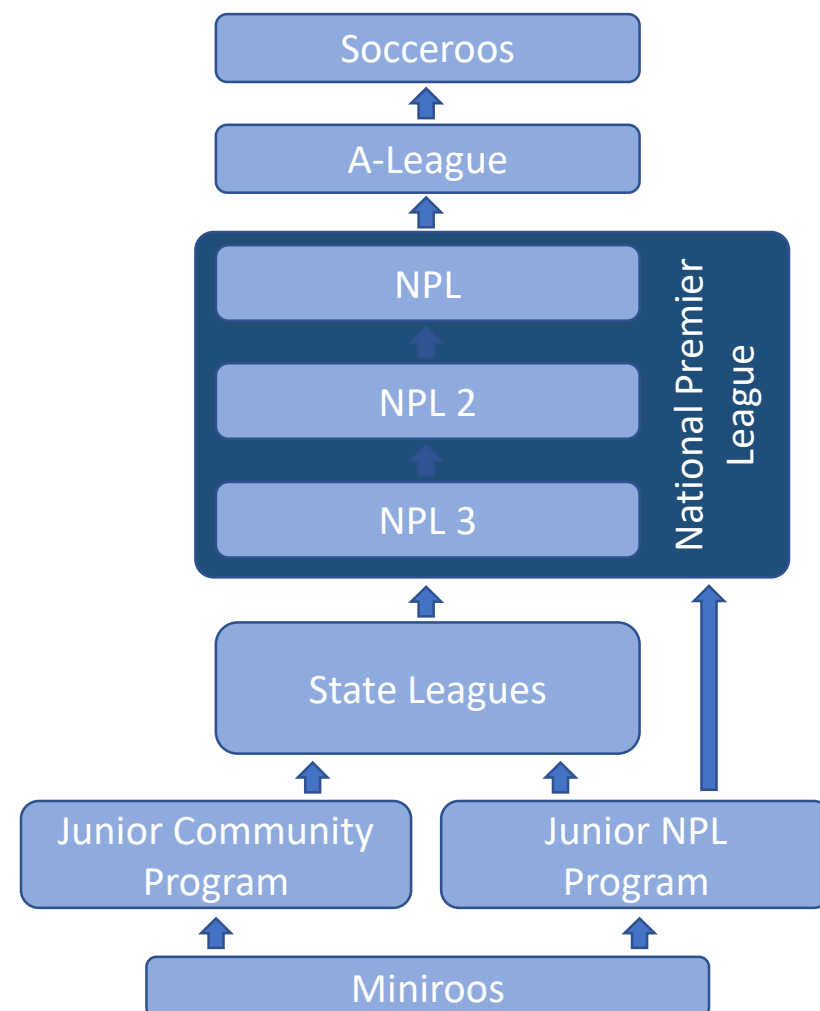
The NPL in NSW is very similar to the NPL in Victoria. The NSW NPL competition is split into 3 divisions; NPL with 12 teams, NPL2 with 14 teams and NPL3 with 14 teams. These divisions exist in a linear, hierarchical competition structure.

All of the 38 NSW NPL clubs are based within the greater metropolitan Sydney area.

The same as Victoria there are eight age divisions in the NPL with each NPL club required to field one team in each age division. Under 12s through to under 16s and under 18s are classed as juniors, under 20s and seniors classed as seniors.

Due to the significantly larger participation base in NSW, NPL players make up a much smaller proportion of total participants, with 1 in 167, or 0.6%, of the total male participants playing in the NPL.

The current NSW NPL season runs for 22 weeks plus 4 weeks of finals.



AFL Victoria

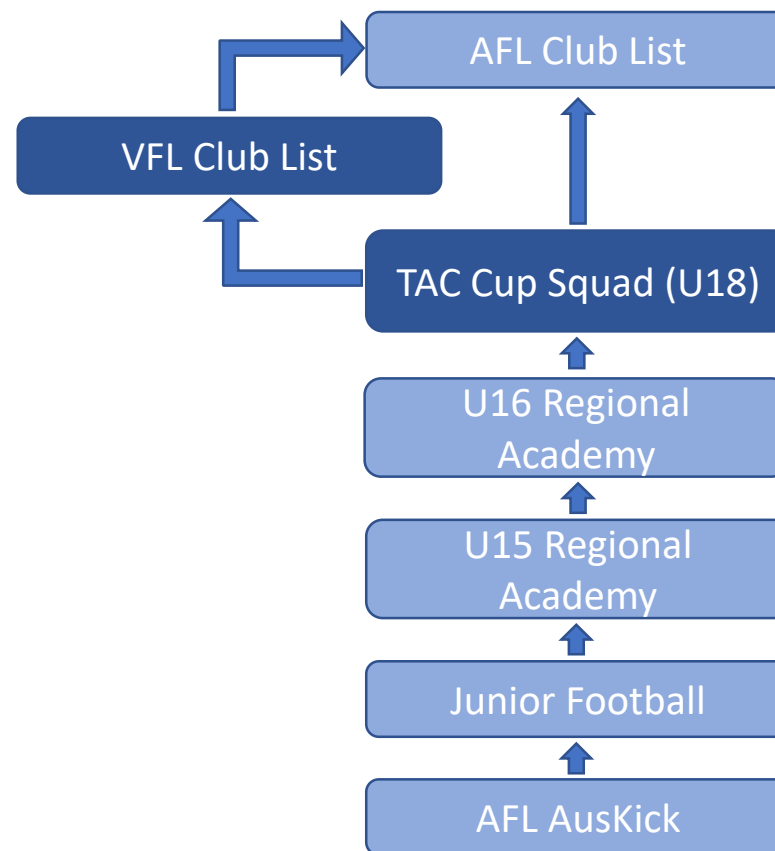
Broad Purpose: Develop players to be drafted on to an AFL club list.

AFL in Victoria has a significant participation base with over 160,000 participants.

Talented players are identified through junior football programs and are selected in development squads which sit within a TAC Cup club. These underage squads form the AFL Victoria Regional Academies. Players can only be selected into a Regional Academy if their junior club belongs to the geographic region of the TAC Cup club.

The TAC Cup competition is a state based Under 18 competition and complements the Victorian U18 State Teams (Country and Metro) which competes at the AFL U18 Championships, by providing additional player development opportunities. Each TAC Cup Team (U18) can select a squad of up to 55 players.

The TAC Cup serves as a pathway competition to identify talent for the AFL draft. Players who aren't selected in the AFL draft may be contracted to a VFL club. The VFL has 15 teams, with squads of between 25 and 45, depending on the club's alignment with a Victorian AFL club.



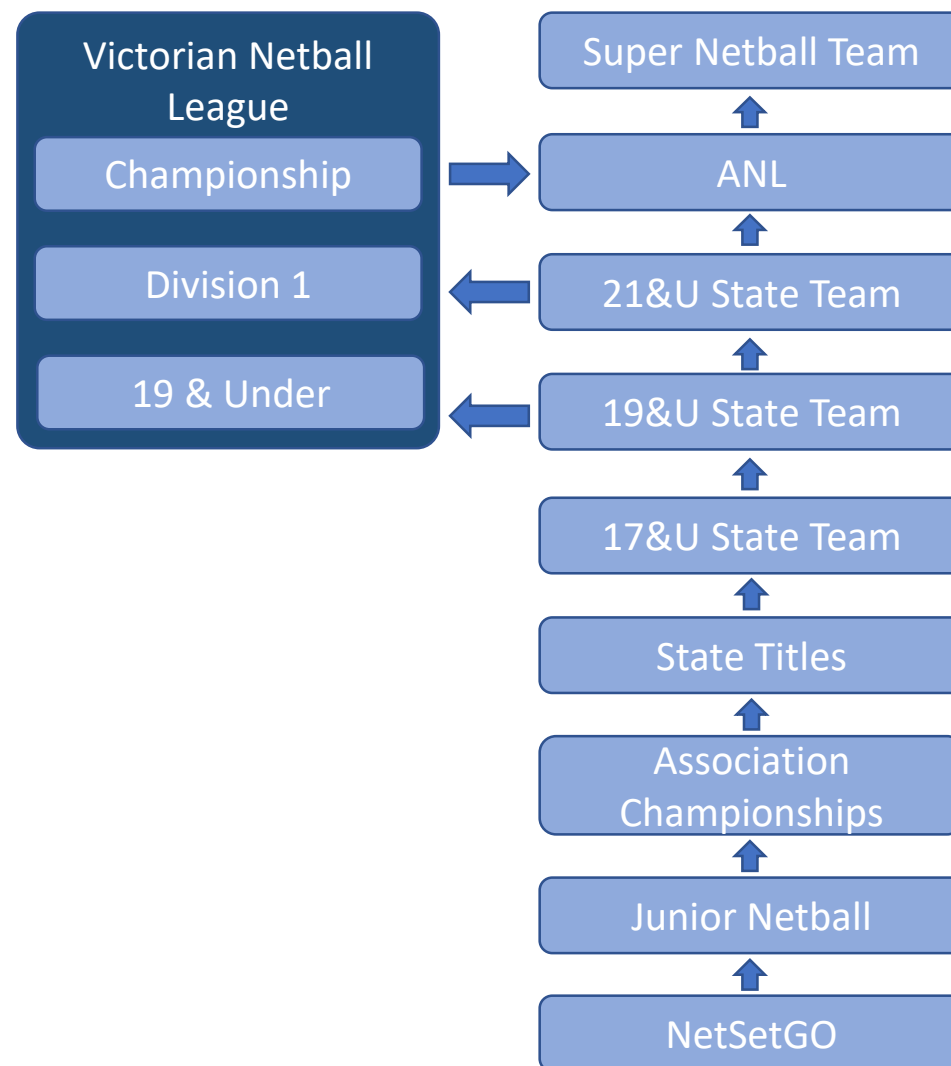
Netball Victoria

Broad Purpose: Develop players to be contracted to a Super Netball team and ultimately play for the Australian Diamonds.

Netball in Victoria has a large participation base with over 114,000 registered participants. Talented players are first identified by their local associations and trial to be selected in the Association's representative team. Talented players are then invited to trial for the regional team to compete at the State Titles. This tournament provides an opportunity to select players for the relevant aged state teams.

VNL Clubs are able to contract a player in the year they turn 15 years old. There are no restriction on where a player can be selected from. Each club has 3 teams in separate divisions, with only the 19 & under division being restricted by age (maximum age). Talented players aged 19 & under can play in higher divisions if they are good enough.

The VNL serves as a pathway competition for the Australian Netball League and Super Netball competitions.



Cricket Victoria

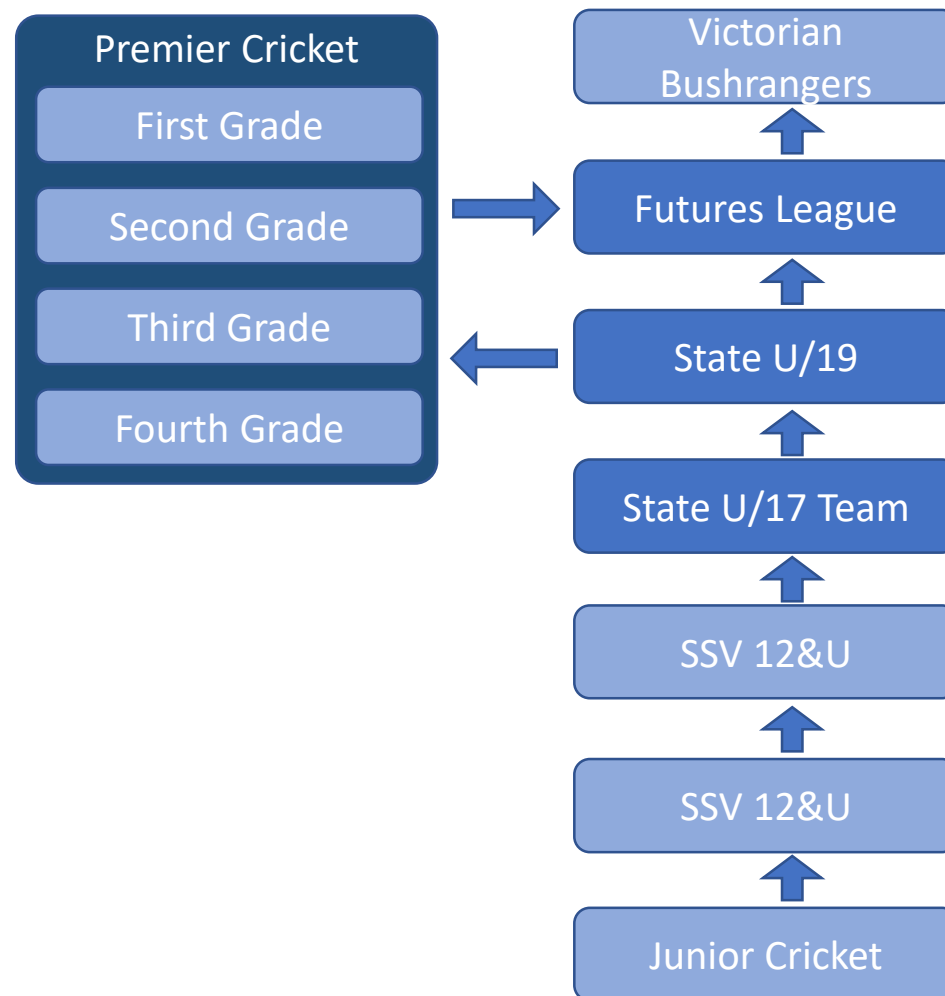
Broad Purpose: To develop players to make the Victoria domestic state teams and ultimately make the Australian Cricket Team.

There are over 130,000 male cricket participants in Victoria.

Talented cricketers are first identified through junior cricket competitions and selected to be a part of Development Squads. Talented cricketer also trial to selected in the School Sports Victoria team which compete at the 12 & Under and 15 & Under School Sport Exchange. From age 15, talented players are selected by Cricket Victoria in to Under-17 and Under-19 state squads who compete at the national championships.

Player are then either selected to play in the Cricket Australia Futures League (national competition) or contracted by a Victorian Premier League Club.

Both the Futures League and Premier Cricket have a pathway to the Victorian Bushrangers (senior state team), with the Victorian Futures League squad forming the reserves for the Bushrangers.



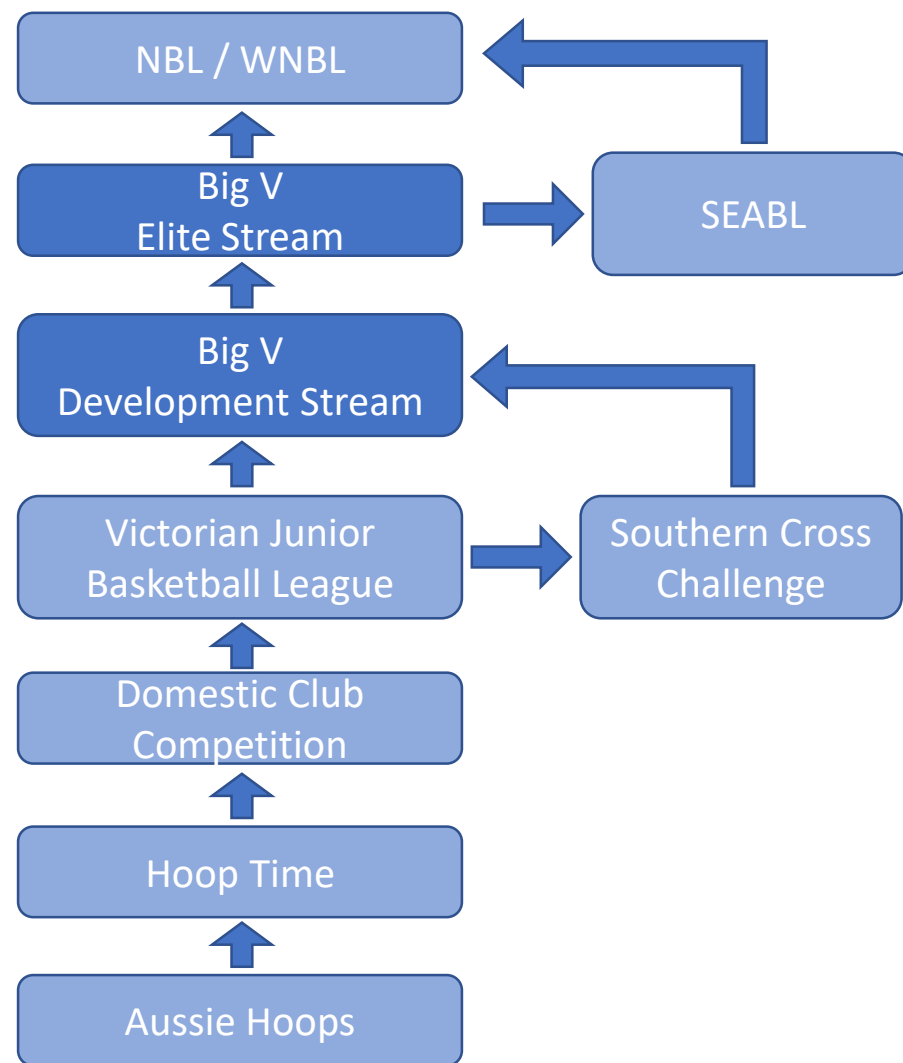
Basketball Victoria

Purpose: To develop players to play in the NBL/WNBL and ultimately represent Australia in the Boomers or Opals.

Talent players are first identified through their domestic (local) club competition and are invited to try-out for a club/team that competes in the Victorian Junior Basketball League (VJBL). The VJBL has age groups from under 12 to under 20, with multiple divisions per age group. There are over 1,700 male and female teams across the 56 clubs which compete in the VJBL. Talented players from the VJBL can try-out for a state representative team which competes in the Southern Cross Challenge (SCC). Victoria has three metro and two country teams entered in the SCC.

Once a player turns 21, they need to try-out for a club which competes in the Big V competition. This is a state-wide competition with two streams; an elite (senior) stream and a player development (under 23) stream. Each stream has with three divisions, with the State Championship being the highest level of competition. Each club is only eligible to enter one team per stream.

A promotion and relegation system is in place and the team that wins the divisional championship may apply to be promoted if they meet pre-determined on and off-court criteria which includes; pathway and historical performance, governance, financial management, promotion and marketing, venue standard and previous game attendance.





Appendix 5: Summary of Key Documents Reviewed

NPL Strategy 2017 – Football West (W.A) | Produced by People Places Planet (Consultants)

This report highlights the establishment of a framework for the NPL competition in W.A over the next few years.

Key headlines:

- The eligibility criteria needs to be as clear as possible and communicated well to clubs to limit as much as possible any confusion.
- There is general agreement that if the number is to decrease, then it should be phased in and not implemented for 2018. The general consensus is there should be 3 divisions each with 12 teams.
- There is general consensus that promotion and relegation should apply for all levels (NPL and State League) of senior football, and that any club, deemed to have met the eligibility criteria, can apply to be an NPL accredited club (seniors and/or juniors).
- Recommendation (33) all clubs provide all members with financial statements (profit and loss and balance sheets), such that all members can clearly see the income and expenditure for the club including but not limited to player payments

Key insights for FFV

- Any criteria set for being a NPL club must be clear, be practically enforceable, transparent, and potentially be phased in over a reasonable period of time
- FFV should consider having a linear structure with 12 teams in each division
- FFV should consider promotion/relegation between divisions, and decoupling of seniors and juniors. Of note, the FW Review also recommended an independent body or person be assigned to complete assessments of NPL criteria for each club on an annual basis.
- Junior NPL fees in WA range from \$390 to \$1,150.
- The Football West review found that increasing the transparency of club financial statements to be of critical importance – to address ‘perceptions’ that the junior fees were being used to pay senior players

FFA's Football Development Ecosystem 2016 | FFA

This report outlines the football ecosystem across Australia and the need to align all Member Federations with the National plan.

Key headlines:

- Australia's unique football environment is impacted by our geography, other major sports, member federations having different capabilities and capacity, the high cost of football participation and the increase in unstructured football.
- Traditionally the talented player pathway has been very narrow. As a result FFA has broadened its focus to increasing the number of players and the quantity of training hours in the pathway.
- Increase the focus on and quality of youth development in the NPL competitions around Australia.
- NPL Clubs to be encouraged to develop accredited academies as part of the pathway (1 star or 2 star)

Key insights for FFV

- NPL clubs and players will play a bigger part in the talented player pathway rather than a relying on FFV and state teams.
- FFV NPL clubs will be encouraged to develop and run their own accredited academies.
- FFA looking to increase the number of players and hours of training within the pathway

PFA Player Pathway Study 2016 | PFA

This report tracks and analyses every minute played by a Professional Australian footballer from 2002 to 2016, and is designed to help shape the decisions made by future players.

Key headlines:

- The link between the volume of match minutes between the ages of 18-21 and a successful career is profound
- The number of teams and matches in the A-League have dictated the number of minutes played by Australian professional players
- The recent settled structure of the A-League has seen a drop in the in the number of minutes played.
- Those players who played more than 2,000 minutes of A-League were more likely to establish themselves abroad than those who had failed to reach this milestone.
- Many professional players from within this study have returned to play in the NPL across the country.

Key insights for FFV

- The NPL competition plays a vital role in providing a high level elite pathway for players moving into the A-League
- The NPL competition has the ability to provide quality high level competition for players both at the start of their career and at the end of their careers.
- FFV should work with FFA, and other states, to revise the existing national Player Points System (PPS) to increase opportunities for young players within the elite competitions.

FNSW 2016 Men's Competition Review | FNSW

This report outlines the FNSW Men's competition review process and recommendations.

Key headlines:

- Review's aim was to establish the optimal competition structures and their connection to the talented player pathway.
- The Terms of Reference highlighted two principal areas of focus; 1. Participation development that facilitates long-term growth of the game and improves the quality of players, coaches and referees. 2. Club development that encourages investment and commitment to elite development.
- Recommendations included: NPL1 remain with 12 clubs, NPL2 be expanded from 12 to 14 clubs (to accommodate the 2 HAL academies), State League 1 becomes NPL3 with 12 teams. Promotion and relegation will remain between divisions.
- NPL Clubs to be encouraged to develop accredited academies as part of the pathway (1 star or 2 star)

Key insights for FFV

- FNSW NPL1 competition has only 12 clubs, NPL2 has 14 clubs and NPL 3 has 12 clubs.
- Promotion and relegation (1up – 1down) exists for each division. Therefore, NPL3 clubs could over a period of time progress to NPL1.
- HAL clubs entering teams will be bound by exactly the same rules and regulation as for NPL clubs.

FFA 'We Are Football' – Whole of Football Plan 2015 | FFA

This plan highlights the vision and long term targets set by FFA that need to be achieved to reach their potential over the next 20 years.

Key headlines:

- The Whole of Football plan was a collaboration involving national, state and territory governing bodies, top tier clubs, community clubs and participants and football fans across the country.
- The vision for football is to be the largest and most popular sport in Australia. This includes having more grassroots participants than any other sport, having more fans than any other sport and having world class elite players.
- The plan highlights nine inter-connecting topics and the targets for the next 20 years. Topics include the football community, Coaching, Facilities, Refereeing, Administration, Fan Connection, Competitions, Player Development and National Teams.

Key insights for FFV

- The Whole of Football plan highlights the vision for football over the next 20 years using the catch phrase – “Anytime, Anywhere, Anyhow”.
- The Plan has identified the NPL competition as needing to be an elite competition with elite clubs improving the professionalism and raise exposure.
- The plan identified the FFA Cup as a unique connection between grassroots and the top end of football in Australia

How Germany went from bust to boom on the talent production line | Stuart James/The Guardian

This article explores how German Football Association (Deutscher Fußball-Bund) turned around a poor performance at the Euro 2000 to become a global football powerhouse.

Key headlines:

- At the Euro 2000, Germany finishes last in the group stage of the tournament.
- This forced an overhaul of youth football, the DFB, the Bundesliga and the clubs.
- Decision made that the development of more technically proficient homegrown players would be in everyone's best interests.
- This led to the creation of academies right across the top two divisions.
- In 2003, the DFB introduced a talent development program, with the aim of identifying promising youngsters and providing them with technical skills and tactical knowledge at an early age.
- Unlike in England where the FA relies on clubs to develop young players, the DFB develops players through the Talent Development Program for the Bundesliga teams to recruit.

Key insights for FFV

- The DFB take an active role in the development of young talent
- The success is built on the back of the depth of coaching talent in the country.
- While the German system may not be practical to implement in Victoria, there are key insights and best practice that can be taken and used by the FFV.
- The establishment of academies and centres which have strong alignment with professional clubs.

Building Australia's Football Community – A Review into the Sustainability of Football 2011 | Australian Government – The Hon. Warwick Smith

The report from the review into the sustainability of football in Australia, conducted by the Hon. Warwick Smith.

Key headlines:

- Following the Crawford Review (2003) the FFA have implemented wide ranging governance reforms that, whilst challenging, have established strong foundations for the organisation.
- Grassroots football is strong with the number of participants increasing from 1.1million to 1.7 million between 2001-2009. The number of 5-14y.o. has grown by 58%.
- The international teams have had unparalleled success, with the Socceroos improving their FIFA ranking from 86 to 22 and qualifying for the 2010 and 2014 World Cups. The Matilda's won the 2010 Asia cup, the first time an Australian team has won a major international tournament.
- The quality of the A-League is ever increasing with the 2010-11 final featuring the Brisbane Roar and Central Coast Mariners being credited as one of the greatest contests in Australian football history.

Key insights for FFV

- The biggest challenge for FFV is not how to encourage participation, but how to meet the demand.
- A-League clubs must connect more with the strong community participation base. Winning the hearts and minds of the football community.
- Highlighted in the report is the recommendation that the FFA need to continue to invest in grassroots and women's football.

10 Years of Academies – Talent Pools of Top-level German Football 2011 | German Football League

This report highlights the review of the German Football Academies (Bundesliga) over the past 10 years.

Key headlines:

- Following a very poor performance at the EURO 2000, where Germany failed to qualify from the group stage with just one point and one goal, compulsory academies were introduced for all professional clubs competing in the German League (Bundesliga)
- Thanks to the strong foundation built upon these academies over the past 10 years, today 52% of all Bundesliga players are graduates of the 36 club academies.
- In 2011, the Bundesliga invested more than €90 million (approx. \$134 million Australian dollars) into the academies to support the ongoing development of German football.
- It is by no coincidence that German football is now ranked amongst the top world performers along with France and the Netherlands.

Key insights for FFV

- FFV should work along side the A-League clubs to establish and support the development talented young players and player pathways.
- FFV, FFA and the A-League clubs are advised to invest into the long term development of these academies.

Elite Player Performance Plan 2011| Premier League

This report details the changes made to modernise the Premier League Academy System. It includes detailed information for each level of the new standard for coaching, education, sport science & medicine, staffing and facilities.

Key headlines:

- In June 2010, the Premier League Shareholders agreed to a proposal to modernise the Premier League Academy System. The vision: to create the world's leading academy system.
- This document, the Elite Player Performance Plan (EPPP) details the processes and criteria necessary to ensure that professional football in England is empowered to create and achieve its world leading vision.
- This document provides a comprehensive overview of the requirements of running a Premier League Academy. It sets a minimum standard for the academies to achieve.

Key insights for FFV

- The EPL uses an Independent Standards Organisation (ISO) to audit and classify each academy. While not necessarily achievable for FFV, it could provide a benchmark to measure and assess NPL clubs.
- The FFV should consider developing a document along similar lines that details the criteria and processes which are expected on an NPL license holder.
- While, this document is 6 years old, it could still be used as a benchmark of best practice from which the new NPL structure could be assessed.

Document Title	Author	Summary
Participation by LGA	FFV	Victorian participation numbers for 2009-2016 by LGA
Referee Allocations 2017	FFV	Spreadsheet of the allocations of referees for 2017 by age group.
Teams - 2017	FFV	Database of clubs
Travel NPL regional clubs	Regional NPL Club	Spreadsheet with estimated distance travelled by each NPL club in 2017
2018 FNSW Senior Men's Competitions	FNSW	
AAFC Survey of Member Clubs	AAFC	Screenshots of questions from the AAFC survey of member clubs.
FNSW 2016 Men's Competitions Review	FNSW	Terms of reference for the FNSW 2016 Men's Competition Review.
FFV By-laws	FFV	FFV By-laws
2016 Men's Competition Review Board Resolution May 2015	FNSW	FNSW Board resolutions relating to the Men's Competition Review.
Regional NPL Club Requests for 2018	Regional NPL Clubs	Collective letter from all regional NPL clubs discussion issues currently faced by regional clubs.
FFV NPL Delegates Meeting	FFV	
Meeting Minutes	Regional Victoria NPL Clubs	Minutes from a meeting of regional NPL Clubs on 21 July 2017.

Document Title	Author	Summary
Football Facilities 2017-2026	FFV	PowerPoint presentation from FFV regarding facilities.
The struggle facing boys rejected by academies	David Conn/The Guardian	Article from The Guardian discussing the mental health issues associated with young players being cut from European football academies.
Germany's elite schools nurture sports stars in the making	Sarah Faupel	Article discussing how Germany's 40 elite sports schools have contributed to the country's sporting success.
MTS -2016 Competitions Review Questionnaire Summary	FNSW	Summary of the questionnaire from the 2016 NSW competition review.
European Academies vs Moreland Zebras Comparative Report	Riccardo Marchioli	Excel spreadsheet with competitive data and commentary between the European academies and the Moreland Zebras.
A-League Junior Teams in Victorian NPL Competition - DRAFT	FFV	FFV working document on the inclusion of HAL junior teams into the NPL.
HAL Junior Teams – Meeting Notes	Standing Committee	Meeting Minutes from the FFV NPL Delegates Meeting where HAL junior teams was discussed.
COR - FNSW Men's NPL Discussion Paper Outcomes - FINAL	FNSW	Discussion paper to FNSW members from the Board discussion the changes to the NPL in 2019.
Plus 18 items of email correspondence from various stakeholders and interested parties.		



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