

# Regional Football Review Recommendations Summary

June 2024

## Introduction

The Regional Football Review - initiated by FV - aims to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of football administration, development, and overall experience across Victoria.

Conducted in collaboration with independent organisation – Solucio – the review incorporates analysis of previous reports, the current operating model, stakeholder feedback, best practice governance models in sports, and the overall regional football experience.



## Recommendations

### **Recommendation 1 – Professionalise the regional development workforce.**

Football Victoria formally takes over responsibility for the growth and development of football from Regional Associations.

- a) Each Association should work with FV to commence a process to transfer these responsibilities to FV before the completion of the 2026 season.
- b) This transfer process should include a funding model whereby Association fees are reduced (in line with recommendation 2(a)) and FV fees are increased, to enable FV to resource the additional responsibilities and increase regional staff presence.

### **Recommendation 2 – Make a long-term commitment to progressively increase service delivery to regional football.**

Football Victoria engage additional staff to increase and enhance service delivery across Regional Victoria.

- a) This should include both expanding the number of Regional Development Coordinators in the Growth & Development team, as well as integrating regionally focused staff into existing FV departments (Eg. Regional Competitions Coordinators, Regional Discipline Coordinator, etc).
- b) FV investigate and identify potential sites for FV staff to “hot desk” in Regional Sports Hubs to support regular local service delivery and engagement.
- c) Where possible, FV should prioritise the retention of existing Association staff into new roles to ensure continuity and retention of local IP.

### Recommendation 3 – Re-align the game’s resources to streamline administrative effectiveness and advocacy.

Football Victoria review and adapt the existing Regional Zone Structure to create “Administrative Regions” to coordinate the deployment of resources across Regional Victoria.

- This may include the creation of additional Zones/Regions if required.
- FV should establish an Advisory Committee in each region to provide guidance to FV on local issues and priorities.
- Each Administrative Region should have a dedicated staff resource to act as the conduit between the Advisory Committee and FV operations.
- Each Administrative Region should align with LGA boundaries to support local government advocacy.



### Recommendation 4 – Consolidating the core functions of the Associations.

Regional Football Associations should focus on providing local insight, guidance and nuance for the delivery of local football competitions in their region.

- In the interim phase of transition discussions with FV, Regional Associations should move from charging an individual registration fee to a team entry fee model to support competition delivery.
- Where Association members (Clubs) deem it beneficial, Associations may choose to “outsource” competition management to Football Victoria under a “user pay” model while the Association remains a separate legal entity. At this point, Association members should consider winding up the Association and unifying with FV under a whole-of-football approach.

### Recommendation 5 – Protecting the asset and history of Regional Associations.

Where the members of a Regional Association decide to wind up, FV should take the following steps to ensure the history and assets of the Association are preserved.

- Create individual protected funds accounts held in trust for any remaining Association cash balances. These should only be accessible via nominated signatories accomplished by motions from the relevant Region’s Advisory Committee approving the expenditure.
- Maintain and preserve the history and culture of each Region by continuing local Cup Competitions and naming conventions for trophies, medals, events, and competitions.
- Recognise the Association’s Life Members as Life Members of Football Victoria.

### **Recommendation 6 – Standardise competition delivery for more efficient support.**

Football Victoria develop a standard set of “FV Rules of Competition” which should include a standard GDT process and penalties, to align, standardise and streamline the delivery of football competitions across the state.

- a) The “FV Rules of Competition” should be adopted by all competitions run in regional areas.
- b) Advisory Committees may request minor variations to suit local competition conditions. These variations must be approved by Football Victoria and clearly articulated in supplementary documentation which is published on the FV website.

### **Recommendation 7 – Align discipline and tribunal processes.**

Football Victoria extends its current discipline and tribunal processes to provide all regional football competitions with a fair, effective, and timely tribunal process.

- a) FV work with Regional Football Associations to absorb the discipline and tribunal process into existing FV GDT function.
- b) Where practical, FV should engage regionally based personnel in the tribunal process for regional matters.
- c) All discipline and tribunal processes will be executed in line with the FV Rules of Competition adopted across each Region.

### **Recommendation 8 – Improve participant engagement through school programs.**

Football Victoria increase the reach and visibility of programs available to regional schools to introduce more students to the game.

- a) Football Victoria engage with relevant staff and stakeholders at regional schools to improve awareness of Sporting Schools program funding and ability to utilise football programs.
- b) Football Victoria connect key local club personnel with relevant school staff to maximise local relationships, attendance/promotion of Sporting Schools programs, and increase participant conversion from school programs.
- c) Football Victoria to explore establishing school-based tournaments to engage more student participation in school environments.

### **Recommendation 9 – Improve key development initiatives.**

Football Victoria investigate key initiatives to improve access to player, coach, and referee pathways for participants in Regional Victoria. This may include:

- a) Creating a “Regional Coaching Network” to connect and support the development and education of coaches in Regional Victoria. This should be a free service.
- b) Scheduling and delivery of community coaching courses in each region throughout the year to establish a consistent culture of education and development.
- c) Initiatives to provide greater opportunities for regionally based referees to access matches in metropolitan competitions.
- d) Delivery of player development clinics and camps to enable talented junior players in Regional Victoria to develop outside the NPL program environment.
- e) Working with Football Australia to identify a solution within the FIFA rules to enable talented regional players to utilise dual registration (where required) to support access to the talented player pathway while remaining in their local environment as long as possible.

### **Recommendation 10 – Take responsibility for the Country Championships.**

Football Victoria take responsibility for the delivery of the annual Country Championship Tournament.

- a) To ensure continuation of the Country Championships, FV should establish Regional Representative Programs within each region that will be overseen by the Region’s Advisory Committee.
- b) FV should utilise the Country Championships as an annual development opportunity for regionally based coaches, referees and players. This may include the delivery of courses, workshops, coaching/mentoring initiatives and scouting of talented players.
- c) Upon taking responsibility for the Country Championships FV should begin to make improvements to the overall experience and explore commercial avenues that allow further re-investment back into the event and Regional Football.

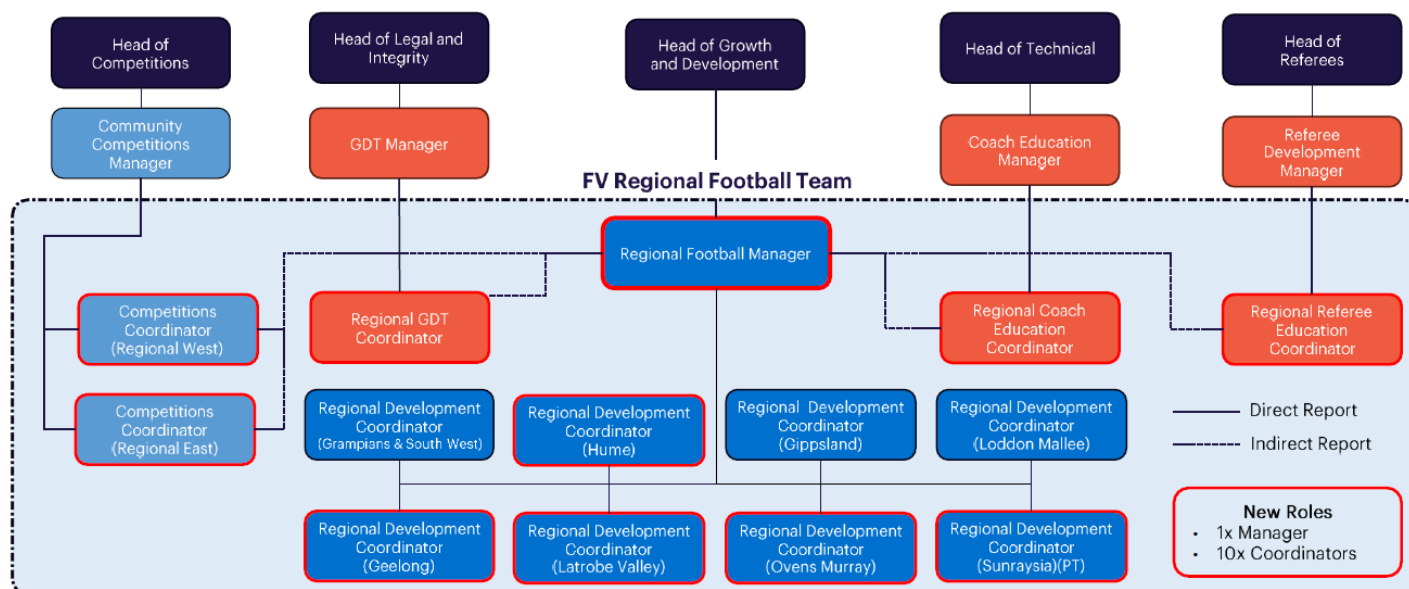
## Summary of Rationale & Benefits

The FV Regional Football Review aims to strengthen the delivery of Football in Regional Victoria to improve the experiences of all stakeholders via the following key rationale:

1. Prioritise the development of efficiencies that lighten the load of volunteer burden, and therefore free up capacity to contribute to club experience.
2. Recognition that the game does not require 11 separate legal entities to govern and administer football in Victoria.
3. Unification and consolidation of governance and administration of Regional Football (including a transition from independent Regional Associations to Regional Advisory Committees within Football Victoria).
4. The Regional Advisory Committees will be comprised of Club Delegates, and a Deputy Chair, and a Chair (who may be independently appointed), noting existing independent Association Executives have first preference for nomination and election into these roles in the first instance.
5. Under a unified structure, create operational and administration efficiencies that allow the game to further professionalise its workforce and increase the quality of servicing in Regional areas.
6. Whilst any final positions on Registration Fees have not been determined by the FV Board, for the purposes of financial modelling - under a unified structure - uniform Regional registration fees have been considered, and would replace fees previously charged by Regional Associations in relation to the administration of the game.
7. As financial resources are realigned across the football ecosystem, and efficiencies are improved that unlock additional resource capacity, FV should re-invest additional funds to enhance service and support of regional clubs and participants via an increased commitment to staffing/resourcing Regional Football.
8. Enhance development of individual clubs and wider regional communities through greater “on the ground” FV presence (Eg. coach & referee development, school programs, talented player programs & pathways, exploration of dual registration - subject to circumstances).
9. Transition to the introduction of integrated Local Advisory Committees (in the place of independent Regional Associations) to retain local knowledge and nuance.
10. Acknowledge that regional stakeholders strongly believe that local competitions should be informed and guided by local knowledge, and utilise Region Advisory Committees to inform decision making on regional competitions.
11. Providing access to subject matter experts in the management and fixturing of Football competitions to improve overall competition delivery and experience.
12. Alignment and standardisation of Rules of Competition, Grievance Discipline & Tribunal (GDT), and Dispensation Processes for consistent stakeholder experience.
13. Utilise professional Discipline and Tribunal services provided by FV to improve outcomes and reduce the current inefficient, and ineffective processes and procedures.
14. Acknowledge FV’s becoming custodians of the game in each region via taking responsibility for preserving historical elements and residual assets of each Association.
15. Broaden reach/visibility of football programs within local schools to engage potential participants/grow interest.
16. Investigate the delivery of more game development initiatives within Regional Victoria (including but not limited to coach education, referee education, talented player programs, etc).
17. Utilise FV subject matter experts in event management, marketing, and sponsorship to expand the delivery and presence of the Annual Country Championships tournament.

## Proposed FV Regional Football Team

The organization chart below provides an indicative structure for how FV could structure a “Regional Football Team” to improve servicing to regional stakeholders. Central to this team is a Regional Football Manager who will oversee the strategic implementation of key initiatives in regional Victoria, manage the Development Coordinators and facilitate cross department collaboration with regionally focused staff in other departments to ensure a successful transition.



Overall, this structure would increase FV Regional resourcing by 11FTE, acknowledging there would need to be a staged implementation of each role. Total staff could increase further with additional participation growth in regional Victoria, however the implementation of a structure such as the above will only be possible if there is a complete unification of the game across regional Victoria and existing revenues are able to be invested into these roles.

## Proposed Timeline

There is a phased implementation plan flagged for the Regional Review recommendations to support regional stakeholders in the transition period.

After the delivery of a significant Regional Roadshow presenting the recommendations and answering stakeholder questions, FV has flagged assuming responsibility for all Regional Association Grievance, Discipline & Tribunal (GDT) processes, and delivery of the Country Championships tournament commencing in 2025.

Simultaneously, FV will appoint a Regional Football Manager to continue engagement and communication with stakeholders to identify and resolve any potential barriers to a smooth transition process while keeping Club and Association stakeholders informed via established communication channels.

Across 2025 will engage with all Regional Associations to prepare MOUs, legal agreements, establish Regional Advisory Committees, etc, to begin a formal transition of all responsibilities. FV is intentionally taking a measured and methodical approach to this transition across multiple years to gradually support regional stakeholders with the changing structures.

The final transition piece will be completed in 2025 when Advisory Committees are appointed, Clubs and Volunteers are educated on new processes, etc, to commence unified delivery of all Regional Football from January 2026.

The timeline of adoption and implementation of these recommendations may be subject to change after the Regional Review presentation sessions.



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