

Circular Resolution – Junior Football Review

Recommendation

That the Game Development Committee note the Terms of Reference and endorse a strategic review of junior football in Western Australia.

ISSUE

- There is a requirement to review the current state of junior football competitions in Western Australia to ensure that it aligns with best practice principles.
- This review is to encompass all junior competitions, both male and female, across Western Australia.

BACKGROUND

- The structure and format of junior football in Western Australia, particularly in the boy's metropolitan competitions, has undergone several changes over the past 30 plus years.
- Since 2014, the identified pathway for talented junior boys has been through the National Premier League (NPL) competition. After the initial implementation of the competition with 12 teams, the Junior NPL Boys competition currently has 22 clubs, including two in regional WA.
- To ensure a focus on long term talent development, the Junior NPL Boys was decoupled from the NPLWA Men's competition meaning that senior clubs relegated from the NPLWA Men's competition would not lose their Junior NPL Boys status.
- Prior to 2019, senior men's clubs who were promoted to the NPLWA Men's competition would also receive promotion to the Junior NPL Boys competition. Due to the continually increasing numbers of the boy's competition, this policy was removed. Since this time there has been no additional clubs enter the Junior NPL Boys competition and the NPL junior competition.
- There has been relatively little change in the structure of the metropolitan junior girl's competitions aside from a change from having odd years as competitions e.g., U11s, U13s etc to even years e.g., U12s, U14s etc. Recently, Football West has begun to fill the gaps between age groups where participation numbers are strongest. For 2023 an U13s girls' competition has been developed.
- Regional junior football for the most part is played in Term 2 and 3 of the school year. There are some exceptions with smaller associations, such as Broome who play the main part of their season through Term 3 only.
- Outside a couple of the larger associations, the competitions are generally mixed, with no dedicated girls only competition.

CURRENT SITUATION

- Football Australia has previously alluded to conducting a junior football review with the aim of aligning all member federations under a unified junior football structure.
- Recent discussions have indicated that this is not a priority project for Football Australia.
- Other member federations including Football QLD and Football Victoria have already conducted their own strategic project in this space and restructured their junior football competitions accordingly.
- As priorities go, the review of junior football is high on the list for the WA football community, based on feedback and discussions over the last couple of seasons.



- In lieu of Football Australia not committing to a nationwide junior review, and the demand from our stakeholders to review the junior football structure, Football West would like to conduct a strategic project of its own to address this issue.
- The project will deliver a strategy that establishes the framework for junior talent development and competitions, both short and long term. It is anticipated that the project will be completed by August 2023 and that the outcomes, where applicable and feasible, will be implemented in 2024.