

MEMO

Joint Statement on 2020 Senior Football & Netball Premiership Seasons

9-6-20



The AFL Barwon Commission, the Colac and District Football Netball League (CDFNL) Board and Geelong and District Football League (GDFL) Executive have today jointly announced the decision to cancel the Geelong Football Netball League (GFNL), Bellarine Football Netball League (BFNL), CDFNL and GDFL senior football and senior netball home and away competitions for season 2020.

This decision includes senior football home & away seasons (including seniors and reserves) for all listed competitions, as well as all senior netball home & away seasons (including all senior grades). Clubs were fully supportive of a united approach to the outcome of the 2020 senior football and netball Premiership seasons.

All governing bodies/leagues remain committed to providing alternative competition models in a modified format for both senior football and netball, which will continue to be canvassed with the clubs and developed over the coming weeks. All governing bodies/leagues also remain committed to conducting junior football, junior netball and Senior Female Football competitions in 2020 and believe all players should be given the opportunity to play in some capacity safely in 2020, if they opt to do so with the support of their club.

Based off extensive feedback and our duty to support clubs across the region, the difficult yet necessary decision to cancel senior home and away seasons ensures the sustainability of all clubs in the region.

79% of senior clubs surveyed across the GFNL, BFNL, CDFNL and GDFL said they were either unsupportive of a Premiership home & away season or were willing to follow an AFL Barwon Commission decision, and all governing bodies and leagues have listened to them.

The intention of AFL Barwon- as stipulated in its strategic plan, and all competitions in the region at the start of this unprecedented pandemic was to maintain the viability of our clubs and competitions, and that we would emerge with 44 senior member clubs.

Through this decision, that will happen.

AFL Barwon Region General Manager Will McGregor said following a lengthy collaborative consultation process where key targets were established, this decision will allow all clubs to return in 2021 in the strongest position possible.

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“Having a unified approach across our entire region and all senior competitions has been beneficial, which I am thankful to Peter Hickey and Neville Whitley for,” McGregor said.

“Unfortunately, cancelling senior football and netball in 2020 is the only viable option to ensure the sustainability of 44 senior clubs.”

Concerns raised by senior football and netball clubs included uncertainty around a clear path back to return to play, uncertainty around how to generate revenue without the opening of bars and canteens- including social functions, the burden placed on volunteers, the inability to effectively manage crowds to comply with the State Government restrictions, health concerns with COVID-19 and varying financial implications.

“We must make a decision based on what is best for our clubs and community,” CDFNL Chairman Peter Hickey said. “With 90% of clubs informing the CDFNL board that they would not take the field at all in 2020- regardless of a return to play date, coupled with associated financial and health implications means cancelling senior football and netball in 2020 is the only viable option.”

GDFL President Neville Whitley added, “A vote between all GDFNL club presidents showed the overwhelming majority did not support a season going ahead,” Whitley said. “I would like to thank AFL Barwon and their General Manager Will McGregor for guidance and support, as well as AFL Victoria, Netball Victoria and local councils. As President, I hope clubs can host football activities and social functions later in the year, as we all prepare for a bumper 2021.”

It remains everyone’s intention to return to play and final decisions modified models of Senior football and netball competition, Senior Female football and junior football and netball will be released over the coming weeks.

“I would like to pass on my wholehearted thanks to all our member clubs, their tireless volunteers, AFL Barwon staff, umpiring associations and our valued partners for their passion, support and efforts over this challenging COVID-19 period,” McGregor concluded.

“It is our duty to support clubs, to protect the over-burden of volunteers, protect teams from high injury rates and protect clubs from potential forfeits, which would’ve tainted the integrity of already compromised seasons.

“For our members to come back reinvigorated in 2021, we believe this is the only course of action given the timeframes. I would also like to thank AFL Victoria, Netball Victoria, G21 LGA’s and the region’s Cricket Associations for their support.”

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