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Season 2020 Statement

The Southern Football Netball League (SFNL) Board met last evening and resolved that the 2020 Men's Senior, Reserve and Thirds Grade football competitions, as well as the Senior Woman's football competition, be cancelled.

The primary purpose of the SFNL is *"to provide football and netball participation to the Southern community"*. We have worked closely with State and local government, AFL Victoria, other metropolitan leagues as well as all our Clubs to explore a responsible way to proceed in 2020, against the challenging background of COVID-19.

However, in light of the recent outbreaks and significantly increased number of positive COVID-19 cases recorded in Melbourne, it has become apparent that the health and safety risks have simply become too great to conduct any senior contact sporting competition in 2020.

This decision has not been taken easily, but the overriding concern we have is for the health and well-being of our people and the importance of not compromising the quality of our football competitions.

The recently updated version of the AFL Victoria Return to Play Protocols, with clarity around limited spectator attendance and change room capacity restrictions has also contributed to the Board's decision to cancel these competitions in 2020.

We thank all Member Clubs for their patience and understanding during this extremely difficult time with its constantly changing environment. The Board appreciates and has been galvanised by the level of constructive engagement, and enduring commitment of officials at each Club, but equally, to the League over recent months.

The Board also resolved, to explore conducting the SFNL youth age, Under-19 competition in 2020, in compliance with the AFL Victoria Return to Play Protocols and State Government COVID-19 restrictions.

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The Board and Administration will undertake a thorough risk assessment and collaborate with Member Clubs wishing to participate, to fully ensure that our youth age competition can be managed in a safe, and responsible manner, before making a final decision.

A similar position has been adopted by the Board in relation to Netball in 2020 for those clubs wishing to participate. Our ability to conduct games at a centralised venue under the Netball Victoria guidelines and State Government restrictions, makes the further consideration of this competition a realistic possibility.

We would like to acknowledge the collaboration of all senior Melbourne metropolitan community league CEO's and from AFL Victoria in working through many complex issues with a strong sense of unity and purpose, in response to COVID-19.

We look forward to welcoming back all 37 SFNL Member Clubs as well as the Umpiring Association (SFNLUA) in 2021. We would also like to extend our great appreciation to our commercial partners and other stakeholders for their continued support of the SFNL in these extraordinary times.

In closing, the Board takes this opportunity to thank the SFNL community for its wonderful support. We trust you and your families, along with your Club communities, stay healthy, safe and remain strong as we move through the remainder of 2020 and progress towards a full resumption of football in 2021.

Regards,



Lee Hartman
Chief Executive Officer – SFNL