

# **SOUTHERN FOOTBALL NETBALL LEAGUE**

## **COVID FUNCTIONAL FRAMEWORK**

The Southern Football Netball League Inc. (the 'SFNL' or 'League') seeks to provide a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment for people to experience Australian Rules Football and Netball. The League is committed to assisting its Member Clubs overcome the adversity of COVID and support them to unite their Communities through our national game of Australian Rules Football and Netball.

The League's COVID Functional Framework is to support Community Football for a 'Return to Play in 2022' and beyond recognising the potential impacts of any COVID related interruptions, it seeks to prepare SFNL Member Clubs for various scenarios.

The Framework:

- Includes a set of agreed terms that will work as 'triggers' (supporting the SFNL By-Laws, Football Competition Regulations and Netball By-Laws);
- Aims to remove ambiguity around fixture decision making, reduce the stress and anxiety on administrators/volunteers and clearly outline the way forward in a simple, concise, and easy to understand format; and
- Is focussed on the provision of SFNL By-Laws, Competition Regulations and Netball By-Laws that will allow the management of another potentially COVID influenced season following the entire cancellation of season 2020 and a COVID impacted 2021 season.

### **GOVERNING PRINCIPLES**

- A. That the health and safety of the community remains the highest priority.
- B. That whilst balanced competition is important, that the opportunity to participate, whenever possible, will be of higher priority.
- C. That where possible the Home & Away season and Finals Series shall be conducted within the traditional timeframes.
- D. Equality in the fixture will be of lesser importance than the opportunity to participate, whenever possible.
- E. That 2022 Minor Premierships be awarded in each Division and Grade once a minimum of 50% of Home & Away games are achieved.
- F. That the minimum meaning of a 'viable, or realizable season' applied to trigger a Finals Series, simply be completion of the maximum number of games possible, which shall not be unduly influenced by traditional fixture requirements and expectations.
- G. That a Finals Series be played with a minimum of one (1) week (1 v 2) and variations beyond that as achievable, up to a traditional Finals Series conducted over four (4) weeks.

- H. Should an operating scenario occur that is not covered within this framework, the matter shall be referred to the League (Board and CEO) to determine at their absolute discretion.

***Subject to changes in the Federal or State Government COVID Restrictions and AFL Victoria Protocols, a season may be impacted which shall trigger the implementation of the following Framework.***

#### **1. Positive COVID Test**

- 1.1 Should a Player/ Official receive a positive COVID Test Result, they must immediately follow the directions set by the applicable Victorian Public Health Authority.
- 1.2 The Player/ Official must advise their Member Club immediately of the positive COVID result.
- 1.3 The Member Club must notify the League General Manager - Operations immediately upon hearing of the positive COVID result.
- 1.4 Based on the extent of exposure, should the number of players in COVID isolation affect the ability of the Member Club to field teams, the relevant By-Law and/or Competition Regulation shall be enacted.
- 1.5 The applicable Public Health Authority shall advise on an individual's ability to return to training or playing.

#### **2. Impact of a COVID Interruption to Open Age Team Player Availability**

- 2.1 Should players be unavailable to play any match as scheduled by the League due to COVID isolation requirements, Senior Grade matches shall be afforded higher priority than Reserve Grade matches and so forth with the exception of 2.2.

**2.2 The impact of a COVID Interruption to Open Age team Player availability does not apply to any Netball grades.**

#### **3. Impact of a COVID Interruption on a Match**

- 3.1 Should a match or matches be abandoned due to a COVID interruption, a match ratio will be applied to that Division and Grade competition.
- 3.2 Individual matches shall not be rescheduled.
- 3.3 The season shall continue in accordance with the fixture until the planned Finals Series are scheduled to commence.

#### **4. Impact of a COVID Interruption to an Entire Round**

- 4.1 If an entire Round of matches are abandoned due to a COVID interruption in the same Grade or Division, that fixture round will be declared abandoned for the applicable Grade and/or Division.
- 4.2 The season shall recommence at the Round scheduled prior to being interrupted by COVID.

- 4.3 The League Home & Away season shall continue as COVID Restrictions permit until the planned Finals Series are scheduled to commence.

*Case Scenario - Rounds 5 (7 May) to Round 7 (21 May) are interrupted due to COVID.*

*Under this framework, Round 5 matches will recommence on the 28<sup>th</sup> May and the schedule will continue onwards with Round 6 being played on the 4<sup>th</sup> June and so forth. Without any further interruptions, the Home & Away season will be shortened by three weeks with the Final Series commencing as previously scheduled. This will ensure all teams have the opportunity to play each other at least once; therefore, protecting the integrity and equity of the competition.*

**5. Return to Play following the COVID Interruption of Consecutive Fixture Rounds**

- 5.1 If two to three (2-3) consecutive fixture rounds have been abandoned, the season may recommence at the scheduled fixture round prior to the fixture being interrupted by COVID Restrictions at the absolute discretion of the League (CEO in consultation with the Board).
- 5.2 Alternatively, the season shall recommence at the scheduled fixture round coinciding with the date of the removal of COVID Restrictions, PLUS a decision by the League (CEO in consultation with the Board) of the need, or otherwise, for a minimum 7 day training period prior to the recommencement of playing matches.
- 5.3 If four (4) or more consecutive fixture rounds have been abandoned, the season shall recommence at the scheduled fixture round coinciding with the date of the removal of COVID Restrictions, PLUS a minimum training period at the discretion of the League, but such minimum will not be less than a 7-day training period prior to the recommencement of playing matches.
- 5.4 Should the recommencement following any period of abandonment occur during the scheduled Finals Series, then the Finals shall be adjusted at the absolute discretion of the League (CEO in consultation with the Board).

**6. Impact of a COVID Interruption on an Individual Finals Match**

- 6.1 The League (CEO in consultation with the Board) may reschedule a Finals match or matches at its absolute discretion.
- 6.2 Excluding a Grand Final, should an individual Finals match be unable to proceed and time does not permit the match to be rescheduled, the competing team with the higher ladder position at the end of the Home & Away season shall be deemed the winner by virtue of the higher ranking.

**7. Impact of a COVID Interruption on a Grand Final**

- 7.1 The League (CEO in consultation with the Board) may reschedule Grand Final matches at their absolute discretion.
- 7.2 Where time does not permit for a Grand Final to be rescheduled and the Grand Final match is unable to proceed, no Premiership or Minor Premiership shall be awarded.

## **8. Impact of a COVID Cancellation of an Entire Finals Series**

8.1 Should the entire Finals Series be abandoned with no Finals matches commencing, the team who finished top of the ladder at the completion of the Home & Away Season shall be recognised as Minor Premiers and awarded a Minor Premiership, provided the League's minimum number of Home & Away games was achieved.

8.2 Further to 7.2, no Premiership shall be awarded if a Grand Final is unable to proceed.

## **9. Finals Qualifications in a COVID Interrupted Season**

9.1 Should season 2022 be impacted on by COVID the League may determine FINAL Qualifications game requirements for Players at their absolute discretion at a time during the season that allows Member Clubs adequate time to plan for the Finals Series in relation to Player eligibility.

## **10. Consequence of a Suspension in a COVID Interrupted Season**

10.1 All suspensions must be served in accordance with the Laws of Australian Football and suspensions apply to fixture rounds played and not dates.

## **11. Impact of COVID Interruption on the Allowable Player Payment Rule**

11.1 As per the Player Payment Rule policy, should a fixture round be abandoned, then the Allowable Player Payment Caps shall immediately be calculated on a pro rata of matches played.

11.2 Should any COVID related scenario occur which is not covered within this regulation, then the matter shall be referred to the League (CEO in consultation with the Board) to determine at their absolute discretion.

## **12. Impact of COVID Interruption on the Player Point System**

12.1 Regardless of any matches or fixture rounds being unable to proceed, the Player Point System regulations and categories shall not be affected.

12.2 Should individual matches be abandoned, a Member Club may make application to the League (CEO in consultation with the Board) for special consideration for an individual Player Reassessment for the following season under relevant region processes and consistent with the Clause 7.3 of the AFL Victoria Player Points System Policy.

## **13. Matters not Covered by the COVID Functional Framework**

13.1 Should any COVID related scenario occur which is not covered within this COVID Functional Framework, the matter shall be referred to the League (CEO in consultation with the Board) to determine at its absolute discretion.