

AFL OUTER EAST

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR A RETURN TO FOOTBALL AND NETBALL



JUNE 2020



INTRODUCTION

Considered, Consultative, Collaborative

The path back to competition in football and netball will be provided by our governing bodies, state, and local government agencies. This will include return to train and play protocols and start dates. AFL Outer East will adhere to every aspect of these guidelines and protocols, which will underpin any return to football and netball.

Working in tandem with our clubs and volunteers, as restrictions are lifted and start dates and guidelines are provided, we will meet regularly with our clubs and assess each stage. Any decision on returning or cancellation will be made in consultation with our clubs and participants.

The message from our participants and our clubs is clear: A return is desired. To achieve this any return must be considered, with regular and ongoing consultation with our key stake holders.

Following an extensive period of consultation and feedback from our clubs, participants and stakeholders, AFL Outer East has developed the key targets required for our clubs and participants to return. This document is not the roadmap back, rather it is the agreed requirements our clubs have in principle agreed to utilise to frame our decision-making process over the next two months as we aim to return to football and netball in season 2020.



“We will be guided by key authorities in our path forward. As restrictions are lifted, start dates and guidelines provided, we will work in unison with our governing bodies to implement these across our competitions. Adherence to these will be vital in any return”

CORE PRINCIPLES

What will shape our decision making?

1. AFL Outer East's priority is the health and wellbeing of its participants, clubs, and stakeholders.
2. AFL Outer East is will full comply with Federal, State, Local Government, AFL Victoria, and Netball Victoria mandated advice/requirements in relation to our sports.
3. Participation must be deemed safe by Government authorities and mandated dates will be adhered to.
4. All participants, including clubs, umpires, officials, and players must adhere to all protocols and guidelines, including AFL Victoria's and Netball Victoria's return to play/train conditions. Failure to do so may result in suspensions/penalties and voiding of insurance.
5. Due consideration will be given to the challenges faced by council and other venue owners of the facilities our clubs utilise during our decision making.
6. All offerings (football and Netball) will be considered independently and assessed under the guidelines found later in this document.
7. AFL Outer East will offer modified participation and club fee structures to enable willing clubs and players to participate in season 2020.
8. Should a traditional season not be possible, AFL Outer East is committed to developing new competition formats including social football/netball and other initiatives for our participants. A regional model may be utilised in any social competition developed.
9. AFL Outer East understand and promotes the premise that any stakeholder (club, player, coach, club administrator, spectator, or other) participates in our competitions voluntarily.
10. Participation in any AFL Outer East competition is voluntary. No player should feel obligated to participate.
11. All clubs should consider their own financial position and volunteer requirements in any return decisions for season 2020. Clubs will not be penalised if they choose to not participate in the 2020 season, specifically and solely for COVID-19 related reasons.
12. Following consultation with Senior clubs, AFL Outer East's current divisional structure will be utilised in 2020. There will be no promotion or relegation in Senior Football in 2020. Flexibility to move within divisions in 2020 is available if clubs can show good cause to do so. This will be at the discretion of the AFL Outer East.
13. Consultation with clubs and stakeholders will underpin all AFL Outer East decision making and we will be transparent, clear, and informative in our communication on return to play/train.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Four key areas will shape any decision to return to football and netball:



COMMUNITY



VOLUNTEERS



HEALTH & SAFETY



SUSTAINABILITY

“Our club's ability to execute and deliver protocols will be key to our return. Education, support, and training will be provided. Any return needs to be sustainable for our clubs and its members”

COMMUNITY

- Maintain community engagement and connection.
- Attendance levels at games provide clubs with enough revenue to remain sustainable and financial.
- Management of crowd numbers and social distancing is achievable for volunteers.
- A return is optional for participants, volunteers, and clubs.

VOLUNTEERS

- The delivery of guidelines and protocols is achievable for volunteers,
- Appropriate education and training provided for volunteers.
- Adequate support for volunteers and clubs.

HEALTH & SAFETY

- Create a safe environment for participants, volunteers, and supporters.
- Adherence to all protocols and guidelines.
- Insurance of clubs and participants is clear and understood.

SUSTAINABILITY

- No club's long-term viability or sustainability is put at risk.
- Returning is financially viable for participants, clubs, and AFL Outer East.
- Participation, mental health, and well-being are the priority.

TRAINING

AFL Outer East Training to Resume June 2nd

Key considerations in your return to train include:



SCHEDULING



HEALTH



WELL BEING



CONNECTION



SOCIAL

“A return to training is highly encouraged. As we work towards a re-start, the health, well-being and social benefits of a return to training will have a positive impact on players and the community”

Getting our communities active, healthy, and socialising through June and July provide outstanding benefits for our community and is highly encouraged.

- One session per week is recommended, particularly in the early phase of training.
- Training must follow all protocols and guidelines as outlined by AFL Victoria.
- In the initial phase of training (Until June 22nd) AFL Outer East highly recommends Senior Training to be held on Saturday and Junior Training on Sunday.
- Minimising use of lights in June will save clubs unnecessary costs.
- Parents and senior players are encouraged to support local business after training.
- A stagnated return to junior training is encouraged. A priority for playing games over training will be implemented for Junior football and Netball.
- Covid-19 Officers must be in place. Clubs are encouraged to have multiple officers, to share the load

PLAYER REGISTRATIONS

All player returning to training must register for insurance purposes. The registration fee will benefit clubs in 2020, assisting them financially.

- Should no season commence players have two choices. They can receive a refund from AFL Outer East, or the money can go to their club. Any money not refunded to players will be provided to clubs as a credit.
- Should a season commence, a club rebate (% of fee) for each registration will be provided.

KEY DATES

Meetings will be held regularly as more information is provided.

June 2nd	AFL Outer East clubs to resume training
June 23rd	Club Meeting to review Progress
July 6th	Club Meeting to review Progress
First week of August	Latest the 2020 senior season can start
September 27th	Proposed Junior Grand Final Date
October 17th/18th	Proposed Senior GF Weekend

“AFL Outer East will meet with clubs regularly through-out this process. Priority for June should be players well-being and health and providing an outlet for members. Significant welfare outcomes can be achieved through training and reconnecting”

COMPETITION REQUIREMENTS

Key requirements for competition return.

	Senior Football	Netball	Junior Football	Vets/Women
Crowd	Up to 500	100	100	100
Games	8-10	8-10	4 and up	5-6
Canteen	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Preferred	Preferred	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Bar	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Gate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Optional	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Functions/Meals	Preferred	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Note: A cross means it is not a pre-requisite to return, but can be utilised if available under rules and guidelines

“Return to play will not be one in all in. Each competition will be considered on an individual basis”

SENIOR FOOTBALL

Key requirements for a Senior return

Key considerations for the commencement of senior football will include:



CROWD OF 500



FOOD SALES



BAR



REVENUE



FIXTURING

“A return to Senior Football must be financially viable. Crowd numbers and the ability to draw revenue through food and beverage sales is vital. A significant reduction in costs and player payments is required to support this”

SEASON START DATE

The return to play date will be provided by the State Government.

July 25th is our preferred start date. The Outer East Senior Season must commence no later than August 1st to ensure a season can be completed. A minimum of 3 weeks training without restrictions will be required prior to this start date. A decision on Senior Football will be made on June 23rd.

Should a Senior season not be possible under the guidelines and protocols, AFL Outer East will look to offer senior open men a social competition to be played in August/September (see alternative competitions).

FORMAT

Divisional Football to remain in place, with everyone playing each other once

- Even number of home and away games
- Local derbies/rivalries utilised for return fixtures

FINALS

- Finals held in October, with Grand Finals held on in October, up until 18th October
- Top 4 Format
- 3 Week Finals series
- Neutral venues removed for 2020, to provide flexibility in fixturing due to crowd restrictions

SALARY CAP

DIVISION	TOTAL
PREMIER	\$15,000
DIVISION 1	\$12,500
DIVISION 2	\$10,000

- Clubs are not required to utilise the full/maximum amount.
- We strongly encourage all players and coaches to participate for heavily decreased amounts or for free in 2020.
- Clubs will need to renegotiate their player declaration forms.
- The aim is to provide clubs the ability to pay players as required, with a preference for players to play for no or minimal remuneration in 2020.
- Clubs are encouraged to identify and only pay players that require payment in lieu of employment.

PLAYER TRANSFERS

All transfers should be finalised as a priority. Transfers close June 30th.

Should neighbouring leagues cancel their seasons prior to the transfer window closing, AFL Outer East strongly advises against clubs transferring players into the Outer East Competition. Any transfer after a league cancellation must go to RGM Aaron Bailey before lodgement for assessment. Player Points allocation and ensuring local players continue to get a game should be considered by clubs.

CROWDS

If restrictions of 100 or under remain in place, Senior football will be cancelled, with an alternative option made available in August. Under 18, Women's and Veterans will be considered separately.

Should the crowd restrictions remain at 500 (Including participants), the following measures will be utilised:

- Under 18's and Women's played in alternative fixtures (Friday Night/Saturday Night).
- A one-hour gap between Junior (Under 18/Netball) finishing times and Senior competition start times to ensure crowd numbers remain steady.
- Increased gaps between senior games.

BAR & CANTEEN

The sale of food and beverage will be required for the Senior season to go ahead. Ability to hold Thursday Nights and some level of Functions preferred. AFL Outer East will work with local Councils to ensure council guidelines are met, including alternative Points of Sale. The ability to hold functions, Thursday nights is preferred, but may not restrict a return.

NETBALL

Key requirements for a return.

Key considerations for the commencement of Netball will include:



CROWD OF 100



FOOD SALES



FIXTURING

“A return to Netball is not dependent on Senior Football”

SEASON START DATE

The return to play date will be provided by the State Government.

Netball can commence independently of football. A training block of two weeks prior to Netball commencing is preferred and Competition can resume once allowed.

Should a winter season not commence, AFL Outer East will look to offer a summer Netball competition.

CROWDS

If restrictions of 100 or under remain in place, AFL Outer East will still aim to start Netball in 2020.

Should the crowd restrictions remain at 100 (Including participants), the following measures will be utilised:

- Increased gaps between games, with participants to attend games they are involved with only.

BAR & CANTEEN

The sale of food and beverage will be not required for the season to go ahead, however is preferred to assist clubs with revenue.

AFL Outer East will work with local Councils to ensure council guidelines are met, including alternative Points of Sale.

JUNIOR FOOTBALL

Key requirements for a junior return.

Key considerations for the commencement of junior football will include:



CROWD OF 100



FOOD SALES



ALTERNATIVE FIXTURING

“A return to Junior Football is a priority and every measure possible will be put into place to achieve this. Participation in games will take priority over training”

SEASON START DATE

The return to play date will be provided by the State Government.

The Outer East Junior Season can commence any time until the end of August. Should a full season not commence, AFL Outer East will look to offer alternative junior competitions to be played in August/September.

FORMAT

6-8 games are preferred for Junior football, though round robins (4 games) can be utilised if required in August/September. Alternative fixturing (Wednesday night Under 10's and Friday night Under 9's) will be utilised.

FINALS

- Junior Grand Finals can be held as late as September 27th. Fixtures will work back from GF day. September 20th and 27th are the preferred Grand Final days for 2020.
- Grand Finals only in 2020, to be played in the final round.
- A floating fixture used for the last round, based on ladder position, with top two playing in the Grand Final.
- A full fixture will be provided for all rounds, except the floating fixture for the last round (Grand Finals).
- Grand Finals will be hosted by clubs as part of their regular fixturing.

PLAYER TRANSFERS

All transfers should be finalised as a priority. Transfers close June 30th.

Should neighbouring leagues cancel their seasons prior to the transfer window closing, AFL Outer East strongly advises against clubs transferring players into the Outer East Competition. Any transfer after a league cancellation must go to RGM Aaron Bailey before lodgement for assessment. Ensuring local players continue to get a game should be considered by clubs.

CROWDS

If restrictions of 100 or under remain in place, Junior Football can still proceed.

The following measures will be utilised:

- Set arrival and departure times for games.
- Breaks between games, to avoid large crowds that occur in cross over.
- Parents/Guardians to remain in cars during games.

CANTEEN

The sale of food will not be required for the junior season to go ahead, though is preferred. Coffee Vans and Food trucks highly encouraged if permitted.

AFL Outer East will work with local Councils to ensure council guidelines are met, including alternative Points of Sale.



WOMEN AND VETERANS FOOTBALL

Key requirements for a return

Key considerations for the commencement of Vets and women's football will include:



CROWD OF 100



FOOD SALES



ALTERNATIVE FIXTURING

“A shortened season, where everyone plays each other once in Veterans and Women, in August/September provides a clear opportunity for these competitions to return”

SEASON START DATE

The return to play date will be provided by the State Government.

Both seasons can commence any time until the mid-late August.

Should a full season not commence, AFL Outer East will look to offer a fixture where everyone plays each other once.

FINALS

- Either a two week or Grand Final only option will be offered in 2020.
- A priority on extra games over a longer final's series will be put in place.

CROWDS

If restrictions of 100 or under remain in place, veterans and women's can still proceed. Alternative time slots are preferred for these competitions, including mid-week.

BAR & CANTEEN

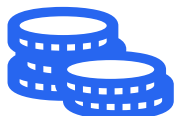
The sale of food will not be required for these seasons to go ahead, though is preferred.

AFL Outer East will work with local Councils to ensure council guidelines are met, including alternative Points of Sale.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

What is Plan B?

Key considerations if we transition to alternative competition models:



ALTERNATIVE FIXTURING

LOW COST

VOLUNTEERS

PARTICIPATION

“Providing players, the opportunity to participate in football and netball, remains our priority in 2020. Should we not get our traditional model started, we will provide our participants and clubs an opt in model”

Our priority remains to bring our full competitions back in 2020. However, should that not be possible, we will provide competitions still in the following grades. This will be an opt in option for clubs and participants.

Full details of alternative models, including fees and charges will be provided in a timely manner if this occurs.

Note: Juniors we are aiming to run as per normal from August

OPEN MEN'S FOOTBALL

- Clubs can enter a side/s in 8-10-week season through August and September
- Competitions will be graded
- Alternative fixturing and game times used
- Rule changes to minimise volunteer workload and shorten match lengths (last possession, no time on, increased bench sizes, shorter breaks)
- If numbers are strong, we will introduce a conference system, where teams will play in a home and away regional conference. Teams that win their conference will progress to a knockout structure (FA Cup style) until the Grand Final

NETBALL

- Netball season to proceed as planned
- Should clubs opt out, we will modify competition structures as required
- Junior Netball will be fixtured regionally

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- Clubs encouraged to enter additional junior sides, particularly if association netball does not proceed
 - Mixed Netball offered for clubs as an alternative for footballers looking to stay fit and active
 - Filmed, feature games with commentary

UNDER 18's

- We believe offering an Under 18 competition in August/September is a priority, no matter what senior structure we utilise.
- Graded competitions of 6 sides per division, with home and away fixtures and a top 4 finals series.
- Finals in October.
- Ability for 18's to play in more traditional senior time slots.
- Filmed, feature games with commentary.

VETS

- If no senior season can proceed, veterans age minimum will lower to 30/32 (2020 only).
- We would encourage clubs to enter additional sides should a traditional Seniors/reserves model not proceed.
- Veterans to use more traditional Saturday timeslots such as Saturday MIDDAY.

WOMEN

- Strong desire to have these competitions in 2020 to build on the growth and momentum
- Women to use more traditional Saturday timeslots such as Saturday MIDDAY and 2pm
- Filmed, feature games with commentary

INSURANCE

“In general terms, so long as the clubs, members and volunteers are acting within the scope of their duties/operations, are acting reasonably and not willfully, maliciously, criminally etc., then the public liability policy, subject to its other terms and conditions, should extend to provide insurance cover to the club, member or volunteer for any resulting legal liability.”

Public Liability insurance and COVID-19

Understandably, community football members and volunteers are concerned about insurance cover for legal liability potentially arising in relation to dealing with the risks and consequences of COVID-19. However the reality is their insurance cover under the AFL Community Public Liability policy for COVID-19 events is currently the same as the insurance cover for legal liability for any other event in connection with their community football roles and/or operations that is not specifically excluded from coverage.

In general terms, so long as the clubs, members and volunteers are acting within the scope of their duties/operations, are acting reasonably and not wilfully, maliciously, criminally etc, then the public liability policy, subject to its other terms and conditions, should extend to provide insurance cover to the club, member or volunteer for any resulting legal liability. However, determination of cover for a particular claim can only be made once the precise allegations and circumstances are known to the insurer.

In addition, it should be noted that where a claim is made against a club, member and/or volunteer, in circumstances where the club, member and/or volunteer have acted reasonably to prevent injury (including taking all reasonable steps in complying with the advice, recommendations and/or protocols of Governments and other statutory bodies), they will have a strong defence to the claim.

Personal Accident insurance and COVID-19

The Personal Accident cover that players and volunteers have the benefit of under the Collective Insurance Program does not provide, and never has provided, any cover for sickness or illness and this includes COVID-19. Players and volunteers may have access to benefits or reimbursement of medical expenses for illness (including COVID-19) events through Medicare, Private Health, Life insurance (generally provided through a superannuation fund) and/or Ambulance membership.

Further questions

Should any Community football body or member have any concerns or questions in relation to coverage under the AFL Community National Risk Protection Program, they are strongly recommended to contact the Marsh Sport team direct on 1300 130 373 or via sport@marsh.com

Netball participants should refer directly to Netball Victoria’s insurance policies.