



## **JOINT STATEMENT – SENIOR FOOTBALL COMPETITIONS CANCELLED**

The Eastern Football Netball League (EFNL) and Northern Football Netball League have today jointly announced the decision to cancel their senior football competitions for season 2020.

The EFNL & NFNL Boards endorsed the recommendation from league management to cancel all senior football (including seniors, reserves, veterans and under 19's) for both men's and women's competitions.

The EFNL has also cancelled its netball season, whilst both the EFNL and NFNL will push forward with their season 2020 junior competitions.

Both Leagues have been in constant communication with their respective clubs, the other major metropolitan leagues and AFL Victoria, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recent feedback from senior clubs indicated an overwhelming wish for the future of the 2020 season to be determined without further delay. Both the EFNL and NFNL believed that cancelling their competitions is the only viable decision that will ensure the long-term sustainability of their clubs and the leagues.

The EFNL and NFNL have the health and safety of not only its participants but the wider community at front of mind in making these judgements.

Both leagues have a clear obligation to protect players, coaches, volunteers, officials, umpires, staff, supporters, and their families, during the Coronavirus pandemic.

Other concerns raised by senior football clubs were; the fiscal burden that playing just half a season would bring; the number of additional requirements for volunteers; the inability to effectively manage crowds to comply with current social distancing rules and crowd restrictions at public (often unfenced) venues and not wanting to play matches without their local community being able to attend without restriction.

The ongoing uncertainty around season 2020 has been a major concern for clubs as they sought clarity, which we have now been able to provide.

EFNL CEO Troy Swainston said the EFNL had conducted a lengthy and thorough consultation process with all of its key stakeholders prior to making its decision and was committed to beginning 2021 with all of its clubs in the strongest possible position to succeed in the long term.



“The EFNL has maintained a view throughout this process that we do not want one club to come back next year worse off than they are now,” Swainston said.

“All clubs were aware of the challenges associated with managing a reduced season under Covid-19 rules and restrictions and were very open, balanced, and frank about where their club sat.”

“Clubs expressed concerns about their financials, player numbers, committees, older volunteers, crowd restrictions and their inability to manage crowds at open public spaces.” Swainston continued.

“We must make decisions based on what is best in both the short and the long-term. The information we have gathered from our clubs together with the latest medical advice, has determined that cancelling the senior football and netball competitions in 2020 is the only viable option.”

“The health and safety of the community and club and league sustainability have always been our top priorities.”

The EFNL and NFNL are both committed to working closely with AFL Victoria and all member clubs to manage the associated issues related to the cancellation of all senior football and netball competitions in 2020 and will now begin working with clubs towards a return to the field in 2021.

Both the EFNL and NFNL remain committed to conducting a junior football competition in 2020.

A final decision on junior football and its 2020 structure will be released as additional social distancing and health protocol updates come to hand.

This announcement will be made over the coming weeks, but for now we move forward with a return to training being the key first step to seeing junior football resume in 2020.