

AFL Queensland

COVID Guidelines for Community Football

February 2022

1. OVERVIEW

These AFL Queensland COVID Guidelines for Community Football have been developed to provide AFLQ managed competitions with key principles and guidance around delivering Community Football in 2022 and a range of COVID considerations.

These Guidelines are intended to assist in removing ambiguity around decision making, reduce the stress and anxiety on administrators/volunteers and outline a way forward in a simple format.

In the event of a conflict with any existing Competition Rules, AFL Policies or the Laws of Australian Football, these Guidelines shall prevail. In the event of any ambiguity or circumstances that arise which are not addressed in these Guidelines or covered under Competition Rules, the Community Football Manager QLD shall make a determination.

2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- **Continue to follow government regulations** – AFLQ will continue to follow all relevant Government regulations related to community sport, namely.
 - The need to follow directions from the Health Authorities should a player or official receive a positive COVID test result
 - Interpretation of a close contact and steps to follow where a COVID positive person participates in a game / training session or attends a club / venue
 - Vaccination requirements (if any)
- **Play where possible** – the priority is continuing to provide an opportunity for people to participate in football. Competition integrity / equitability are important, however, should not override the priority to play in the current environment. Flexibility and support from everyone will be important in managing any impacts resulting from COVID.
- **Health and safety must remain as a key focus** – like any illness / injury, players, coaches and umpires should have completed the Government's health and safety requirements before returning to play after having COVID. An individual may require longer than the designated isolation period to be ready to participate in football. Whilst playing where possible should be the aim, the health and safety of participants shall be paramount.
- **Club Observance** – it is incumbent of all Clubs to provide a safe and healthy environment for all players, coaches, officials, umpires, parents and spectators, inclusive of adherence to any legislated requirements such as COVID Safe Plans. Clubs must remain diligent in being up to date with the relevant Government and Health Authority directives. Such information is readily available through the Queensland and NSW Government websites.

3. DEFINITIONS

In these guidelines, unless otherwise stated:

Affected Team is any team that is unable to participate in a game due to multiple players being unavailable due to COVID Protocols.

AFLQ means AFL (Queensland) Ltd ACN 090 629 342, the controlling body for football in Queensland.

Association is any organisation that has been authorized by AFLQ to manage the Umpire appointment process.

Club is any entity that is affiliated with AFLQ and fields teams in AFLQ managed competitions.

Club Umpire is any person appointed by a Club to officiate in a game. Club Umpires who undertake field umpire duties must be registered and accredited.

Community Football means all competitions administered by AFL Queensland.

Community Football Manager QLD is the department head for Community Football in Queensland.

Competition means any competition solely managed by AFLQ.

Competition Rules means the AFL Queensland Senior Community Competitions Rules and Procedures that apply to the administration of all Colts and Open Age Men's and Women's Community Competitions managed by AFL Queensland or an Affiliate League unless specifically stated otherwise, and the Queensland State Junior & Youth Football Rules and Regulations, the Laws of Australian Football, the Australian Football Game Policy and the AFL & AFL Queensland policies, rules and regulations.

Competition Lead is the line manager of the Competition Manager.

Competition Manager is the person appointed by AFLQ to manage the day-to-day operations of a Competition.

COVID means Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

COVID Protocols means any player, coach or umpire affected by directed quarantine, isolation, recovery from COVID or border closures.

Guidelines means the COVID Guidelines for Community Football governed by AFLQ.

Laws of Australian Football means the AFL's Laws of Australian Football document, which is updated annually.

List Rules are the relevant List Management Rules applicable to either the QAFL or QAFLW.

Permit is any permit granted under rule 3.12 of the AFL Queensland Senior Community Competitions Rules and Procedures or 3.8 of the State Junior & Youth Football Rules & Regulations.

Points Cap is the total allowable player points under the PPS.

PPS is the abbreviation for the AFL Queensland Player Points System Policy that applies to the QAFL and QFA Division 1 & 2 senior men's Competitions.

Regional means the following AFLQ managed competitions: AFL Townsville, AFL Mackay, AFL Capricornia, AFL Wide Bay and AFL Darling Downs.

Sanction means a ruling or penalty handed down by AFLQ based upon their discretion.

Umpire is any accredited umpire appointed by either AFLQ or Association to officiate in a game.

Unaffected Team is the team that has sufficient players to participate in a fixtured game.

4. COVID AFFECTED GAMES

3.1 Individual Players

If individual players are unable to participate in a game or games due to COVID Protocols, the following principles shall apply where a Club does not have enough players to participate as defined in section 5. of *The Laws of the Game* and/or the Competition Rules.

3.1.1 For Clubs competing in Regional Men's*, QAFL, QAFLW, QFAW D1, QFA D1 & QFA D2 (excludes Colts)

- a) If a Club seeks to Permit players in order to field a team but such Permits requested are outside of the Permit rules, any variation to the Permit rules must be approved by the relevant Competition Lead.
- b) Where a Club has 20 available players across Seniors and Reserves, the Senior game must proceed. The Reserve game shall be deemed a draw and each team shall receive 2 points. The Unaffected Team may submit a team sheet. The Affected Team cannot submit a team sheet.
- c) Where a Club does not have 20 or more players available across Seniors and Reserves, both the Senior and Reserve games will be declared a draw and teams will receive 2 points each in both grades. The Unaffected Team may submit a team sheet. The Affected Team cannot submit a team sheet.
- d) Where a Club competing in a Competition with a PPS plays with less than 22 players, the Points Cap shall be reduced on a pro rata basis to a minimum of 20 players.
- e) If a Club cannot field a team without exceeding the Points Cap, permission to exceed the Points Cap must be sought in writing from the Competition Manager prior to the game proceeding. Each case will be assessed on an individual basis as all circumstances will be uniquely different. Where it's possible for a Club to be under the Points Cap with any combination of available players, then those players must be selected.

- f) If a QAFLW or QAFL Club cannot field a team without being in breach of their Competition List Rules, permission to operate outside of the List Rules must be sought in writing from the Competition Manager prior to the game proceeding. Each case will be assessed on an individual basis as all circumstances will be uniquely different. Where it is possible for a Club to field a team/s with any combination of listed players available, then those players must be selected.
- g) Clubs must notify AFLQ not later than 5.00pm the day prior to a game if they (i) cannot field a team or (ii) any further unavailability may give rise to them not having sufficient players to field a team/s. Where an Affected Club fails to notify their relevant Competition Manager within the prescribed timeline, such game/s not played shall be deemed a forfeit in accordance with the Competition Rules.
- h) A Payer Availability Declaration will be required, refer section 5 of this document for a definition and attached declaration form.

** Does not apply where a Club only fields one team, in which case 3.1.2 would apply.*

3.1.2 For clubs competing in Regional Womens, QFAW D2, QFA D3, QFA D4, QFA Colts & QAFL Colts and ALL Youth Competitions

- a) If a Club seeks to Permit players in order to field a team but such Permits are outside of the Permit rules, any variation to the Permit rules must be approved by the relevant Competition Lead.
- b) Where the Club has less than the prescribed number of players to commence a game as set out in 5.1 and 5.2 of The Laws of the Game or Competition Rules, the game shall be deemed a draw and each team shall receive 2 points. The Unaffected Team can submit a team sheet. The Affected Team cannot submit a team sheet.

The exception to this will be where the Unaffected Team is able to permit players to the Affected Team for a game to proceed. Both Clubs must agree for this to occur, however the Affected Team should not unreasonably refuse the offer of opposition players on permit in order for a game to proceed.

- b) Clubs must notify AFLQ not later than 5.00pm the day prior to a game if they (i) cannot field a team or (ii) that any further unavailability may give rise to them not having sufficient players to field a team. Where a Club fails to notify their relevant Competition Manager within the prescribed timeline, any games not played shall be deemed a forfeit in accordance with the relevant Competition Rules.
- c) A Player Availability Declaration will be required, refer section 5 of this document for a definition and attached declaration form.

3.2 Teams

- a) Where a game cannot proceed due to Government restrictions, border closures or any health and safety requirements (e.g. venue closed for deep cleaning or vaccination requirements), notwithstanding b) below, such games shall be deemed a draw with both teams being awarded two (2) points. Both teams will be permitted to submit a team sheet.

- b) Games will only be rescheduled where an opportunity exists in the fixture (Competition bye) for ALL affected games from the round missed to be played.
- c) To protect the integrity of a Competition, Clubs cannot agree to reschedule a game unless ALL affected games for the round missed are rescheduled.

3.3 Coaches

- a) If any coach cannot undertake their game day role due to COVID Protocols, they may only be replaced by a non-accredited coach if prior approval has been received in writing from the Competition Manager.
- b) All replacement coaches must, where required, have an appropriate Blue Card (working with children check) before commencing.
- c) In assessing any request, the Competition Manager will liaise directly with the Coaching Development & Education Lead QLD.

5. PLAYER AVAILABILITY DECLARATION

- a) Any Affected Team will be required to fill in a Player Availability Declaration by no later than 5pm the day before the scheduled game. The Club must list every registered player that is available for selection and every registered player that is unavailable due to COVID Protocols, as well as any other players unavailable due to injury / other. Such declaration must be completed in full and signed by the Club President. In the event the Declaration is not completed fully or is found to be false or misleading, AFLQ may impose a Sanction, which may include a loss of premiership points and/or monetary fine.
- b) If AFLQ assess a Player Availability Declaration and determines that regardless of the players affected by COVID Protocols the Club would have likely forfeited, then a forfeit shall be declared.

6. FINALS

6.1 Finals' make-up impacted by an imbalance of games played

- a) If at the completion of the Home and Away series any team or teams have played a different number of games to others, a winning percentage formula shall be applied to determine the final ladder positions, e.g., games won divided by games played x 100%.
- b) Any game that is forfeited or drawn shall be deemed as having been completed for the purposes of the number of games played by a Club.

6.2 Finals Series impacted by interrupted season (excludes Grand Finals)

- a) AFLQ reserves the right to amend the Finals Series format, which may include less teams or more teams competing in the Final Series.
- b) Unless extenuating and compelling circumstances exist, the final date for completion of each Competition will be as per the fixture.
- c) Where time does not permit for an individual finals game to be rescheduled, the team that was higher ranked at the time (home ground advantage) shall be deemed the winner. Where the game is played at a neutral venue, the team that would have normally earned the right to host the final shall be deemed the winner.

6.3 Finals' qualifications in a COVID interrupted season

- a) Should a season be interrupted by COVID, AFLQ may determine finals qualification requirements for players at their discretion at any stage throughout the season.

6.4 Impact of a COVID interruption on individual finals games

- a) Where a player doesn't meet the finals qualification for Home and Away games played, if the Club can demonstrate that a player has missed two (2) or more games due COVID Protocols or a COVID enforced draw as per section 3.2 of these guidelines, AFLQ will consider a finals' exemption application. Each application will be assessed on merit, with major consideration given to any application supported by documented proof of games being missed due to COVID Protocols. The final decision as to whether an exemption is granted will be made by the relevant Competition Lead.

6.5 Impact of a COVID interruption on a Grand Final

- a) Where time does not permit for the Grand Final to be rescheduled by the stated completion date and the Grand Final is abandoned, no premier shall be awarded.

6.6 Impact of a COVID interruption on the entire Finals' Series

- a) If no finals games are played, no premier shall be awarded.
- b) The Minor Premiership will be awarded immediately on completion of the Home & Away season if the minimum number of rounds have been completed.

7. CLUB UMPIRES

- a) Should a situation arise where Umpires are unable to officiate in a game due to COVID Protocols, priority will be given to Senior Men's and Senior Women's games with a scaling down approach in Southeast Queensland regarding the levels of competition.
- b) In the event there is insufficient Umpires available to be appointed by AFLQ or Association due to COVID Protocols, Clubs will be responsible for providing Club Umpires across any disciplines required. Where possible, notice will be provided by no later than 10am on a Friday.
- c) No game can proceed unless there is a minimum of two (2) field umpires and two (2) goal umpires.
- d) Where boundary Umpires cannot be appointed or sourced by Clubs, when the ball goes out of bounds it shall be tossed up by the field umpire 15m in from the boundary. After a goal is scored the team that scored will be responsible for returning the ball back to the umpire in the centre of the ground.
- e) Circumstances may arise where Umpires become unavailable on game day, in such situations Club Umpires may be required at short notice and Clubs will be advised immediately.
- f) Clubs should ensure all field Club Umpires are registered and accredited. Registration and accreditation are free and the accreditation process is completed online.
- g) In the event a Club has somebody available to act as a field Club Umpire, but they are not registered or accredited, permission must be sought from the Competition Manager prior to them officiating. The Competition Manager will always endeavor to consult with the Community Umpire Development Coordinator before making a determination.

8. AWARDS & VOTES

- a) Competition awards and votes will be awarded for games played and will not be prorated for missed games.

9. CONSEQUENCE OF A SUSPENSION IN A COVID INTERRUPTED SEASON

- a) All suspensions must be served in accordance with the Competition Rules and the State & Territory Tribunal Guidelines.
- b) Suspensions apply to games played (not dates).
- c) There is no reduction in suspensions for an interrupted season or games missed through COVID Protocols.
- d) Where a Club is eligible to submit a team sheet, such game will be deemed as a game served for any player serving a suspension.

10. MATTERS NOT COVERED BY COVID BY LAWS

- a) Should any scenario occur which is not covered within these guidelines, then the matter shall be referred to the Community Football Manager QLD to determine.

11. IMPACT OF COVID INTERRUPTION ON THE ALLOWABLE PLAYER PAYMENT RULE

- a) Should a round be abandoned, then the Allowable Player Payment Caps shall immediately be calculated on a pro rata of games played.

12. SANCTION

- a) If any Club is deemed to be in breach of these guidelines, AFLQ reserves the right to apply an appropriate Sanction.

Ends:



QUEENSLAND