



MEMORANDUM

Date	24th June, 2022
To:	All SEQ Senior & Junior Clubs
From:	Brad Howard (Competition Lead – SEQ Youth & Regional)
Subject:	SEQ Participation Pathway Changes for 2023

Dear Presidents,

Over the last 12 months we have been in constant communication with all SEQ clubs relating to a review of our youth participation pathways. The review was implemented on the back of significant participant growth, but moreover some gaps that were emerging in relation to retention rates and the transition of youth players into senior football.

In order to ensure the pathways are effective, we undertook a number of analytical projects, with the outcome data then shared with Clubs in order for them to provide informed feedback for consideration for any recommended changes.

We would like to thank all clubs, volunteers, parents and players that have provided feedback and input throughout this process. In conjunction with the data and analysis completed during this time, this feedback has significantly helped shaped the outcomes listed below, all of which we believe will have a positive impact on player transition and retention rates moving forward. In recognizing that any change has its challenges, our intent is creating stability and consistency across our football network, particularly in relation to age groups. As such, we believe the new two-year odd age groups are sustainable long term.

While the current female pathway will remain the same, we will continually monitor the upper age youth pathway to ensure our structure is providing opportunities for aspirational QAFLW / AFLW players.

A high-level overview of the changes and supporting rationale have been provided below, with further details as a result of any changes to be communicated with Clubs as required. AFL Queensland is meeting with all Junior & Youth Clubs over the next few weeks, and this will provide the opportunity for any initial questions emanating from the changes to be discussed.

Outcomes and Changes commencing in 2023

- 1. Youth Mixed/Boys Age Groups changed to U13.5/U15.5/U17.5 (was U12.5/U14.5/U16.5)**
 - Aligns the transition point to senior football to when players have:
 - completed their high school education, and
 - become adults (18 years of age)
 - Consistent 2-year age group brackets

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- **Club sustainability** – allows clubs to build a full pathway from junior to senior football (27% of clubs currently do not have an U12 team)
- **Reduction in player movement** – more clubs with a full pathway reduces the quantity of players that are forced to change clubs
- **'Like for like' competitions** – the greater the number of teams and the enhanced capability of having players of similar ability competing against each other, thus enhancing the match day experience, and limiting travel. Lower divisions naturally have a much higher participation rate of 'bottom aged' players (between 70-75% in D4 in 2021)
- **Important for player development** – limiting bad habits etc.

2. Sunshine Coast & Northern Rivers Footy4Fun Mixed Age Groups changed to U9.5/U11.5 to align to the Youth Age Groups (was U8.5/U10.5), and an increase in the top age of Superstars eligible players to 8.5

- Maintains the 2-year age group brackets – too big of a gap between U10.5 and U13.5
- Allows Northern Rivers to have a localised U11.5 competition played on Sundays that aligns to their other teams in both the Footy4Fun and Youth competitions
- Allows an 8-year-old to choose whether they want to participate in Superstars (non-contact) or U9.5 (modified contact) competitions

3. QFA Colts competition disbanded, with the opportunity for adults to select where to play based on what best suits their individual needs (skill level, day/time of matches etc.)

- Increase of the Youth Age groups to U17.5 captures all bottom age players in the current U8.5 competition
- There are multiple levels of senior football available that cater to adults of varied skill level, time commitments, availability etc.
- Increasingly difficult for Clubs to find enough players specific to this age cohort to fill a whole team (currently only 10 teams in this competition and has been declining in recent years)

4. QAFI Colts competition to become an U19 talent development competition that forms part of the talent pathway

- Allows aspirational QAFI senior players the opportunity to develop in state league club environment
- Serve as the transition point for aspirational players so that they **do not need to move clubs at an earlier age group**
- QAFI Clubs need to be strategic in establishing their U19 list, as lists will be required to be submitted at the start of a season and capped at 30 age eligible players
 - U17.5 players can still play up if required (outside of list of 30)
 - List management rules to be developed in conjunction with Clubs

5. Capping of U17.5 teams

- All Clubs will be capped at a maximum of 2 x U17.5 teams to assist with the transition of players to senior football
- AFLQ will work with clubs where retaining existing players is impacted (currently three clubs have 3 x U16.5 teams)

We appreciate the time you have taken to read this memo and we look forward to working with you and your club in implementing the changes.

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