



# **AFL RIVERINA**

## **COMPETITIONS REVIEW**

### **TERMS OF REFERENCE – AUGUST 2018**

#### **Background**

##### ***Governance***

Australian Rules Football has a rich heritage in the Riverina and Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area (MIA) regions of Southern NSW and which dates back to the late 1800's. Over that time there has been a number of changes to league names and competition structures. The Ganmain Football Association was formed in 1895 and then renamed the South West District Association in 1910. In 1969, under the administration of the then Victorian Country Football League (VCFL), the East Riverina District Association was formed by splitting off the eastern half of the Riverina. The Farrer Football League first formed in 1957 as a breakaway from the Albury & District Football League. Culcairn, Henty, Holbrook and Mangoplah-Cookardinia United competed in the first season. In 1958 all remaining clubs from the Albury & District Football League moved across to the new league. It was in 1982 that the Farrer Football League amalgamated with the South Western District Football League and the Central Riverina Football League in order to create the Riverina Football League and the Riverina District Football League, with the latter changing its name to the Farrer Football League in 1985. In 1995 the Farrer FL and the Riverina FL combined to be governed by a single governance model called the Murrumbidgee Valley Football Association. The South West Junior FL history back dates to the early 1990's. Over time the current competitions of the Farrer Football Netball League and the Riverina Football Netball Leagues have evolved into what they are today.

In November 2009, AFL Riverina was formed on the back of a review conducted by AFL NSW/ACT with the view to streamline the governance of Australian Rules Football and Netball in the region. The structure of which, is an independent board comprised of 4 club elected and 3 AFL appointed members, that in conjunction with AFL Riverina staff, AFL NSW/ACT staff and the Competition Management Committees of the four competitions, oversees the management of its member clubs and competitions, being the Riverina Football Netball League, Farrer Football Netball League, South West Junior Football Netball and the Wagga & District Football League. This governance integration has been effective in better aligning football and netball across the Riverina and MIA regions of Southern NSW, noting that Netball NSW has no role in the governance and administration of the AFL Riverina netball competitions.

##### ***Current Competition Structures***

Currently, three Riverina Football Netball League clubs, the Griffith Swans, Leeton Whitton Crows and Narrandera Eagles, all have junior clubs affiliated with the South West Junior Netball League, whilst the remaining clubs, namely Coolamon Rovers, Collingullie Glenfield Park, Ganmain Grong Grong Matong, Mangoplah CUE (Eastlakes MCU), Turvey Park Bulldogs and Wagga Tigers, all have junior clubs affiliated with the Wagga & District Junior Football Netball League.





Within the Farrer Football Netball League, the clubs of Barellan Two Blues, Coleambally Blues, Temora Kangaroos and the Northern Jets have junior clubs affiliated with the South West Junior Football Netball League, whilst East Wagga Koorungal, North Wagga and The Rock Yerong Creek have junior clubs affiliated with Wagga & District Junior Football Netball League.

Farrer Football Netball League Clubs, Charles Sturt University and Marrar Football Netball Clubs do not have junior club affiliations in either league, whilst the Wagga Swans JFNC are a standalone junior football netball club within the Wagga & District Junior Football Netball League.

In 2018, these four competitions comprise of 106 football teams, 143 netball teams and approximately 5400 football and netball participants. The structure of these competitions is unique in regard to the crossover of Junior and Senior Clubs, due to a number of factors, most importantly the significant geographical distance of the AFL Riverina competitions spanning almost 150 square kilometres, as reflected in Attachment A of this document. Other contributing competition factors include other sports in the marketplace and the varying depth of the participating clubs and teams.

### ***Female Football***

Female football in Southern NSW and more specifically the Riverina continues to grow. Whilst current challenges including fixturing, facilities and Netball make it difficult to implement our ability to adapt to local conditions has made Women's and Youth Girls AFL accessible for all.

Historically local AFL Women's clubs Riverina Lions and Cootamundra Blues have been the only avenue for women to participate in a structured competition namely AFL Canberra. The Riverina Lions have been the stalwarts of female football in the region yet the fact they have only been able to field 1 team in the AFL Canberra competition highlighted the lack of ability to recruit women into weekend fixtures whilst competing with other sports. With the need of Female participation becoming evident AFL NSW ACT introduced the state's first ever Girls only Auskick program in Wagga back in 2009 which has since generated the new wave of female football participants.

In 2016 a community-based Youth Girls AFL Competition was introduced with 6 teams and 120 participants taking part in the regions first ever Youth Girls competition. This competition was the catalyst in introducing club-based Youth Girls competitions in both the WDJFNL and SWJFNL in 2017. The competition's fixturing on Wednesday night's allowed alternate athletes including weekend netballers to participate. In 2017 the WDJFNL had 16 club-based teams with the SWJFNL having 6. This has since grown to 21 teams in the WDJFNL and 10 teams in the SWJFNL in 2018.

On the back of the success of the inaugural club-based Youth Girls competitions and increased support from local clubs the regions first ever club-based Women's Competition was launched. 5 clubs from across the region participated in the competition including Riverina Lions, Cootamundra, CSU, Griffith Swans and new comers Snowy Mountains Bears.

The governance and administration duties of these competitions has been the responsibility of AFL NSW ACT Game Development staff and has been ably supported by local clubs. The complete pathway from Auskick to Opens Women's AFL now exists in the Riverina.



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## **AFL Riverina Competitions Review**

AFL NSW/ACT recognises the importance of local clubs and how they are an integral part of the community, providing positive environments for the whole community to connect through the physical benefits of the playing Football and Netball, as well as the social benefits of being part of a community.

AFL NSW/ACT's strategic themes are to use data and innovation with a focus on delivering quality experiences through Community Football. Further, AFL NSW/ACT identified a number of priority areas for Community Football in 2018, inclusive of the enhancement of competition structures and competitive balance mechanisms across all leagues, including AFL Riverina.

## **Project Mission Statement**

Progress the game so everyone can share in its heritage and possibilities – by determining the optimal competition structures and pathways in the Riverina/ MIA region to facilitate competitive balance, community club sustainability and future growth of AFL.

## **Purpose of the Review**

The purpose of this review is to identify the various strengths and weaknesses of the current competition structures, and identify recommendations relating to future structures for the sustainable long-term benefit of all AFL Riverina's stakeholders.

The overarching objective will be the development and implementation of strategies to support growth and sustainability for AFL Riverina's competitions acknowledging the specific needs of the competitions and changing landscape of the region.

The review is jointly commissioned by AFL Riverina and AFL NSW/ ACT.

Key areas of focus will include:

- Identifying the areas of growth and decline in the respective sports, and the factors contributing to this such as:
  - geography
  - demographics including dwindling regional populations
  - employment trends including attraction to regional hubs such as Wagga and Griffith
  - education
  - social trends
  - competition from other sports
  - volunteer workforces
  - facilities
- Sustainable competition pathways for Football and Netball, individually and collectively;
- Identifying the optimal competition structures of all junior and senior competitions including the composition of clubs;
- Enhancing competitive balance of all junior and senior competitions;
- The resourcing implications on AFL Riverina, if any;





- The growth of female football and the integration into AFL Riverina factoring in Netball; and  
The impact Football and Netball has on local communities, such as:
  - social engagement
  - family alignment
  - club culture
  - local economy

## Scope of the Review

The Review will cover AFL Riverina's existing junior and senior Football and Netball structures, as well as female football.

1. Examine the current state of AFL Riverina Competitions, Riverina FNL, Farrer FNL, Wagga & District JFNL and South West JFNL, specifically competition structures including:
  - the effectiveness of the current competition structures, scheduling, age groups and pathways;
  - the mechanisms to improve sustainability and competitiveness of clubs and competitions;
  - the proposed integration of female football into the future competition structures and the relationship to compliment football and netball competitions;
  - the alignment of junior and senior Football and Netball on match day;
  - the club/s model and structure that supports the management and growth of male football, female football, junior football and netball;
2. Determine the optimal structure and administration of AFL Riverina female competitions to better support female football growth and factor in the community importance of Netball. Examine and identify potential enhancements to the administration of AFL Riverina competitions to better support clubs including:
  - the competitive advantages and disadvantages of Football and Netball, against competitors;
  - any level of duplication of resources and opportunities for increased administrative efficiencies;
  - the depth of volunteer attributes and contributions, as well as their recruitment and retention; and
  - the levels of collaboration between various stakeholders, across all levels of the AFL Riverina;
3. Identify the initiatives, priorities and potential investments required to address the current sustainability challenges, and take advantage of the identified opportunities, such as:
  - areas that potentially require additional resources or investment including utilisation of AFL Riverina's cash reserves;
  - the provision of resources and support to club administrators, coaches and umpires; and
  - investment in community facilities.





## **Review Responsibility**

AFL NSW/ACT and AFL Riverina will lead the review process, engaging with independent consultants to assist in the development of the review content and importantly the identification of key data for the creation of recommendations, as required. This review will seek feedback and submissions from a wide range of key stakeholders including but not limited to:

### **Key Stakeholders**

- AFL NSW/ACT;
- Netball NSW;
- AFL Riverina Board and Competition Management Committees;
- AFL Riverina Clubs - Riverina FNL, Farrer FNL, Wagga & District FNL, South West JFNL;
- AFL Riverina staff and AFL NSW/ ACT regional development staff;
- Umpires;
- Coaches;
- Independent Consultants;
- Other relevant sporting bodies, inclusive of Football and Netball, as required.

### **Project Team**

- Project Sponsors: Sam Chadwick (AFL NSW/ ACT), AFL Riverina Board
- Project Lead: David Burgess (Independent Consultant)
- Project Team:
  - Steve Mahar (AFL NSW/ACT)
  - Marc Geppert (AFL NSW/ACT)
  - Matthew Irons (AFL NSW/ACT)
  - Paul Habel (AFL NSW/ACT)
  - Shane Buchanan (AFL NSW/ACT)
- Project Consultants:
  - Michael Irons (AFL Riverina Board)
  - Janine Fitzsimmons (AFL Riverina Board)
  - Phil Rowston (AFL Riverina Board)
  - Other consultants (stakeholders and participants) as required from time to time.





## Project Timeframe

Initial Planning	Due	Status
Stakeholder engagement – AFL Staff and AFL Riverina Board	April	
Development of Terms of Reference	July	
Review and finalise of Terms of Reference	August	
Release of Terms of Reference (External)	August	
Consultation and Research	Due	Status
Development of Research Strategy – Surveys, Meetings etc.	August	
Development of Research Content, Questionnaires, Surveys	September	
Engage with Independent Consultants (if funding is available)	September	
Identify alternate sources of data – census, LGA data, annual reports	September	
Release Questionnaires, Surveys etc. to stakeholders	September	
Review all data and responses from surveys.	October	
Conduct stakeholder meetings	November	
Initial Findings	Due	Status
Review all data and responses from surveys, meetings etc.	November	
Engage Independent Consultants to review the findings	November	
Summarise findings – identify trends, common responses etc.	December	
Confirm key findings and communicate to stakeholders (face to face meeting)	February 2019	
Key Findings, Recommendations and Investments	Due	Status
Develop initial recommendations and identify strategic priorities	February 2019	
Identify potential investments, and review budgets accordingly	February 2019	
Engage with AFL Riverina Board and Competition Management Committees	March 2019	
Engage with AFL NSW/ACT Executive for additional recommendations	March 2019	
Advise clubs on the finalised recommendations and engage for final feedback	March 2019	
Implementation of Recommendations	Due	Status
Establish timeline and project plan for implementation of final recommendations	March 2019	
Communicate the final recommendations and relevant changes for 2020	April 2019	
Commence applying relevant recommendations for 2020	May 2019	
Commence applying long term recommendations	Ongoing	
Review	Due	Status
Create timeline for review of implemented recommendations		
Engage with relevant identified stakeholders for review		
Adjust and update recommendations and implementation – as required		





**Attachment A**

**AFL Riverina Map – 2018 Competitions**

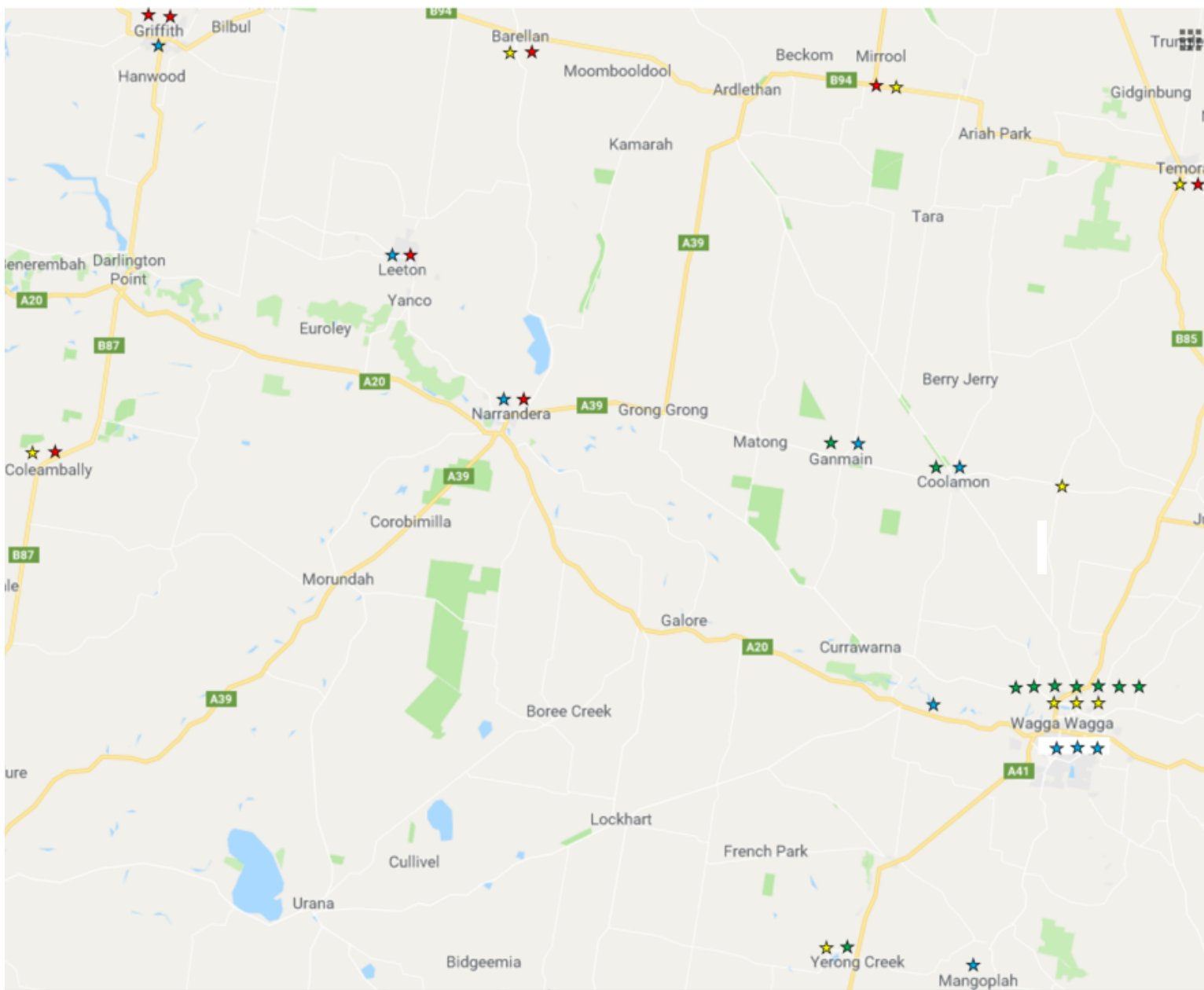
**Longest Trips Per League**

Riverina FNL – Griffith >> Mangoplah - Approx. 205km (2 hours 24 minutes)

Farrer FNL – Temora >> Coleambally – Approx. 213km (2 hours 20 minutes)

South West JFNL - Temora >> Coleambally - Approx. 213km (2 hours 20 minutes)

Wagga & District JFNL – The Rock >> Ganmain – Approx. 65km (47 minutes)



Riverina FNL (9 Teams) – ★

Farrer FNL (9 Teams) – ★

South West JFNL (8 Teams) – ★

Wagga & District JFNL (10 Teams) – ★

