

Standing Committee Recommendation

To: Chief Executive Officer
From: NPL Standing Committee
Date:

Recommendation (provide a detailed description of the recommendation)

The recommendation is to restructure of the current Junior National Premier League format. In 2018 the introduction of the NPL was a 12 club based Licence. The structure was to strengthen the pathway at club level whilst providing a criteria to effectively strengthen junior development. This model with the introduction of PPS was to strengthen clubs and the pathway to first teams. NPL was a 12 club based concept which was selected by an independent entity. This included a substantial criteria base and a stringent application process.

This was a 12 team format with pathway to Senior Squads. NPL Seniors were based on promotion and relegation. This is based on playing merit.

The introduction of 10 more junior clubs from Division 1 and 2 has been problematic since the implementation with no consultation with the existing 12 clubs. It in essence created a delusion of both NPL and Community football and a delusion of club pathways to play at the highest level.

The recommendation would be therefore to restructure 23 teams currently to NPL 1 and NPL 2.

Restructure could be based on possible options;

OPTION 1:

NPL 1 based on 12 League Senior Squads and their 12 Junior teams- making the NPL structure streamlined.

NPL 2 base on Senior Squads in Division 1 and their Junior teams- making the pathway for State League Squads

NPL 3 base on Senior Squads in Division 2 and their Junior teams- making the pathway for State League Squads

This option is purely based on creating the original concept to effectively strengthen clubs as a whole, clearly restoring Club culture and identity, whilst strengthening it creates the original focus to reduce the player migration and allowing teams to work on the PPS system looking at loyalty and homegrown juniors.

OPTION 2:

Restructure to 2 Divisions consisting of 12 teams based on merit of results achieved of the 5 year club results.

Division 1 to comprise of 12 clubs with the top results over that period.

Division 2 to comprise of 12 clubs with the next results over that period

Promotion and relegation will occur at competition of season.

Describe the Issue or Idea (give a concise description of the issue focussing particularly on the problems that are being experienced)

The current Junior NPL structure is flawed at present due to the delusion of the competition which has resulted in weakening the NPL product and its original concept ideal.

It has also creating results in double figures even for clubs with Academy programs in place.

Due to many factors, we are losing players not returning to play, leaving soccer altogether due to the score lines, inconsistency with competition, many playing division 1 due to cheaper options as the annual costs are significantly reduced.

This cost is club relative due to NPL fees being considerably different for clubs (based on NPL Senior criteria and Division 1 status).

The total numbers of registrations per age group are below. It shows the total number of registered players per age group in the NPL, year-to-year, with a % of the increase/decrease from season to season.

	2019	%	2020	%	2021
U13s	346	6.93%	370	-2.43%	361
U14s	332	5.72%	351	-0.28%	350
U15s	343	2.33%	351	4.55%	367
U16s	334	5.38%	352	1.13%	356
Total	1355	5.09%	1424	0.70%	1434

The overarching ideal of NPL has been decreasing in creditability at both club and players levels. The once prestigious concept which was to streamline and allow ambitious clubs the opportunity to drive to include structures, governance, management and infrastructure whilst continuing to meet minimal criteria. This has been overshadowed by clubs receiving NPL Junior licenses irrespective of the initial applications. The NPL brand became an open ended competition which has not developed an elite competition for juniors. It is producing score lines in double figures creating inconsistencies with competition, lack of club retention, poaching of coaches and players across the board whilst creating an increase in mental and resilience issues.

The increasing delusion of player standards has increased over the 4-5year period, this is featuring in the Senior competition. The population within our State is a completely different dynamic both due to regional and geographical areas.

The final problem has been the difference in the financial impact on clubs at these levels with Senior NPL clubs having a intense criteria base which they have been investing for up to 14-20 years previously which has always been required to sustain League squads.

Describe the benefits of Football West implementing the Recommendation

Football West needs to implement a change for the *integrity* of the competition for WA. The structure has demerited over this period.

Clubs and players cannot continue to sustain the competition, with the continuation of the current format it is having a negative impact of both NPL and Community football.

Clubs are not sustaining player and coach retentions due to the player and coach movements which need to be reviewed, as clubs are now having to withdrawal teams from this NPL competition due to players transferring without notice due to results, players and coaches developing a movement culture due to results being in the verticity of 20-0, 16-0 etc.

Implementation of transfer windows, and registration processes for Juniors having to revert to club communication and processes prior to self de registrations without notice. Clubs engagement with juniors needs to have a stronger Football West mandatory support structure. Football West implementation of stronger guidelines will only provide a stronger NPL and community based club systems which would regain club identities and regain club governance, strategic plans along with supporting and strengthening cultures.

List the Clubs or Club Associates that have been consulted in reaching the recommendation

- All 24 clubs were consulted with , 22 clubs were in a meeting with Football west staff at Football west office to discuss the competition, all clubs unanimously agreeing the current format needs to change for clubs to continue a viable NPL Junior structure.

Heidi Lazzaro

Signature

July 2021

Date

Heidi Lazzaro
Standing Committee Chair

