

# Discussion Paper

## Women's Competition Structure

12 September 2016



### BACKGROUND

Following feedback received from the Football Community, and most recently expressed at meetings between the Capital Football Board and the NPL Clubs, a decision was made to review the Capital Football women's and girl's competitions.

The review included an analysis of registration data, modelling of alternate competition structures, measurement of those models against local football needs and FFA Women's NPL criteria, and engagement with the football community to gather feedback.

The process aspires to deliver optimal competition structures in 2017 that consider both player development and participation objectives, formulated using evidenced based decision making combined with a comprehensive community consultation.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### Stakeholder Survey

A stakeholder survey was distributed to the football community on 1 August 2016. The survey posed 20 questions seeking feedback to identify the manner in which the respondent engages in football, participant experience, opinion on current competition structures, opinion on 3 alternate models, and preference to optimal delivery (i.e. teams per league, age grades).

The survey was sent to circa 4,000 recipients, including registered coaches, club administrators and registered female players.

234 people completed the survey.

Please find following an overview of the people who responded to the survey;

- 76% female / 24% male
- 79% of all respondents were over the age of 18
- 49% of all respondents were over the age of 35
- The vast majority of respondents were players and/or parents of players
- The largest respondent segments were;
  - Junior Leagues – 40%
  - Women's Premier League – 31%
  - Women's State League – 25%

### STAKEHOLDER SURVEY ANALYSIS

The following summary lists key insights drawn from the Women's Competition Structure survey;

#### Current Competition Structure

- 68% of respondents feel that the Women's Competition structure is sub-optimal
  - 59% of respondents feel that the Women's Competitions Structure does not deliver a clear development pathway
  - 52% of respondents had no opinion about the quality of the CUA pathway
  - 51% of respondents were unsatisfied with the competition they played in
  - 87% of respondents supported inclusion of new outside of ACT teams
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### New Competition Structure Models

- 83% of respondents preferred a change from the current Women's Competition Structure
- 46% of respondents believe 8 team divisions are the best option
- 59% of respondents believe the best age grades for junior community football are U13, U15 and U17
- 57% of respondents believe the best age grades for senior community competition are 1<sup>st</sup> grade, Reserve Grade and Masters
- 92% of respondents believe that Capital Football should introduce youth age grades in women's Premier League
- 64% of respondents believe youth Premier League age grades should be U13, U15 and U17
- 60% of respondents believe the best age grades for senior PL competitions are 1<sup>st</sup> grade and reserve grade

### SEGMENT FILTERS

Annexure 3 contains a table communicating the survey outcomes when the responses are filtered to include only those from the individual stakeholder segments (i.e. Women's Premier League, State League, Capital League, CUA, Masters and Junior Leagues).

Points of interest from an analysis of segmented data include;

- State League and Masters respondents preferred a 10 team competition structure (opposed to the overall survey result of a preference for 8 team divisions)
- Junior League respondents indicated a positive experience (opposed to the negative experience result of the overall survey)
- The Masters respondents returned significantly higher "no opinion" answers to questions relating to the player pathway and development programs

### KEY LEARNINGS

Following are key learnings drawn from the Women's Competition survey analysis that have been used to inform the development of the proposed competition structure for 2017

- There is a general dissatisfaction across Premier League and Community Football with the current competition structure and participant experience.
  - There is an overwhelming preference for change
  - There is no clear consensus to suggest a preferred model from the 3 offering change
  - There is significant support for new teams from outside of the ACT
  - There is generally limited understanding or knowledge of the CUA pathway for girls
  - There is majority support for 8 team competitions in Premier League, Capital League and Junior League competitions
  - There is majority consensus for 10 team competitions in State League and Masters competitions
  - There is overwhelming support for youth age grades underpinning the Women's Premier League
  - There is majority support for change to junior age grades in Premier League and Community Football to U13, U15 and U17
  - There is majority support for change to age grades in Senior football to Reserve Grade, 1<sup>st</sup> Grade and *Masters (community only)*
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### CHALLENGES TO DELIVERING RESPONDENT PREFERENCES

We have identified the following potential challenges to delivering the preferences as submitted by the football community.

#### 1<sup>st</sup> and Reserve Grade in Capital League

Senior age grades of 1<sup>st</sup> Grade and Reserve Grade will be difficult to coordinate in Capital League. Given that only 3 teams nominated to Capital League prior to the 2016 season, it is reasonable to suggest that increasing the requirement for clubs to field 2 squads in a competition that did not receive enough nominations to run as a single team competition in 2016 would be significantly challenging.

With this in mind we have not recommended this preference for adoption in 2017.

#### New Teams from outside of the ACT

While there was significant support for new teams outside of the ACT from all stakeholder segments, managing match scheduling and travel may be challenging.

In a Premier League competition that includes aspirational clubs, players and parents, travel might not be as challenging. However, inclusion of teams from further afield (i.e. Wagga Wagga) may prove a more challenging scenario in State League and Junior Football, especially where there has been a history of cluster venue delivery.

Aligned to the survey results, we see significant value in expanding the reach of Capital Football, especially in female football, and recommend that the organisation explores opportunities to include new clubs to bolster the competitions.

#### Timing, Communication and Consultation

We believe the stakeholder survey is one step in reviewing the competition structure. The survey has helped us understand the current participant satisfaction and gauge the community's thoughts on the best path forward.

There remains a consultation with the Clubs and broader football community to ensure the key stakeholders are aligned.

Communicating the new structure, consultative process and rationale for any change is vital.

It is also vital that this occurs with ample time for the clubs, coaches and players to adequately prepare in the off season for the 2017 winter football competition period.

#### Quality of Women's National Premier League in Year One

We acknowledge that there is work to be done over a number of years to support the clubs accepted into the Women's NPL to deliver optimal learning environments, and that this collaboration results in a competitive league at all age grades.

We believe the expansion to 8 teams in senior competition will be supported by the discontinuation of the U18 and U20 competitions. Effectively, there is 21 senior women's teams from 2016 (1<sup>st</sup> Grade, U20 and U18) feeding into 16 teams in 2017 (1<sup>st</sup> Grade and Reserve Grade). These teams may also be bolstered by the return of senior players from Capital and State League to the NPL Reserve Grade.

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## National Premier League ACT – Women and Girls

We see significant value in establishing an NPL for women and girls in the ACT.

National branding, and an aspirational target will assist Capital Football promote the sport to players and help clubs sell their assets to potential sponsors. This is important given the promotion locally for AFL and Women's Rugby Union in recent time.

Additionally, we have the opportunity to establish an NPL and criteria in a phased manner. We can approach the criteria as a journey to best practice entered into collaboratively by Capital Football and the Clubs.

## **RECOMMENDED MODEL FOR 2017**

We recommend changes to the 2017 Women's and Girl's competition structure reflective of the feedback received by the football community.

We recommend that the changes include endeavours to establish a National Premier Leagues ACT – Women and Girls. This would require clubs to field teams in all age grades, and commit to minimum delivery standards across facilities and coach qualification as set by Capital Football in consultation with FFA and the clubs.

The following table provides a summary of the competition structure.

Annexure 1 further illustrates the possible teams per league and division, using the 2016 competitions as the basis for the forecast.

Division	Teams per Division	Rounds	Senior Age Grades	Youth Age Grades
National Premier Leagues ACT – Women and Girls	Up to 8	3 (21 premiership matches)	1 <sup>st</sup> Grade Reserve Grade	U17 U15 U13
Capital League	Up to 8	3 (21 Premiership matches)	1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	
Masters	Up to 10	2 (18 premiership matches)	O/35	
State League	Up to 10	2 (18 premiership matches)	Open age	
Junior League	Up to 8	2 (14 Premiership Matches)		U17 U15 U13

Annexure 1: 2017 Proposed Competition Structure (using 2016 teams as a guide)

2017 Proposed Competition Structure

NATIONAL PREMIER LEAGUES ACT - WOMEN	
Divisions	Teams
1st Grade	8
Reserve Grade	8
U17	8
U15	8
U13	8

CAPITAL LEAGUE - WOMEN	
Divisions	Teams
1st Grade	8

STATE LEAGUE & JUNIOR LEAGUE	
Divisions	Teams
Masters Division 1	10
Women's Division 1	10
Women's Division 2	10
Women's Division 3	10
Women's Division 4	10
Women's Division 5	10
Women's Division 6	10
Girl's U17 Division 1	8
Girl's U17 Division 2	8
Girls U15 Division 1	8
Girl's U15 Division 2	8
Girl's U15 Division 3	8
Girl's U15 Division 4	8
Girl's U13 Division 1	8

2016 TEAMS	
Divisions	Teams
Masters	9
Women's	51
U20	7
U18	25
	83
U16	25
U14	20
U13	20
U12	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>173</b>



2017 TEAMS	
Divisions	Teams
Masters	10
Women's	84
U17	24
U15	40
U13	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>174</b>

Annexure 2: 2017 Example Competition Season

	Jan-17	Feb-17	Mar-17	Apr-17	May-17	Jun-17	Jul-17	Aug-17	Sep-17	Oct-17	Nov-17	Dec-17	
Women's & Girl's Competition	1 8 15 22 29	5 12 19 26	5 12 19 26	2 9 16 23 30	7 14 21 28	4 11 18 25	2 9 16 23 30	6 13 20 27	3 10 17 24	1 8 15 22 29	5 12 19 26	5 12 19 26	
Premier League (8 teams comps x 3 rounds)	21 premiership matches / SF + Final			1 2 3	4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14	15 16 17 18 19 20 21	SF SF F						
Capital League (8 teams comps x 3 rounds)	21 premiership matches / SF + Final			1 2 3	4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14	15 16 17 18 19 20 21	SF SF F						
Masters (10 team comps x 2 rounds)	15 premiership matches / 2 weeks SF + Final			1 2	3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13	14 15 16 17 18	SF F						
State League (10 teams comps x 2 rounds)	18 premiership matches / 2 weeks SF + Final			1 2	3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13	14 15 16 17 18	SF F						
Juniors League (8 teams comps x 2 rounds)	14 premiership matches / no final			Easter	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	Kanga Cup	12 13 14						

**Annexure 3: Segmentation Analysis of the Women's Competition Stakeholder Survey (identifying most popular responses per question per stakeholder segment)**

Womens Competition Structure Survey Questions	Overall	Women's Premier League	Variance	Capital League	Variance	State League	Variance	Masters	Variance	Junior League	Variance	CU Academy	Variance
Sample Size	243	72		12		57		17		93		22	
Do you believe the current structure of the Capital Football women's competitions is optimal?	68%	82%	-14%	92%	-24%	71%	-3%	69%	-1%	58%	10%	73%	-5%
Do you believe the current competition structures create a clear and effective development pathway for players?	59%	72%	-13%	82%	-23%	58%	1%	65%		54%	5%	73%	-14%
Do you believe the Canberra United Academy provides an effective development pathway for girls?	52%	50%		58%		82%		81%		52%		59%	
What is your overall level of satisfaction with the competition you are associated with?	51%	60%	-9%	50%	-9%	60%	-9%	53%	-2%	58%	9%	50%	1%
Are you supportive of new clubs from regions surrounding the ACT participating in Capital Football competitions (in addition to Goulburn, Cooma, Palerang and Yass)?	87%	89%	2%	92%	5%	93%	6%	82%	-5%	83%	-4%	95%	8%
Having viewed the models, which is your preference													
Total preferring change	83%	90%		90%		89%		100%		73%		86%	
Highest percentage model	Model 2 31%	Model 4 46%		Model 3 50%		Model 2 47%		Model 2 55%		Model 3 27%		Model 2 36%	
What do you believe is the ideal number of teams per league, considering the quality and quantity of players in the region?	8 Teams 46%	8 Teams 59%		8 Teams 58%		10 teams 41%		10 Teams 38%		8 Teams 52%		8 Teams 36%	
What do you believe are the best age grades to apply in junior community competitions?	U17 U15 U13 59%	U17 U15 U13 59%		U17 U15 U13 58%		U17 U15 U13 59%		U17 U15 U13 60%		U17 U15 U13 49%		U17 U15 U13 64%	
What do you believe are the best age grades to apply in senior community competitions (Capital and State League)	Masters 1st Grade Res Grade 57%	Masters 1st Grade Res Grade 70%		Masters 1st Grade Res Grade 58%		Masters 1st Grade Res Grade 50%		Masters 1st Grade Res Grade 73%		Masters 1st Grade Res Grade 48%		Masters 1st Grade Res Grade 71%	
If Capital Football was to introduce youth age grades for Girl'sNPL what do you believe are the best age grades?	U17 U15 U13 64%	U17 U15 U13 63%		U17 U15 U13 50%		U17 U15 U13 63%		U17 U15 U13 73%		U17 U15 U13 64%		U17 U15 U13 82%	
What do you believe are the best age grades to apply in Women'sNPL competitions	1st Grade Res Grade 60%	1st Grade Res Grade 72%		1st Grade Res Grade 89%		1st Grade Res Grade 67%		1st Grade Res Grade 88%		1st Grade Res Grade 48%		1st Grade Res Grade 63%	

**Legend**

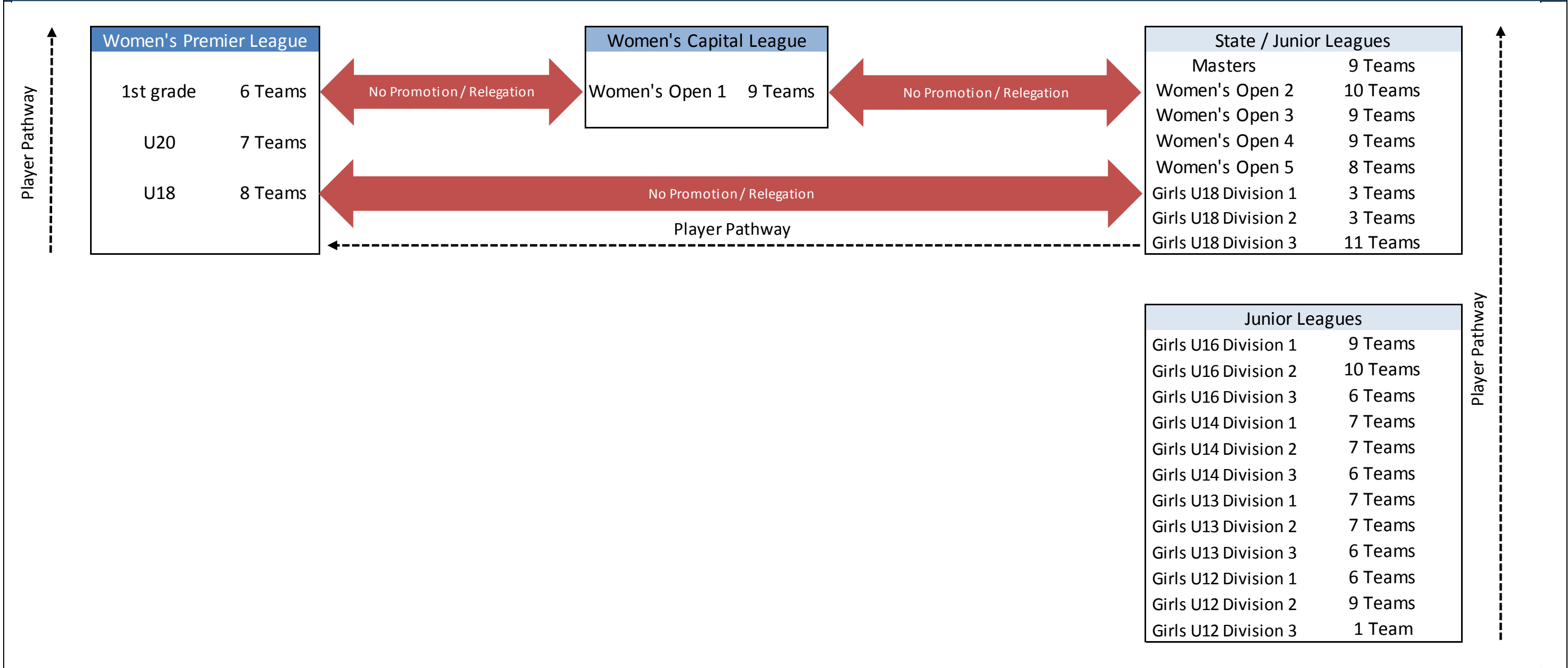
Red – Negative response

Green – Positive response

Grey – No opinion response

Note: some respondents identified in multiple stakeholder segments, therefore the accumulation of the segment sample sizes is higher than the total number of respondents

Annexure 4: 2016 Competition Structure (for reference)



2016 Competition Period

	Jan-17	Feb-17	Mar-17	Apr-17	May-17	Jun-17	Jul-17	Aug-17	Sep-17	Oct-17	Nov-17	Dec-17	
Competition	3 10 17 24 31	7 14 21 28	6 13 20 27	3 10 17 24	1 8 15 22 29	5 12 19 26	3 10 17 24 31	7 14 21 28	4 11 18 25	2 9 16 23 30	6 13 20 27	4 11 18 25	
Women's Premier League - 1st Grade	15 matches (3 rounds) + 5 Fed Cup Matches							SF SF F					
Women's Premier League - U20 Grade	21 matches (3 rounds)							SF SF F					
Women's Premier League - U18 Grade	21 matches (3 rounds)							SF SF F					
Women's Capital League	16 matches (2 rounds home and away with a bye)							SF SF F					
State Leagues	16 to 18 matches (2 rounds home and away, some with a bye)							SF SF F					
Junior Leagues	10 to 16 matches (various competition formats)												