

06/11/20

STATEMENT REGARDING 2021 NPL COMPETITIONS

There has been some interest in the community about the recent 2021 Declaration of Leagues, and we take this opportunity to provide further clarity on the process and decision for the 2021 NPL competitions. For ease of reference, the Declaration of Leagues can be found on the [Circulars and Memos](#) page of the Capital Football website.

Leagues

Following consultation with the Premier Leagues Standing Advisory Committee (**PLSAC**) and Technical Committee, Capital Football confirmed the leagues for 2021, including;

2021 National Premier Leagues Women (NPLW)

- ▶ The competition will include eight clubs (reduced from nine).
- ▶ The competition will include three premiership rounds (21 matches, increased from 16 in the previous format) plus finals.
- ▶ Clubs will be required to field teams in all age grades (1st Grade, Reserve Grade, U17, U15 and U13).

2021 National Premier Leagues Men Division 1 (NPL1)

- ▶ The competition will include eight clubs (status quo, with no promotion and relegation between NPL1 and NPL2 from the 2020 to 2021 seasons).
- ▶ The competition will include three premiership rounds (21 matches) plus finals.
- ▶ Clubs will be required to field teams in all age grades (1st Grade and U23).

2021 National Premier Leagues Men Division 2 (NPL2)

- ▶ The competition will include eight clubs (reduced from nine).
- ▶ The competition will include three premiership rounds (21 matches, increased from 18 in the previous format) plus finals.
- ▶ Clubs will be required to field teams in all age grades (1st Grade and U23).

2021 National Premier Leagues Youth Boys (NPLY)

- ▶ The competition will include two divisions, being Division 1 and Division 2.
- ▶ Each division will include eight clubs (total clubs across NPLY (both divisions) increases from thirteen to sixteen).
- ▶ Each division will include three premiership rounds (21 matches) plus finals
- ▶ Clubs will be required to field teams in all age grades (U18, U16, U14 and U13).

Capital Football believes this format serves the best interests of football as it;

- ▶ Aligns the formats for female and male competitions.
- ▶ Aligns the youth and senior formats within men's and boy's competitions.
- ▶ Provides for more competitive leagues, with like for like opportunities between clubs in the same division.
- ▶ Promotes a better environment for individual player development.
- ▶ Creates opportunity in NPLY2 and NPL2 for aspiring clubs to develop.
- ▶ Incentivises clubs to invest in player development through implementing promotion and relegation between NPLY1 and NPLY2, and between NPL1 and NPL2.

Application

On 2 October 2020, Capital Football opened an application process for clubs to express interest in participating in the 2021 NPL competitions. Clubs were informed that applications would be assessed considering the following key areas of focus;

Area of Focus	Detail
Performance	League table positions (2018, 2019, 2020 for NPLW, and 2019, 2020 for all other competitions).
Participation	Fielding teams in all age grades in the 2019 and 2020 seasons. Forfeit history in the 2019 and 2020 seasons.
Coaching	Coach qualifications (2019 and 2020 seasons).
Development	Football Development Plan. 2021 Coach structure and qualifications.
Facilities	Nominated match and training facilities.
Finance	Financial Statements and equity position.
Governance	Club Constitution, AGM minutes, Strategic Plan and Member Protection.

Assessment

Within each key area of focus, the degree to which a club satisfied the requirement was rated against a set of six criteria relevant to each area. A weighting was also applied to each category to highlight areas important to football, including;

- ▶ On-field performance (demonstrating the club's ability to be competitive in the leagues).

- ▶ Participation in the leagues (demonstrating a club's ability to meet the minimum entry standards of the leagues by fielding teams in all age grades).
- ▶ Coaching (demonstrating the club's commitment to appointing appropriately qualified coaches to develop players in the highest tier of competition).

Other categories, while also important to football objectives, were assessed using a lower weighting.

Engagement with Clubs

The application process to enter the 2021 NPL competitions was a competitive process, and we understand and appreciate that some clubs will be disappointed to have not been invited to participate in the leagues, or been allocated to a division lower than their preference.

Capital Football made the difficult decision regarding the declaration of leagues with the ongoing best interests of football in Canberra.

The Capital Football Board is meeting with those affected clubs to provide feedback on their applications.

Opportunities to Play

It has been suggested that decisions on which teams are invited to play in the 2021 NPL competitions has removed opportunities for people to play football. Underpinning the NPL competitions, clubs and players continue to have opportunities to play in the Senior and Junior Community Leagues, with multiple divisions in each age grade.

While moving from nine to eight clubs, the 2021 NPL Competitions league format announcement increased matches in the NPLW by extending the season from 16 matches to 21 matches (with teams playing each other three times as opposed to playing each other twice with two bye rounds). This aligns with *Principle V* of the [FFA XI Principles for the future of football](#) which has a measure to “increase the number of match minutes being played by youth footballers”.

In the NPLY, three new clubs have been included in the NPLY2 competition.

Individual players in all leagues can be selected for any of the teams invited into the NPL Competitions.

Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Sports Complex

It has also been mentioned incorrectly in social and print media that Capital Football plans to use the Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Sports Complex at Jerrabomberra as the training base for the Canberra United Academy (**CUA**).

This assertion is incorrect.

The CUA currently trains at the Hawker Football Centre and will continue to do so until the Home of Football is built in Throsby, at which point CUA training will relocate there.

Promotion and Relegation

We take this opportunity to clarify questions related to promotion and relegation between NPL1 and NPL2, and between NPLY1 and NPLY2.

From the 2021 to 2022 season, there will be promotion and relegation between NPL1 and NPL2, based on the league table position of the 1st Grade team. The NPL1 team at the bottom of the 1st Grade league table at the end of the 2021 season will be relegated to NPL2 in 2022. The NPL2 team at the top of the 1st Grade league table at the end of the 2021 season will be promoted to NPL1 in 2022.

From the 2021 to 2022 season, there will also be promotion and relegation between NPLY1 and NPLY2. Capital Football will engage with the newly appointed Premier Leagues Standing Advisory Committee and Technical Committee over the coming weeks as we confirm the method for determining which clubs are promoted and relegated between the divisions.

Talent Support Program

It has been suggested that only players competing in the NPLY1 will be considered for selection into the Talent Support Program for boys or ACT teams competing at National Championships. This suggestion is incorrect.

Players across all leagues (NPLY1, NPLY2 and Junior Leagues) are eligible and will be considered for talented player programs and representative teams.

This has been, and will continue to be the case, demonstrated by the Talent Support Program and U13 ACT Team in 2019 (the last time the championships were played) having players from NPLY and Junior League teams.