



AFL WOMEN & GIRLS COMMUNITY LEAGUE BEST PRACTICE



The following document outlines the best practice for the delivery of Women's & Girls Community Football competitions. This document only addresses areas not referenced in the AFL's National Community Football Policy Handbook. For all other matters, please refer to the [handbook](#).

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF EQUITY

Leagues and clubs should champion and support the progress of women and girls' community football, guided by the following four principles.



OPPORTUNITY

Women & girls can fully participate as players, coaches, umpires, volunteers & administrators.



VISIBILITY

Women & girls are respected as leaders and role models.



ACCESS

Women & girls have safe and fair access to facilities and resources.



INVESTMENT

There is fair and equitable investment in women & girls' football.

WOMEN & GIRLS DIRECTOR/COORDINATOR

Leagues are encouraged to appoint a Women & Girls Director/Coordinator who can advise on and represent the voice of women and girls on the league's board.

It is also recommended that leagues should strive to have gender balance on their board.

SENIOR WOMEN'S FOOTBALL RULES

Leagues are strongly recommended to align all Senior Women's football competitions, where/when possible, to the following AFLW competition rules:

- » 16-a-side (4-5 player bench);
- » Unlimited rotations;
- » 17-20-minute quarters (inclusive of any time-on);
- » Size 4 ball;
- » Free kick for last disposal out of bounds (between the arcs); and
- » Boundary throw-ins to occur 10m in from the boundary (between the arcs).

The rule changes are designed to assist players to develop their skills under nationally consistent rules that increase opportunities for players to be involved in the play and create a less-congested and freer-flowing match.



JUNIOR/YOUTH GIRLS RULES

Junior & Youth Girls rules are outlined in the [AFL Juniors Rules](#). The rules, structure and environment for the delivery of junior football across the country has been designed to create an optimal experience to drive participation and foster a lifelong connection to the game.

MATCH SCHEDULING & FACILITY ACCESS

It is important that leagues ensure women and girls have equal opportunity to access preferred ovals and timeslots for matches than men and boys. This could be as simple as ensuring the main oval is rotated between men's games and women's games throughout the season.

Leagues could survey their clubs/participants to understand scheduling preferences across different competitions.

Everyone has the right to fully participate and reach their full potential. Without this approach women and girls will continue to face more barriers to participation in the game than men and boys. This creates an unequal playing field, and by creating both perceived and actual barriers to fair participation, Australian Football will never realise the full potential of the game for women and girls.

APPOINTMENT OF UMPIRES

Leagues should **assign or appoint the most suitable umpires** across all competitions (regardless of the gender of the competition or the gender of the umpire).

Leagues can do this by determining the ranking of all competitions and assign league-appointed umpires in order of competition priority. Umpires should be assigned to competitions based on their experience/skill level (not their gender) and the league ranking of the competition. When ranking competitions, it is important that leagues rank based on the level of competition available and not whether it is men's or women's. For example, a reserves men's competition (second highest available competition to men) should not be ranked ahead of a senior women's competition (highest available competition to women).

Umpires who are women or girls are not to be limited to women's and girls' football (and vice versa); rather, umpires who are women can umpire both men's and women's football.

Inappropriate allocation of umpires can jeopardise the integrity and standard of the competition, as well as impact player and umpire retention due to negative experiences. Player and competition development can also be hindered by poor decision-making due to the inexperience of developing umpires, and player welfare can be put at risk.

UNIFORMS

It is recommended that Leagues and clubs remove any mandates for white shorts, instead allowing women's and girls' teams to wear alternate-coloured shorts as away shorts where required.

The traditional white away shorts can make women and girls feel uncomfortable.

"Having navy or black would be nice as it would make me less self-conscious when on my period"

[Click here](#) to access the Change Our Game research on the importance of uniforms for girls in sport.

COMPETITIVE BALANCE

As women's competitions continue to evolve, leagues should consider the need for player points or other competitive balance measures.

Competitive balance frameworks are designed to support appropriate player development, retention of players and the sustainability of competitions.

Leagues should liaise with their AFL state body for further information regarding the development of a Player Points System. Player Points System policies may need to be tailored to address local issues/circumstances and be approved by the relevant AFL state body.

FLEXIBILITY IN GROWING COMPETITIONS

Leagues are encouraged to think about ways they can be flexible in providing opportunities to women and girls in areas where Australian Football is still growing. For example, if you don't have enough participants to field a 16-a-side competition for senior women, think about how you can offer a modified competition with reduced numbers in the first year whilst you grow the base of participation. Alternative length of competition, time of year or timeslot in the week may also be considered in consultation with the interested players and clubs.

Other options to consider when growing competitions, especially for juniors, includes hybrid competitions (such as an Auskick or Superkick extension program) or, gala days/round robins.

OTHER RESOURCES

- » [AFL Community Football Gender Diversity Policy](#)
- » [AFL Community Football Policy Handbook](#)
- » [AFL Preferred Facility Guidelines](#)
- » [AFL Women's Vision](#)
- » [AFL Women & Girls Game Development Action Plan](#)
- » [AFL Women & Girls Community Football Charter](#)
- » [Concussion Management Resources](#)
- » [Girls Community Football Acquisition & Retention Research](#)
- » [AFL Junior Rules](#)

