

CASE STUDY

AFL Riverina



Department of
Local Government, Sport
and Cultural Industries

Keeping Country Football Alive

AFL Riverina is the resultant merger between multiple football and netball leagues in rural NSW since the early 1980's. AFL Riverina is governed by a board of six and has a paid administrator, funded under the AFL and by the League.

The Challenge

AFL Riverina is seeking to operate a sustainable football competition to ensure club growth and sustainability and enhance competitive balance and player retention.

Why Did They Do It?

AFL Riverina was experiencing what many rural football clubs in Western Australia experience, that being:

- ◆ Declining population bases in small rural towns and the difficulty of retaining competitive teams
- ◆ Trying to recruit players from major regional centres and thus competing with other clubs and associations
- ◆ Clubs finding it difficult to field senior first grade and reserve sides in football
- ◆ Football clubs outlaying significant funds to attract and retain key players to continue to participate and be competitive in football leagues
- ◆ Volunteer exhaustion and lack of volunteers for committee positions across all clubs and associations
- ◆ Many leagues operating and competing in small geographical districts / sub regions

What Was Achieved

In 2018, the board of AFL Riverina engaged an external consultant to conduct a Competitions Review to determine the optimal competition structures and pathways in the region to facilitate competitive balance, ensure community club sustainability and drive the future growth of AFL. The review had a number of recommendations with two specifically around the league composition:

- ◆ Revising senior football competition structures into a club based tiered model to ensure club growth and sustainability, and enhance competitive balance and player retention
- ◆ Developing criteria for club participation and club minimum standards to provide a framework for aspiring clubs, enhance standards and drive club development and improvement

The AFL Riverina board will implement a divisional football league in 2022 with two club tiers within it:

1. A community competition – rural clubs, generally from small populations with a stable membership base and have the capacity to field teams from their own town or neighbouring towns. These clubs wish to retain a football team. These clubs wish to compete at a level they are comfortable with but also acknowledge that they may have difficulty fielding all three teams each season - first grade, reserve and U17's. Clubs in this competition are required to only field one senior grade and one junior grade of football.
2. A premier competition – rural clubs with a strong junior and senior base to populate a senior first grade, reserve and U17's side. These clubs are likely to grow in membership and are encouraged to grow sustainably to develop junior and senior football pathways into larger competitions.



CASE STUDY

Lake King, Hopetoun and Ravensthorpe Winter Sports



Department of
Local Government, Sport
and Cultural Industries

Improving Winter Sports Governance

Volunteer club and association committee members of the three Winter sports across the southern towns of Lake King, Hopetoun and Ravensthorpe identified the need to streamline governance and an improved one day Winter sports competition.

The Challenge

To improve the one day Winter sports fixtures in partnership with clubs and associations, using an informal unincorporated existing group called the Winter Sports Executive. Whilst at the same time improving club and association governance and reducing volunteer exhaustion in delivering the season.

Why Did They Do It?

At the time, the Winter sporting clubs and associations were experiencing:

- ◆ Low game day numbers in both junior and senior sports due to inflexible fixturing and decreasing populations
- ◆ Volunteers were time poor, exhausted and there were not enough to fill club and association positions
- ◆ Unclear roles and responsibilities within clubs, associations and the Winter Sport Executive
- ◆ Unclear guidelines and communication amongst clubs, associations and the Winter Sports Executive
- ◆ Winter Sports Executive meetings were infrequent and the group did not have a clear mandate and was not systematically included for major competition-wide decisions
- ◆ Adverse impacts from community issues such as the Ravensthorpe Nickel Mine opening and closing and the lack of flexibility the current club and association governance structure had in responding to these issues

What was Achieved?

Over the period of 2yrs the club and association committees worked collaboratively to achieve:

- ◆ Three clubs playing senior and junior sport all on one day in one location
- ◆ Improved operating framework and governance of the Winter Sports Executive. This group continued as an unincorporated organisation but became clearer on its role, responsibilities, as well as improving its meeting structure, appointment of representatives to the Executive and ultimately the 'leaders' of the Winter sports competition, communication and engagement with clubs / associations
- ◆ Improved game day structure for three Winter sports. All played on one day in each of the towns, rotated weekly. Improvements included moving the start and finishing times of the one day competition to account for socialisation at the end of the day, the start and finish times of each junior and senior game, scheduling of sports to encourage participation across more than one sport, including the needs of umpires and canteen volunteers
- ◆ Improved process for developing and implementing the fixtures. The Winter Sports Executive which now included equal representation from the Winter sports had time to contribute to the development of fixtures and at the end of the season offer ideas for improvement. Additionally the fixtures had a focus on supporting volunteers on the day and bringing families together at the end of the day for a meal (and ultimately financial contributing to the host club)
- ◆ The employment of a Winter Sports Coordinator to support clubs and associations with their administration and governance – ultimately reducing the workload of volunteers. The Winter Sports Coordinator was required to learn three different sports administration systems for football, netball and hockey.



CASE STUDY

Central Midlands Coastal Football League



Department of
Local Government, Sport
and Cultural Industries

Delivering Winter Sports Under One League

The Central Midlands Coastal Football League (CMCFL) is a combined one day Winter sports competition (football, netball and hockey) with clubs from the communities of Moora, Lancelin, Cervantes, Jurien Bay and Dandaragan. It currently includes all senior sports and is working towards aligning all junior sports.

The Challenge

To align Winter sports games and have one organising administration.

Why Did They Do It?

Prior to establishing the Central Midlands Coastal Football League there were:

- ◆ Two neighbouring football leagues operating with diminishing participation numbers
- ◆ Games being played on both Saturday and Sunday's in two leagues
- ◆ Football, netball and hockey playing days were not aligned
- ◆ Time poor volunteers and a large number required to run multiple sports and clubs
- ◆ Reducing participation numbers

What was Achieved?

Following the consolidation of two leagues into the CMCFL, the football clubs identified the desire to move to a one day Winter sports competition with the other two major Winter sports in their communities – netball and hockey.

The CMCFL Board approached all clubs within the CMCFL and instigated the start of what has now become a one day Winter sports competition.

Senior netball was included in 2010 and is gaining momentum, with juniors starting in 2019. An A Reserves competition was due to start in 2020.

Hockey was included in 2018 and the CMCFL aim to include junior hockey in the near future.

Today Central Midlands Coastal Football League includes a volunteer board of 5 directors and a paid Operations Manager. The 5 directors are appointed based on their skills and experiences and must be nominated and seconded by a member club. Each club attends the yearly board meetings and each is asked for feedback on all matters with decisions being made by the board.

The board has the opportunity to delegate tasks to sub committees if it so wishes. Clubs of the League are able to get together as and when they need to, to discuss the competition structure, fixtures, membership etc. This information can be brought up to the board for discussion. During a regular season, the board and delegates meet 3 times.

There is a paid Operations Manager. Duties include secretarial services to the CMCFL, membership management, fixturing and all other operational matters. The position is funded by the CMCFL.

