



COVID FUNCTIONAL FRAMEWORK

COVID FUNCTIONAL FRAMEWORK & By Laws

AFL Victoria and its affiliated bodies seek to provide a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment for people to experience Australian Rules Football, to overcome adversity and unite communities through the game of Australian Rules Football.

As the governing body, through the provision of leadership and being outcome focussed, we will focus on what can be done, to Return to Play and supporting our Leagues.

The COVID Functional Framework is to support Community Football for a Return to Play in 2022 and beyond recognising the potential impacts of any interruptions and being prepared for the various scenarios:

- It includes a set of agreed terms that will work as 'triggers' (By Laws).
- It will remove ambiguity around decision making, reduce the stress and anxiety on administrators/volunteers and clearly outline the way forward in a simple, concise, and easy to understand format.
- The Framework is focussed on the provision of By Laws that will allow the management of a season following the cancellation of 2020 and impacted 2021 seasons.

In the COVID environment we need to establish a minimum viable season will be a version of our normal with enough features to be usable by leagues, clubs, and participants.

Don't let perfect get in the way of good.

What does this mean? It doesn't have to be perfect; the highest priority is to Return to Play in a safe and welcoming environment. Quality and equitability come a distant second to the goal of creating a season that gets underway, can be flexible with fixturing and can accommodate a finals series.

This Framework is built on the willingness to present a viable season that gives participants the opportunity to participate and provides the vehicle to feel connected in difficult times.

It is proposed that each League adopt By Laws and regulations which can manage the scenarios of an impacted season.



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Governing Principals

- That the health and safety of the community remains the highest priority
- That whilst balanced competition is important, that the opportunity to participate whenever possible be of higher priority
- That where possible the H&A and Finals shall be conducted within the traditional timeframes
- Equality in the draw be of lesser importance than opportunity to participate whenever possible
- That a minor premiership be acknowledged once, as a minimum, all clubs have played all other teams in their competition at least once.
- That a minimum viable season which triggers a finals series be the maximum number of games possible and not influenced by traditional fixture requirements and expectations
- That a Finals Series be played with a minimum of 1 week (1 v 2) and up to a traditional final's series of 4 weeks
- Should any scenario occur which is not covered within these By Laws then the matter shall be referred to the League Executive to determine at their absolute discretion

Subject to changes in the Federal or State Government COVID Restrictions and AFL Victoria Protocols, a season may be impacted which shall trigger the implementation of the following By Laws.

1. Vaccinations Policy

Refer to the Victorian Government website [How we live: Information for Victorians | Coronavirus Victoria](#) and **Getting active**.

Vaccination requirements don't apply to people involved in community sport (e.g. a local footy match) or people using swimming pools for essential medical care like hydrotherapy.

If the space is being operated only for the purpose of community sport, participants, spectators and workers (including volunteers), are excluded from the vaccination requirement.

Social rooms where food and/or drink are being served, come under hospitality regulations, and as such require all that enter to be fully vaccinated.

2. Positive COVID TEST

Should a Player/Official receive a positive COVID Test Result, they must immediately follow Victorian Health Authorities directions.

The Player/Official must advise the Club immediately of the positive COVID Result and the Club assess the potential extent of exposure to its players and officials and notify the relevant League Manager immediately.

Based on the extent of exposure, should the number of players in COVID isolation affect their ability to field teams the relevant By Laws shall be enacted.

Public Health Authority shall advise on an individual's ability to Return to training or playing.



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3. Impact of a COVID Interruption to Open Age Team Player availability

- Should players be unavailable to play any game as scheduled by the league due to COVID isolation requirements, Senior games shall take precedent for player numbers.
- Senior games will be played provided that:
 - Senior teams can field a minimum of **14 players and 2 on the bench, 16 in total.**
 - Should a team not be able to field **14 and 2** the game shall be cancelled, and each team awarded 2 points
 - Teams must have equal number of players on the field at the commencement of the match
 - Senior teams shall not share players
- Reserve games will be played provided that:
 - Reserve teams can field a minimum of **14** players.
 - Teams are required to share players to meet the minimum requirement
 - Should a team not be able to field **14** players, the game shall be cancelled, and each team awarded 2 points
 - Teams must have equal number of players on the field at the commencement of the match
 - If one team has players more than the other team, the team with more players than the team with fewer players must share the excess players until each team has equal numbers of players. If the number of excess players from the club with more players is an odd number, then the team with the greater number of players will retain one extra player on the bench.
 - Teams may have unequal numbers on the bench
 - Where games are cancelled, teams are encouraged to play a practice match where possible

4. Impact of a COVID Interruption to Underage Team Player availability (Under 19 and below)

- Should players be unavailable to play any game as scheduled by the league due to COVID isolation requirements, the game will be played provided that:
 - Teams can field a minimum of **14** players in total
 - Teams are required to share players to meet the minimum requirement
 - Should a team not be able to field **14** the game shall be cancelled, and each team awarded 2 points
 - Teams must have equal number of players on the field at the commencement of the match.
 - If one team has players more than the other team, the team with more players than the team with fewer players must share the excess players until each team has equal numbers of players. If the number of excess players from the club with more players is an odd number, then the team with the greater number of players will retain one extra player on the bench
 - Teams may have unequal numbers on the bench
 - Where games are cancelled, teams are encouraged to play a practice match where possible



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5. Impact of COVID on Umpire Availability

- Should umpires be unavailable to be appointed to matches as scheduled due to COVID isolation requirements, Senior matches (Men's and Women's) shall be a higher priority than Reserves
- Should umpires be unavailable to be appointed to Senior matches as scheduled by the league/umpire association due to COVID isolation requirements, Field umpires will be appointed as first priority, Goal umpires will be appointed as second priority, Boundary umpires appointed as third priority:
- Should an umpire group not be able to appoint Field umpires to all Senior matches, or where only partial umpire panels are appointed (e.g. Field umpires only) or Boundary or Goal umpires do not attend to officiate a match, the competing Teams may appoint an umpire(s) to officiate in those roles.
- Where a match is not appointed any league/association Field umpires, clubs will refer to Law 8.1.4 where the competing Teams may appoint a Field Umpire each to officiate the match.
- Should no boundary umpires are appointed or club volunteers available to a match, the officiating field umpire shall adopt the last disposal rule. If this is to occur:
 - o The field umpires will award a free kick against the team of a player who kicks or handballs the ball over the boundary, regardless of intent, when the ball crosses the boundary line between the two 50m arcs.
 - o If the ball goes out of bounds inside the 50m arcs, the field umpire shall ball the ball up at the spot where a boundary throw-in ruck contest would normally occur.

6. Impact of a COVID Interruption on a Single Round

- Should an entire Round of matches be abandoned, no points or percentage shall be awarded to any team
- If the abandoned round matchups have not previously been played in the current season, the abandoned round will be the next round played when resumption of play is allowed and the ensuing rounds will be pushed back accordingly. To enable the finals series to commence as scheduled, rounds at the end of the season will be cancelled relative the number of abandoned rounds.
- If a round is abandoned after all teams have played each other once, the season shall recommence with the next scheduled round.
- The season shall continue until the original finals are scheduled to commence

7. Impact of a COVID Interruption on a consecutive Rounds

- Should consecutive Rounds of matches be abandoned, no points or percentage shall be awarded to any team for the abandoned Rounds
- If the abandoned round matchups have not previously been played in the current season, the abandoned rounds will be the next rounds played when resumption of play is allowed and the ensuing rounds will be pushed back accordingly. To enable the finals series to commence as scheduled, rounds at the end of the season will be cancelled relative the number of abandoned rounds.
- If a round is abandoned after all teams have played each other once, the season shall recommence with the next scheduled round.
- The season shall continue until the original finals are scheduled to commence



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8. Impact of a COVID Interruption on a Multiple Rounds

- Should multiple Rounds of matches be abandoned, no points or percentage shall be awarded to any team
- If the abandoned round matchups have not previously been played in the current season, the abandoned rounds will be the next rounds played when resumption of play is allowed and the ensuing rounds will be pushed back accordingly. To enable the finals series to commence as scheduled, rounds at the end of the season will be cancelled relative the number of abandoned rounds.
- If a round is abandoned after all teams have played each other once, the season shall recommence with the next scheduled round.
- The season shall continue until the original finals are scheduled to commence

9. Impact of a COVID Interruption on individual matches within any Round

- Should individual matches within any Round be abandoned, team shall be awarded 2 points each and the average weekly percentage of all participating teams of the same competition from that round of matches
- The individual games shall not be rescheduled
- The season shall continue until the original finals are scheduled to commence
- Suitable evidence must be provided by the affected club to support their inability to field a team in the respective competition.

10. Return to Play following a COVID Interrupted Round or Match

- If 1-3 consecutive Rounds have been abandoned, then the season may recommence as above at the discretion of the league. If 4-6 consecutive Rounds have been abandoned, then the season shall recommence as above following a minimum of 7-day training period at the discretion of the league but not less than a minimum 7-day training period
- If more than 6 consecutive Rounds have been abandoned, then the season shall recommence as above following a minimum 14-day training period at the discretion of the League but not less than a minimum 14 day training period
- Should the recommencement following any period of abandonment occur during the scheduled Finals Series, then the Finals shall be adjusted at the direction of the League Executive in consultation with the Region Commission and AFL Victoria

11. Impact of a COVID Interruption on an individual FINALS matches

- League Executive may reschedule FINALS matches at their absolute discretion
- Where time does not permit for a FINALS game to be rescheduled, should an individual FINALS match, excluding the GRAND FINAL be abandoned, the team with a higher ladder position at the end of the Home and Away season shall be deemed the winner by virtue of higher ranking

12. Impact of a COVID Interruption on a GRAND FINAL

- League Executive may reschedule the GRAND FINAL matches at their absolute discretion
- GRAND FINAL must be completed by **the Friday immediately preceding the AFL Grand Final.**
- Where time does not permit for the GRAND FINAL to be rescheduled and the GRAND FINAL be abandoned, no Premiers shall be Awarded



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13. Impact of a COVID cancellation of an entire Finals Series

- Should the entire Finals Series be abandoned with no finals games commencing, the team who finished top of the ladder at the completion of the Home & Away Season shall be acknowledged as the Minor Premiers provided the leagues minimum number of H&A games be achieved.
- No Premiership shall be awarded under this clause
 - o Minor Premiers determined immediately at the conclusion of the H&A series

14. Final Qualifications in a COVID interrupted Season

- Should a season be impacted on by COVID in any manner, the League Executive may determine FINAL Qualifications game requirements for Players at their absolute discretion at any stage during the season.

15. League Awards in a COVID interrupted Season

- Should a season be impacted on by COVID in any manner, the League Executive may determine at their absolute discretion at any stage during the season the management of and awarding of League Awards.

16. Consequence of a suspension in a COVID interrupted Season

- All suspensions MUST be served in accordance with the AFL Victoria Country Rules and suspensions apply to games played and not dates.

17. Impact of COVID Interruption on the Allowable Player Payment Rule

- Should a round be abandoned, then the Allowable Player Payment Caps shall immediately be calculated on a pro rata of games played by the respective clubs
- Country Leagues may make application to the Region Commission to reduce the Allowable Player Payment Cap at any stage during the season should a minimum of 6 Rounds be abandoned
- Should any scenario occur which is not covered within this regulation, then the matter shall be referred to the AFL Barwon Commission to determine at their absolute discretion

18. Impact of COVID Interruption on the Player Point System

- Regardless of any Rounds being abandoned, the Player Point System regulations and categories shall not be affected
- Should individual club matches be abandoned, clubs may make application to the AFL Barwon Commission for special consideration for individual Player Reassessment for the following season under relevant region processes and consistent with the Clause 7.3 of AFL Victoria Player Points system Policy.

19. Matters not covered by COVID By Laws

- Should any scenario occur which is not covered within these By Laws then the matter shall be referred to the League Executive to determine at their absolute discretion