



AFL VICTORIA AND CRICKET VICTORIA

# **COVID-19 Winter to Summer Seasons 2020 Transition Framework**

22 MAY 2020



## COVID-19 WINTER TO SUMMER SEASONS | 2020 TRANSITION FRAMEWORK

Australian Football and Cricket have a long history of working together and sharing many of Victoria's sporting fields. Approximately 90% of all ovals used for Australian Football are also used for Cricket with a large number of participants, and volunteers involved in both sports and many using the same sporting facilities.

Demonstrating this partnership, AFL Victoria and Cricket Victoria (together with the State Government) have long been party to a Determination of Seasons Agreement which defines the traditional football and cricket seasons. This agreement and the ongoing spirit of cooperation has and will continue to serve both sports well.

The impact of COVID-19 is possibly the greatest challenge each of our sports have ever faced.

AFL Victoria acknowledge that 2019/20 Cricket competitions over the summer were significantly hampered by poor weather (heat & rain), followed by the impact of the bushfires / smoke haze and then the impact of COVID-19 seeing many cricket grand finals not proceeding. In addition, the winter-based cricket competitions and indoor cricket competitions have been severely impacted by the cancellation of sport due to the Pandemic.

Similarly Cricket Victoria acknowledge the significant impact that has been caused to Australian Football by the inability to commence competitions and the continued uncertainty caused by not knowing when competitions could start.

To assist our respective networks with planning (together with guidance to all Victorian Local Government Authorities), AFL Victoria and Cricket Victoria have developed the following set of underlying principles to help the various leagues, associations and clubs with planning for return to play of our respective sports competitions.

The desire for community football and cricket to return is being carefully planned by both sports and will require collaboration with many health experts, government bodies at all levels, other sports and volunteers.

Despite the uncertainty regarding a return to play date for either sport and acknowledging that current restrictions could be eased and/or further restricted over coming weeks / months, AFL Victoria and Cricket Victoria agree to the following to help guide planning for both sports:

### Principles of the agreement:

- Acknowledgment of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on both sports.
- A desire of both sports to see strong vibrant community football clubs and strong vibrant community cricket clubs and maximise participation opportunities for both sports through this period.
- Providing a framework for competitions and Local Government to plan ahead - noting that some football Leagues may choose to finish their seasons earlier (or not start at all) and some cricket Associations may choose to start their seasons later (or be forced to start later due to underprepared grounds / wickets for safe play).
- Acknowledgment of the role that Local Government/land managers will play in transitioning grounds between sports and allowing a gradual transition of grounds from football to cricket.
- Acknowledgment that an overlap of seasons should be minimised given the number of participants, volunteers, families and grounds that are shared by both sports.
- Input has been received by various cricket and football stakeholders and the Victorian State Government to seek to find the best outcome for all.



## AGREED POSITIONS BY BOTH AFL VICTORIA AND CRICKET VICTORIA

### FOOTBALL / CRICKET SEASON TIMING

1. Priority use access shall be provided to **football leagues** to fixture competitions up to no later than the following:
  - a. **Home and Away** football fixtures for Seniors and Juniors to conclude on or before **Sunday 27th September**;
  - b. **Finals** (or 'lightning premierships') for **Juniors** to conclude on or before **Sunday 11th October**; &
  - c. **Finals** fixtures for **Seniors** to conclude on or before **Sunday 18th October**

*NB: This approach provides the ability for the vast majority of grounds to be transitioned to cricket use from the end of September and then a gradual transitioning of remaining grounds through the finals period.*

2. Priority use access shall be provided for **cricket associations** to fixture competitions from no earlier than the following (with play to commence when safe to do so – including ensuring matches do not proceed until pitches are adequately prepared):
  - a. **Premier Cricket** 1st & 2nd XI competition (Men and Women) – **Saturday 10th October**;
  - b. **Junior** competitions from **Friday 16th October**; &
  - c. All other **Senior** competitions from **Friday 23rd October**

*NB: Where community football competitions choose to not commence their season or have completed their season by the end of September, Cricket Associations shall retain priority flexibility to schedule matches from October 1st.*

### GROUND USAGE

3. No football matches shall be scheduled for any of the 21 Premier Cricket (Men & Women) 'main' grounds from October 1 with details of those grounds already supplied by Cricket Victoria to AFL Victoria. In addition,
  - a. The prioritisation ranking (in order) of grounds for use by Football during all finals and any Junior Lightning Premiership shall be (where practicable) as follows:
    - i. Football grounds without a cricket pitch; then
    - ii. Football / cricket grounds with a synthetic cricket pitch; then
    - iii. Football / cricket grounds with turf wickets
  - b. Every effort shall be made by football clubs, cricket clubs and local councils to seek to protect all turf wickets including covering, preparing, roping off the centre square outside of matches and (if necessary) training from the 3rd week of September at the latest to help prepare safe turf wickets for use by cricket competitions

### ADDITIONAL COMMENTARY TO ASSIST WITH PLANNING

4. Given a reduced handover period compared to 'normal' seasons, formal handover is recommended to occur as soon as possible after the football teams who normally use the ground have finished their season – i.e. within five (5) calendar days
5. Football Leagues are strongly encouraged to work with their relevant cricket association(s) and local government(s) as soon as possible to identify grounds to be used in October to assist with the transition between sports and for cricket association fixturing
6. The Premier Cricket competition (Men's & Women's) shall be entitled to schedule finals matches through to April 25, 2021. The finals dates will be confirmed before September 30. Every effort will be made to minimise the impact on football grounds and competitions in finals scheduling during this period
7. Other senior turf cricket competitions (outside of Premier Cricket) shall only be entitled to consider scheduling finals through April 2021 where they cannot commence their season before November 1, 2020 due to inadequate time to prepare safe wickets. The position of each affected Association shall be confirmed by no later than November 30, 2020 and discussed locally with the relevant football league(s)
8. Local Government bodies will obviously play a significant role in working collaboratively with local football and cricket organisers to help plan ground usage and access
9. Local clubs are encouraged to work collaboratively to see football teams with priority in-season and finals access for training and matches as well as cricket teams with support for pre-season preparations