

9<sup>th</sup> May 2022

Dear Member Clubs

We understand it has been a very frustrating start to the season with the unprecedented wet weather we have experienced.

Over the past week, we have had the opportunity to have thorough discussions across our local Council areas to obtain feedback in relation to the status of grounds across the region.

Some of the difficulties and challenges we face are as follows:

- A number of grounds will remain out of action for a further 3-4 weeks. This is because grounds cannot be mowed (and in some cases attempts have resulted in significant field damage). Councils also need heavy vehicles to access grounds and install goal posts and cover cricket pitches. Accessing grounds to perform this activity cannot occur at this time.
- Cricket has been significantly impacted by the wet weather and there will be minimal opportunity for any scope creep across seasons. In addition, Wollongong is hosting a major UCI Event (World Road Cycling Championships) which is considered to be an Olympic size event. This will result in significant road closures from 17 to 25 September. This event is also predicted to have an impact on the availability of Emergency Services. School Holidays are then scheduled from the 26 September to 7 October.
- With competition games, we have a number of divisions where teams have already played games and others have not. If this gap widens further, this will result in other adverse impacts later in the season where additional make up games may be required, putting even more pressure on grounds.
- One rule will not fit all with our competitions given the different team numbers that exist within different divisions. For example, an eight team competition will result in a different structure to a 13 team competition.

After taking all of these complex factors into consideration, we have attached a summary of each Competition and the proposed way forward for the 2022 Season. In summary, the proposed plan operates with the following key principles:

- We are looking to facilitate as many games as possible with the available weekends we have, taking into consideration impacts of the UCI Event.
- We are anticipating that for the majority of community competitions, grounds will not be available until at least 28 May (in the event of no further significant wet weather). Upon factoring in this date, 15/16 rounds (normally 18 rounds) can be played across the majority of our competitions.
- Up until 28 May, games will be facilitated where possible (this may be via trial games, make up or grading games). This timeframe may also allow additional training and fitness development from a player welfare and preparation perspective.
- We are seeking feedback from clubs on Grand Final options across various competitions and further information will be provided in relation to this shortly.

As you can understand, it has been difficult to plan a way forward with circumstances that are beyond our control and where information is being obtained from other organisations such as Councils on a week-to-week basis.

We acknowledge that this has been an extremely difficult period for clubs to find training facilities and facilitate grounds, especially with the disruption over the last 2 years and now having our community experiencing an unprecedented wet weather event. Thank you for your huge efforts to date.

We anticipate that this information will provide our member clubs with some detailed direction on the approach for the season, which will assist in communications with the entire local football community. Please note however, that any further significant wet weather will result in variations being required to this plan.