

Dear Member Clubs,

As part of Football South Coast's ongoing commitment to strengthening the female football pathway and providing sustainable competition structures across all age groups, we are pleased to outline the competition framework being planned for the 2026 season in relation to female youth / under 18 competition structures and in consideration of the Women's Premier League reverting from a three grade to two grade structure:

Following a detailed review of 2025 participation data and club feedback, the following approach has been developed in line with FSC strategic focus on maintaining and enhancing female player pathways:

- Data and feedback indicate that player numbers will not be sufficient to support any form of a standalone female youth competition in 2026.
- The average age of players in the 2025 Women's Premier League Youth Grade is 17–18 years.

Accordingly, the 2026 season will see an expanded and strengthened U18 competition, designed to accommodate these players and ensure a more robust and competitive environment as we see further growth in female participation numbers from junior age groups.

Transition Year & Exemptions

To support a smooth transition:

- A limited exemption process will be introduced to allow select 19-year-old players to participate in the U18 competition under strict criteria.
 - A maximum of 3 players aged 19 yrs per team
 - The process for exemption is to submit a (late) registration request form. (The registrar cannot add the player directly to the team in Dribl and exemption will be automatically approved if maximum has not occurred)

Note - The inclusion of a 19-year-old in your team will however mean that the team is **ineligible** to participate in FNSW U18 Girls competitions (State Cup or Champion of Champions)

Other points:

Minimum Age for registration is 16

Borrowing from WPL or WCL is not permitted.

Borrowing from Junior is permitted as per comp rules.

FNSW

- FSC will consider inviting teams to U21's Women's - FNSW Champion of Champions and will use the following as a guide.
 1. League Ranking of first two teams in Second Grade of WPL if and only if the team is age eligible meaning that for all league games the participants from the Club were always U21. i.e. no overage player participated in League or final series then
 2. League Ranking of first two teams in U18 comp where teams had U19 players participating.

Note - Teams with significant disciplinary issues are likely not to be considered.

- Currently there is no State Cup for U21 Women's.
- Teams in U18 Girls Division 1 only may be considered for FNSW competitions in this age group.

Premier League & All Age Women's Competitions

- Feedback from Premier League clubs confirms that two grades will meet their player capacity and competition needs.
- Any players not selected for Premier League squads will be encouraged to participate in either the U18 or All Age Women's competitions, ensuring ongoing opportunities for match play and development.
- The female player progression pathway from U18 into Premier League or All Age Women's football (for players aged 19+) will be actively promoted through FSC communications and club engagement initiatives.

This competition framework aims to ensure a balanced, competitive, and development-focused environment for all female players, supporting their continued football journey within our region.

Further details and implementation timelines will be shared with clubs in the coming weeks as we prepare for Season 2026.

Yours in football,

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