

Brighton's Response to the FFV's First Forum on U12 Proposed Changes for Community Clubs

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Brighton's Position after attending the First Forum on 28 June 2017

Victoria's leading junior community soccer club continues to be unanimously opposed to the FFV's proposed change for U12 from 11v11 on a full pitch to 9v9 on a ½ pitch.

Many other clubs have also expressed opposition or major concerns regarding the proposed change to 9v9.

The FFV must undertake a proper review and consultation process prior to making any change. Changes should not be rushed.

Given the preliminary nature of consultations – at the time of writing no presentation has been emailed for clubs to consider – we believe that it is already too late to consider changes for 2018. Brighton and other clubs typically commence "Transition to U12" programs in late July.

There should be no change in U12s in 2018.

FFV Presentation & Forum

We thank the FFV for arranging the First Forum on U12 proposals on 28 June 2017

- This first forum highlighted the need for increased dialogue between FFV and Community Clubs
- We believe the FFV should make presentation material available to members prior to forums, and note that at the time of writing the presentation still has not been distributed

Forums should not be held in School Holiday Periods

- We remind the FFV that we are volunteer organisations run by parents
- Many private schools were already on holiday in the week of 28 June
- Many other parents are busy in the week leading up to school holidays or were already on holidays
- This was reflected in the low attendance at the Forum
- A further Forum should be held to allow more junior clubs' representatives (who are parents) to attend

Feedback should not be sought from Junior clubs over school holiday periods

- It is inappropriate for feedback to be sought by 17 July to a presentation which is yet to be distributed to Clubs (17 July is the revised date due to the FFV delay in sending the presentation due to the FFV's need to include "further content")
- In our opinion, this request shows a poor understanding of the volunteers at junior community soccer clubs - we are parents of school kids, and we are often on holiday during school holidays or we are busy juggling work and the kids!
- We ask the FFV to extend the date for feedback to provide a reasonable opportunity for volunteer parent committees to discuss what has been presented
- Given most club committees meet on a monthly basis, allowing four weeks after everyone gets back from school holidays, **the FFV should extend the date for feedback to 12 August 2017**

We do not believe a key reason presented for the need for the change – we do not believe such a dramatic crisis exists in U11s dropping out

- The FFA presented shocking participation drop out data as a key reason for why the change is needed
- The FFA presented that only 12.5% of U11s are still playing at U13
- That is, **the FFA stated that 8 out of every 9 U11 players in Victoria are dropping out by U13**
- This participation crisis was presented as a key reason for the need to change the U12 format
- Many clubs attending did not believe this data and rejected this as not representing their clubs' experience
- Under questioning, the FFA advised that this data had not been verified with clubs
- We ask the FFV to produce this statistic for each of the Community Clubs so that we can benchmark ourselves
- We do not believe there is a participation crisis of the magnitude stated by the FFA, and consequently we do not believe there is an urgent need to change the U12 format

We do not believe there is a major drop in participation due to U12 playing 11v11

- In the presentation, the FFA did not provide any analysis of the reasons why (in their assessment) 8 out of 9 U11 kids are dropping out
- We ask the FFV to conduct an Exit Interview Survey of the U11s who have dropped out to understand the reasons why they have dropped out of soccer
- Such analysis will provide important guidance as to what, if any, changes should be made to U12 in Victoria
- We would like to understand what level of drop out is due to "U12 pitch too big / 11v11 too daunting"
- If this is major reason, then there may be merit in changing to 9v9
- This data should be collected and shared with Community Clubs prior to making unnecessary or ill-informed changes to the U12 format

The FFV Junior Standing Committee has not issued a recommendation in favour of the proposed change

- No major change should be made to junior soccer in Victoria without the assessment and recommendation of the FFV Junior Standing Committee
- FFV management cannot circumvent the key Junior soccer policy formulation committee
- We ask that the FFV Junior Standing Committee assess the proposal and the alternatives
- We ask the FFV JSC to provide a presentation document on its assessment and recommendation to the Community Clubs
- We ask that a Forum be held for the JSC to present their assessment and recommendation and take questions from Community Clubs

No evidence was presented at the First Presentation to support the proposed change to extend Miniroos to U12

- Lots of evidence was presented of SSF being good for kids
- BUT no evidence was provided to support changing the point of transition from SSF to LSF to U13 instead of U12
- It was not explained why SSF should not be kept for U13, U14 or older ages
- We ask the FFV to share evidence of why 13 years and 4 months of age (and not other ages) is the most appropriate age for Victorian juniors to transition to Large Sided Football
- No analysis addressing the size of Victorian kids, their playing capabilities, their average years of experience by U12 etc was presented

No assessment was made of whether 8v8 was more appropriate than 9v9 or 11v11

- Our view is 9v9 is too crowded for such big kids on such a small pitch

The FFV's proposal is extreme and no example was provided anywhere in the world of so many big kids playing on such a small pitch

- We haven't surveyed the world but we can't find such big kids playing so crowded on such a small pitch
- The FFV proposal is for kids starting age 12 years and 4 months to play 9v9 on a pitch max length (under the NPL rules) of 60m
- In England, 1/3 of these U12 kids would be playing U13, and the other 2/3 would be playing on a recommended pitch which is 22% longer
- In Holland, the kids would be playing 8v8 so as to not crowd out the space
- A severely crowded pitch leads to pinball game rather than a soccer game

Changes to U12 should wait for, and be coordinated with, the FFA's Major Review of Miniroos

- It was revealed that the FFA is conducting a Major Review of Miniroos
- Brighton, the largest Miniroos club in Victoria, was not yet aware of this Major Review
- With the Major Review to Miniroos underway, it would make sense to NOT make changes to U12 format UNTIL the Miniroos strategy is worked out
- We ask that the FFV consult with the Community Clubs regarding the Major Review of Miniroos

"We want to avoid an own goal" - Competition from Other Sports was not Addressed by the FFV

- Some attending Community Clubs voiced very strong concern to consider the competition with other sports and school sports – "We want to avoid an own goal"
- Dynamics are different in different regions and states, e.g. competition with AFL is different in certain regions or states
- The attractiveness of the U12 product to kids and parents needs to be considered
- The timing and day of play needs to be considered
- Many Community Club kids play multiple sports
- Analysis is required to determine where and why kids might choose to drop soccer in favour of another sport, or where and why that choice might be forced on them due to conflicting time etc

"Don't Tell Year 6 kids that they have to Stay in Primary School"

- Some Community Clubs voiced concern that telling U12s to continue to play Miniroos would be a significant turn-off for kids versus other sports and activities
- The general feedback from Community Clubs attending the Forum was that their U12 kids definitely want to play on the big pitch
- Kids watch their heroes play on the big pitch, and want to play 11v11

No evidence was presented that changing to U12 Miniroos will help participation

- It was acknowledged at the commencement of the Forum that participation was key
- However, no evidence was put forward that the proposed changes would help participation

No evidence was presented that removing ladders would help improve the game

- It was proposed to remove ladders but no evidence to support this was presented
- The Community Clubs highlighted that kids like having ladders, that competing sports all have ladders and that in their experience, the existing of ladders does not adversely impact the game or participation.
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No comprehensive feedback was provided on the NPL experience of U12 Miniroos

- A single NPL club representative provided anecdotal experience at a NPL club
- No comprehensive data was presented
- Some Community Club attendees said that they had heard negative feedback from NPL clubs

Hybrid Models had not been considered

- Brighton expressed a view that our 12 x U11 teams will have played 2 years at 9v9 and then when they reach U12 are ready for Large Sided Football (most kids will have 3-4 year's soccer experience by this point)
- However, we have discussed with other Community Clubs which have many new kids joining at U11 and U12 levels and for whom the U12 Miniroos format might be advantageous
- It seems sensible to us to consider a hybrid model, where:
- (1) kids (and teams) who are ready to play U12 11v11 large sided soccer (i.e. Kangas, Wallabies) continue to play U12 11v11 unchanged; and
- (2) Clubs can also enter teams in a U12 Miniroos comp to cater for newer kids.
- Offering U12 Miniroos as an alternative can also reduce the price barrier for new kids to sign up at U12 level, and reduce the parent burden (match books, linesmen, setting up big goals etc).

Clubs are Not Asking for Change of U12 format

- Community Clubs attending the First Presentation were not saying that there was a problem which needed change in the U12 format
- Other issues – e.g. regrading of inappropriately graded teams – seemed to be a more important issue

No Pilot Data was Presented

- No pilot data from any Community Club was presented

Highest Priority for Senior FFV Leaders

- To our knowledge, this is by far the most significant proposed change to football in Victoria
- We ask that the senior leadership of the FFV be closely involved in this major proposed change and allocate resources for the necessary research and pilots to be conducted

A Reminder that we are Volunteers

- Community Clubs are run by volunteers, who are all busy with their day jobs
- We pay the FFV and its staff to work for us to assist our running and development of the game
- It is a reasonable expectation for FFV staff to provide documents ahead of time for consideration by Community Clubs and their volunteer committees
- We ask that the FFV provide materials in advance of Forums

Looking Overseas for Best Practice

- We accept that best practices may be found overseas
- We ask the FFV to look to adopt administrative best practices including processes of research, consultation and pilot
- We are impressed by the Dutch process of research, consultation, pilot and encourage the FFV to follow a similar approach to ensure poor decisions are not made (see <https://knvb.h5mag.com/pupillenvoetbal/proces>, Google does a good job to translate)
- We note Dutch changes for 8v8 in 2018/19 commencing September 2018 are already locked in

Conclusion

- **Brighton remains strongly opposed to the FFV's proposed change to effectively make U12 Miniros**
- We ask that the FFV share the First Forum presentation, Forum video, and the supporting evidence mentioned with Community Clubs
- The feedback period must be extended beyond the school holiday period to 12 August so that Community Clubs can properly review, discuss and provide feedback
- A Second Forum should be scheduled to allow more Community Clubs to attend and for the FFV to provide additional research
- The Junior Standing Committee needs to assess the proposed change and make a recommendation
- Changes to U12 should not occur until the FFA's Major Review of Miniros is determined
- **No change to U12 in 2018**
- We support well-considered, well-researched changes to improve community soccer and offer our cooperation and support in research, surveys, and pilots to achieve these