

## **Position Paper on the FFV U12 Proposed Changes for Community Clubs**

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### About Brighton

#### **Brighton is Victoria's leading soccer club**

- Brighton has 1,500 players, the majority of which are juniors
- One third of the Club is women and girls
- We are supported by a team of over 300 volunteers
- We have 12 x U11 teams, which then flow on into 8 x U12 teams

### Brighton's Position

**The team at Brighton is unanimously opposed to the FFV's proposed change for U12 from 11v11 on a full pitch to 9v9 on a ½ pitch.**

Brighton believes that **U12 remains the appropriate point for Community teams to transition from SSF to LSF** (large sided football).

We are opposed to other rule changes which would effectively extend Miniroos to U12.

### Our Reasons

**There is no evidence** which has been presented to date

- We have not seen any evidence to support claims of any benefits to changing the point of transition from SSF to LSF to U13 instead of U12
- The FFV has not responded to the Bayside Group of Club's 4 October 2016 statement opposing the changes and highlighting that no research has been tabled. The Bayside Group of Clubs are Bayside Argonauts, Bayside United WNPL, Beaumaris, Brighton, Hampton and Sandringham
- What is the position of the FFV's Junior Standing Committee? Does it unanimously support the proposed changes?

#### **Comparisons to the FA are misleading**

- In the UK, date of birth is taken on 31 August for an early September start. In Australia, date of birth is taken on 1 January for a late April start. **Approximately 30% of Australian U12s would be considered U13s in the UK** and would be playing on the big pitch.

#### **The FA's recommended pitch is 22% longer**

- The FA's recommended pitch size for U12 9v9 is 73m x 46m. This is 13m (22%) longer than the maximum of 60m that the FFV propose our (older) kids to play on.

**The FFA/FFV proposal is an extreme position** and we struggle to find any country advocating playing such big kids, so tightly packed on such a small pitch:

- Due to difference in the measurement of the point of date of birth, northern hemisphere kids are in general 4 months younger than Australia
- In the UK, kids not only are kids 4 months younger than Australia, they play on a recommended pitch which is 22% longer
- In Holland and in Denmark, kids play 8v8 on a small pitch NOT 9v9

**Our U12 Kids are too big to play 9v9 on a ½ pitch**

- The proposed pitch is too small
- The number of players is too many for such a small space
- In the crowded space, kids cannot learn the skills of the game
- Research (Gerdson, 2008, NZ) found a larger pitch led to increased dribbling and increased passing (albeit this covered a mix of ages)

**We are competing with other sports** for kid's focus and participation

- Forcing U12 kids to play Minirosos "futsal" game of 9v9 on small pitch for a 3<sup>rd</sup> year would in our view be adverse in our competition with netball, AFL, basketball and rugby

**Kids want to play on the big pitch**

- At Brighton, our kids want to play on the big pitch
- Research (Gerdson, 2008, NZ) reported that kids prefer a larger pitch because:
  1. More fun
  2. More space
  3. More through balls
  4. More one-two's
  5. Able to take free kicks from further back
  6. More running

**Our Kids are ready to play on the big pitch**

- They have already played 2 seasons of 9v9 on ½ sized pitch, they are ready to transition to the large pitch

**Participation is key**

- We want to encourage kids to play soccer, we want it to be fun for them and we need it to be logistically easy for kids and parents
- The FFV proposed change makes it harder for parents as we need more coaches, more managers, more goals to be set up and packed away

**We are a soccer club, not a futsal club**

- We see benefits in training and playing in small groups and consider futsal options during both the season and for summer off-season
- But, our players want to play soccer, not futsal

### **We recognise the benefits of SSF**

- It is not a debate about whether small sided football has benefits, rather it is about the point at which kids should move from the small pitch to the big pitch
- Of course, at some point we do need to move to the big pitch
- We do not see value in delaying the move to playing large sided soccer later, or crowding more players onto a pitch, than our northern hemisphere peers

### **Don't be deceived by anecdotal international claims, e.g. "Brazilians have great ball skills"**

- Australia is currently 7<sup>th</sup> in the world vs Brazil 8<sup>th</sup> ... the Brazilians perhaps should be looking to us for best practice in women's soccer
- In men's, yes we are lower ranked than Brazil, however Brazil have 8.5x our population and soccer is only one of many sports played in Australia, most would regard that we are outperforming our small population base on the international stage
- **We believe that the reason Australia punches well above our weight is due to participation and our access to quality open spaces**
- Keeping our kids unnecessarily constrained to an extremely small and crowded pitch will not benefit us

### **9v9 does not deliver more total minutes**

- "Research in the United States (Singleton, 2006) found that in an average 60-minute game, each player (12 years of age) in an 8 versus 8 game averaged 3:45 minutes on the ball in comparison to a 11 versus 11 game, where each player averaged 2:44 minutes on the ball."
- It is a mathematical fact, with less players you get more ball, in fact  $2:44 \times 11/8 = 3:45$
- But, total minutes are not increased

### **The Proposed Changes have not been piloted or results communicated**

- When Holland undertook its reform process, it conducted a series of pilots and provided feedback to its members
- We've seen nothing regarding these extreme proposed changes

### **Obvious alternatives have not been addressed to date**

- Why not 8v8 instead of 9v9?
- Why not a larger pitch?
- Why change to SSF at U13, why not at U14 or U15?

### **Community Clubs and NPL do not need to be aligned**

- NPL caters to a small number of elite pathway players, and it is designed to be a different product offering
- If NPL Clubs want to play 9v9 Minirosos on ½ sized pitches for the development of elite players, then that's fine
- However, Community competitions need to be designed for Community teams and players

### **Boys and Girls are the same**

- We don't believe it makes any difference for girls or boys
- Based on our observation as Victoria's leading girls club, we believe the U12 girls should continue to play 11v11 on the full size pitch
- Similarly, based on our observation as Victoria's leading boys club, we believe the U12 boys should continue to play 11v11 on the full size pitch

### **The logistics of 9v9 on ½ pitch are problematic**

- Requires a significant number of additional coaches, managers and referees
- Requires a significant amount of additional equipment and storage of that equipment
- Presents challenges in pitch allocations and timings, and makes it difficult to use dedicated pitches for the sizes for our kids

### **The changes would put us out of synch with schools**

- Schools in our catchment are playing 11v11 fullsize at U12

### **It does not need to be an either-or choice**

- The FFV can give clubs a choice between both formats
- If there are clubs that want to play their big kids 9v9 on ½ pitches, then that's fine, this format might work better for kids who are new to soccer
- Brighton will elect to play soccer 11v11 on full size

### **We believe no "Mini-roo" changes are necessary for U12**

- We believe U12 should continue to play soccer, 11v 11 on full size pitch
- We believe offside should be maintained
- We believe results and ladders should be maintained – e.g. netball has results and ladders at this age. We do not observe coaches compromising player welfare in the pursuit of wins; if this is an issue then we believe the wrong coaching staff are engaged
- We believe current paid referee should be maintained

### Conclusion

- **Brighton is strongly opposed to the FFV's proposed change to the year of transition to 11v11 full size**
- The FFV must consider the needs of Community clubs in operating Community competitions