



Frequently Asked Questions

COVID-19 and the SUSPENSION OF FOOTBALL to 31 May 2020

Last updated 7.00 pm Wednesday 1 April 2020

PLEASE NOTE: this document is a guide surrounding the suspension of football. Any specific medical advice surrounding COVID-19 should be sought from official Government Health sources such as

NSW - [Health.nsw.gov.au](https://www.health.nsw.gov.au) – Infectious Diseases – COVID 19 (Coronavirus) – [Click Here](#)
Federal - [Health.gov.au](https://www.health.gov.au) – news - coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert - [Click here](#)

Suspension of all Football Activities

When is football suspended to?

Football NSW Competitions and community football have been suspended until at least 31 May 2020. This is an extension to the original date of 14 April 2020 and follows a national statement by Football Federation Australia on the evening of 1 April 2020.

This remains a temporary measure and we remain committed to resuming football as soon as possible. We are conscious that everyone wants to play again and will only do so when we can ensure that we aren't putting anyone's health at risk.

Further advice regarding any change to this will be provided as and when it comes to hand.

What information has been used to form the decision to suspend football?

Football NSW is taking its advice from both the Federal and State Governments, and their respective Health Agencies and Chief Medical Officers. The football community is being represented by and led by our national governing body, Football Federation Australia (FFA) which is communicating directly with the Federal Government at the highest levels.

This is an unprecedented public health situation and Football NSW will follow the instructions of the Federal Government.

Clubs and all football organisations should understand and comply with the Federal Government's social distancing protocols.

Why has football made this decision?

Football is determined to be part of the whole of community response to slow the spread of COVID-19– and in doing so, help the broader community and our health systems cope with this emergency. We are united across our sport in making hard decisions necessary to protect the health and wellbeing of the broader football family and everyone involved.

Given the suspension of football to 31 May 2020, can I continue to play or train for football?

No. All Football NSW matches, and those of affiliated Associations/Clubs, and other football related activities have been suspended until at least 31 May 2020.

Can my team continue to train?

No. All formalised team/club training has also been suspended. Furthermore, everyone should be aware of and comply with the increasingly strict measures announced by the Federal and State Governments in terms of isolation and social distancing, and the provisions for police and other authorities to issue fines.

Am I insured if a group of us play/train/have a kick around and I'm injured?

If you play in a match (in any form), or train with all or some of your team/club, during the period of suspension, these activities are not sanctioned by Football NSW and as such you will not be insured. The National Insurance Program that Football NSW subscribes to, and which provides personal accident cover to you, only applies when you are:

- playing in official matches sanctioned by Football NSW or your Association; and
- engaged in official training or practice (including practice matches) sanctioned by Football NSW, your Association or your club.

However, given the unique circumstances we find ourselves in, our insurers are prepared to cover players under the personal accident policy if they are participating in a formal and official club **virtual** training/skills session conducted by their coach or another appropriately qualified club official (e.g. a Technical Director) and approved by the club.

Acknowledging the government's most recent 'social distancing' guidelines particularly in respect to gatherings of now, no more than two persons, such sessions would need to be conducted by the coach via a platform such as Zoom or Skype so that the coach could supervise the participants. Further, it would be preferable if the coach used the functionality of the relevant platform to record the session. This is important as the

recording can be used to substantiate that the injury was suffered while participating in training of this type. During such sessions, we would expect players to be accessing the session individually, however, if they were to access it with one or two teammates, the Federal Government's social distancing protocols must be adhered to.

In the case of any injuries suffered during the period of suspension, there will be heavy onus placed on the participant to establish, to the satisfaction of the insurer, that the injury was suffered during the formal and official virtual training/skills session as opposed to any other private football activity.

It is incumbent on all players, coaches, managers and clubs to be vigilant in ensuring that, except as stated above, football activities do not take place and that everyone follows all stated instructions. AGAIN, PLAYERS AND COACHES MAY NOT BE INSURED AND CLAIMS MAY NOT BE APPROVED DURING THIS SUSPENSION PERIOD.

Do clubs need to shut down their development programs or specialist extra training programs?

Yes, players and coaches are not permitted to take part in any football activity (except as stated above). This includes academy programs or extra training sessions that are directly or indirectly associated with your club.

Clubs need to be vigilant in ensuring this does not take place. Your club (and the players and coaches) are affiliated to the FFA and you are required to follow the instruction that all football activities are suspended. Clubs, players and coaches will not be insured. While the absence of insurance cover is one important factor, we must also keep top of mind the increased risk of exposure to, and transmission of, COVID-19 that accompanies playing and training in groups.

I have noticed that the FFA has introduced two social media programs, namely the #PlayAtHomeChallenge and the #StayAtHomeChallenge whereby young players are encouraged to try basic drills at home

This is FFA's attempt to keep children occupied and practicing basic skills and simple drills at home. These activities are designed mostly to be conducted individually (e.g. juggling) and at home in a relatively safe environment. Players are encouraged to conduct these activities with the utmost of care so as to minimise the risk of injury.

Further, in order to help the grassroots football community stay active and connected throughout the temporary suspension period, FFA recently launched an online Skills Hub, developed in association with each of Australia's nine Member Federations. To access the Skills Hub and get involved with the #PlayAtHomeChallenge, please visit www.playfootball.com.au/skills-hub.

Please note that these are not official training sessions and as such the personal accident insurance that participants receive as part of their registration to play football does not

cover participants for participation in these types of activities and participants do so at their own risk.

What about private academies or external providers who may offer extra training or one-on-one sessions for players?

We all have a civic duty and community responsibility to follow and comply with the Federal Government's protocols with regard to social distancing and 'stay at home' isolation so as to minimise the spread of COVID-19. As such, we discourage ANY such football activity with private academies and external providers.

Participation in any unsanctioned football activity is done at your own risk. This includes non-sanctioned futsal, modified football, small-sided football and private academy activities. If players make individual decisions to participate in such activities, they must seriously consider the potential ramifications for the football community and the broader community should they contract COVID-19.

We all hope to resume playing football in the near future. If, when we do resume, a player or coach tests positive for COVID-19, a series of containments and shutdowns will need to be implemented and these could jeopardise, and further delay, recently resumed competitions. Clubs, Associations and Football NSW reserve the right to act appropriately should FFA's directive be ignored. We also remind all participants that any football activity they participate in during FFA's suspension is not sanctioned by FFA or by Football NSW and therefore, is **not** covered by the insurance policies provided as part of registration.

Who do I contact if I have further questions?

In the first instance, players, coaches, and parents/guardians should direct their questions to their club, who will in turn contact the respective Association or Football NSW for further clarification.

Competitions/League Structures

What does this mean for our Competition and League structures?

Firstly, it is important to recognise that there are various competitions run by different administrators across the NSW landscape – primarily there are those that are run centrally by Football NSW (for example, NPL, WNPL, AYL, SAP, GSAP), those run locally by Metropolitan Associations (in Sydney) and those conducted by our regional (country) Branches/Associations.

With this in mind, at all levels of our game, organisations are currently working through a range of different scenarios. That said, it is fair to assume that football in 2020 will be vastly different to any other year as the world faces an unprecedented public health emergency.

At this stage, we have only lost a small number of games across the various competitions, and some competitions are yet to even commence. Whilst further games may be lost if the

suspension period is extended, further information about this and competition/league structures will be provided in due course.

What does this mean for the draws that have been released?

It is inevitable that competition administrators will need to amend almost all competition draws. Competition administrators are currently working through alternative scenarios and any changes will be advised when there is greater clarity about the ability to resume playing football.

Many may recall previous seasons in which a significant number of match days were lost due to inclement weather. On these occasions, the season still went ahead with a modified format and, currently, there is still adequate time to play out a modified season.

Will we still have semi-finals/grand finals?

As stated above, all competition administrators are working through alternative scenarios for the 2020 season to ensure players get to play as much football as possible. Whether or not any amended schedules include a Finals series will be determined in due course by the relevant competition administrator.

Is there a cut-off date where the season would be called off?

No. At this stage, we are still hopeful of some football being played. The situation we all find ourselves in is highly unpredictable and, as we have seen to this point, it can change at any time. We will continue to take advice from the Federal Government and FFA and then make decisions accordingly.

What about other Football NSW Competitions such as State Cup, the FFA Cup and Champion of Champions?

State Cup

In consultation with our member-Associations, it has been agreed that the focus for the remainder of the 2020 season is on local community football competitions. Accordingly, in consultation with our member-Associations, we have taken the difficult decision to cancel the State Cup for the 2020 season.

FFA Cup

Recognising that the FFA Cup is a national cup competition run by FFA and games have already commenced, Football NSW remains in ongoing discussions with FFA in relation to the format the competition will take when football resumes. Further details will be provided in due course.

Champion of Champions

No decision has yet been made with regards to this competition, however, again, the feeling among member-Associations was that the focus for the 2020 season should be on local community football competitions. Further details will be provided in due course.

Registration and Fees

What happens to my registration fees?

Again, football is currently suspended, not cancelled.

At this stage, the suspension of football activity is for a period of time only and Football NSW and its member-Associations are working on ways to get as much football played as possible in 2020. We are delaying the start of the season (or postponing competitions that have already commenced), we are not cancelling the season. We are working with our member-Associations to identify the cost savings that may be made in the event that fewer matches are ultimately played.

We will make a final decision on the refund of registration fees when we know the full extent of the disruption and that decision will be based on the broad principle of trying to ensure that all clubs, Associations, Football NSW and FFA are able to remain financially viable through this difficult time so that football can continue into the future.

What is happening to the registration fees that go to the Associations, Football NSW and FFA?

Our initial focus has been on forming a collective response to this very unique and rapidly developing issue, including ensuring the health and safety of all stakeholders and providing them with the necessary support and assistance. At this point in time, neither Football NSW nor the FFA are in a position to provide any formal decision in relation to registration fees. This will form part of the broader discussion around the viability of all levels of the game moving forward.

All the organisations have incurred expenditure already this year getting ready for the season although a ball hasn't been kicked in most community organisations. All organisations are working tirelessly to ensure that we're ready to play when it's safe. These costs have to be considered and recouped.

So, at this time, we ask you to be patient. Let's wait and see if we can get on the pitch, once we get the go ahead. If that situation doesn't arise, then yes, we will inform everyone about refunds, however we are a long way from that at present.

We need to make sure that when football and life in Australia returns to normal, that we have a sport, clubs and an infrastructure that will allow us all to continue to play.

Can I still register to play?

Absolutely. Many clubs will welcome more players and are still taking registrations.

If I haven't registered yet, can I still use my Active Kids Voucher?

Yes. Claim your voucher [here](#).

I've already registered, what happens to the Active Kids voucher I used to pay registration?

We understand that vouchers that have been used in reducing a junior player's registration fee (by \$100) have been processed and funds provided to the relevant clubs. Football NSW does not envisage any change to this process.

COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

What should any player or member of the football community do if they believe they have contracted COVID-19 (Coronavirus) or if they have cold and flu symptoms that is concerning them?

What is COVID-19 (Coronavirus)? How do I get information on the virus and the associated issues/changes it is causing?

Football NSW is not able to provide medical advice. Information on COVID-19 is plentiful and can be found [here](#).

What can we do to help our community to reduce collective anxiety and manage individuals who are distressed at this time?

There are a number of ways in which we can all reduce collective anxiety and manage individuals who are distressed. For example:

1. Practice and model self-management of stress:

- Engage in breathing exercises throughout the day to maintain a calm state
- Establish a calm ritual: every time you wash hands for 20 seconds, count 5 calming breaths
- Rest regularly (both mentally and physically), and maintain good sleep hygiene
- Maintain good social connections and communicate openly with family and friends
- Continue enjoyable activities and hobbies, including exercise (especially if in isolation)
- Balance time spent on reading or listening to news on COVID-19 with other activities such as listening to music, reading, watching TV
- Get quality sleep and avoiding the use of alcohol or other vices to cope with stress
- Practice relaxation, meditation and mindfulness every day to settle the body and readjust to a calm state

2. Limit media exposure to reliable sources:

Constant media coverage about COVID-19 can keep us in a heightened state of anxiety. Try to limit related media exposure and instead seek out factual information from reliable sources such as the Australian Government's health alert (see above link on Page 1) or other trusted organisations such as the World Health Organization (<https://bit.ly/3cQUwCw>).

Remind your players that social media, whilst it may be the most up-to-date news, it may not be the most factual information source.

3. Keep things in perspective:

- Distract when “notice catastrophising” (i.e. blowing things out of proportion)
- Distract when “notice personalising” the situation (blaming yourself for things outside your control)
- Take a problem-solving stance regularly i.e. don’t make a judgment without supporting information
- Take different perspectives (view your situation from other people’s point of view)
- Focus on what you can do (hand hygiene, practicing wellbeing strategies) and accept the things you can't change (global responses)
- Focus on facts - illness due to COVID-19 infection is usually mild and most people recover without needing specialised treatment
- Impacts of COVID-19 are time limited
- Take a compassionate stance: we all have a role to play to reduce transmission to protect the vulnerable in our community and our healthcare workers.

General

Are Football NSW and Associations still open for business?

Yes. However, most, if not all, staff are working from home during this period. In terms of Associations, it is suggested that you check respective websites/social media platforms for information in terms of operating hours, and best means of contact. Again, for the general public, and registered participants, the first point of contact should be your club.

I have registered for a Coach or Match Official Education Course / Workshop, will they be rescheduled?

We will endeavour to re-schedule coach education events once the suspension of football activities is over. Registered participants have been contacted and Football NSW is working through the schedule to outline new dates and methods of delivery.

As more information comes to hand, Football NSW is committed to continue keeping its members and all players updated

This is an update of a previous version that was provided on 26 March 2020.