

COMPETITION & TECHNICAL CHANGES

2026 – 2027

PART 2: BOYS YOUTH



**FOOTBALL
NSW**

BACKGROUND: PLAYER DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

Football NSW Strategic Plan 2023 - 2026

“...to develop the most effective youth system of any state”

GOALS

- National team success
- An average of 45% of Australian national representative players are selected from NSW
- Increase in players from NSW reaching A-Leagues & signing professional contracts
- Achieve 75% participant retention rate
- Improved transparency with members
- Clear roles & responsibilities throughout the game ensuring clarity and empowerment
- Streamlined service delivery...across Australian football structures
- 25% increase in female coaches & referees



GROWING
FEMALE
FOOTBALL



SUPPORTING
COMMUNITY
FOOTBALL



ENHANCING
COMPETITIONS



PRODUCING
FOOTBALL
TALENT



PROVIDING
LEADERSHIP

BACKGROUND: PLAYER DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

The Competitions & Technical Department commenced a review into the Youth Player Development system in Football NSW throughout the 2024 season. Part 1: Girls & Women. Part 2: Boys (this report).

REVIEW

- Youth League Competitions
- High performance programs
- Talent support programs
- State representative programs
- Regional football pathways



INFORM

- Competition structures
- Club requirements
- Club servicing & support
- Talented player programs

STAGE ONE

STAGE TWO



BACKGROUND: PLAYER DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

STAGE ONE

Research	Examination of Technical & Competition recommendations from FIFA, AFC, UEFA, Football Australia & other national bodies
Competition structures	A review of the past 10 years of FNSW Competition structures and alterations
Data analysis	In depth data analysis to obtain objective evidence on various factors of FNSW Competitions and Clubs that relate and influence football development.
Observations	Ongoing observation from FNSW staff and representatives of the Youth Development system in FNSW, including training and matchday visits to Clubs.



23 Membership & Stakeholder meetings

STAGE TWO

Talented player prog.	A review of FNSW delivered talented player support programs; TSP, TDS, FNSW Institute, NYC
Consultation meetings	Held with a wide array of relevant stakeholders & members
Membership surveys	Surveys to all GYL, BYL & AYL players, Clubs, coaches and parents



1,490 survey responses

BOYS YOUTH COMPETITION CHANGES: 2026 - 2027

The following changes will come in effect for the 2026 – 2027 Boys Youth Competitions.

V.	Implementation of Club Standards across Boys Youth League; 2 year licence period
VII.	Removal of the Association Youth League (AYL). Release recommendation of the Association Development League model
VIII.	Conduct a detailed review into Under 13 playing formats during 2025 season
IV.	No expansion of Under 17 age groups in Youth Leagues
X.	Cease the delivery of Country Cup. Announce the establishment of the Association Championships.

V. Implementation of Club Standards across Boys Youth League; 2-year licence period

Football NSW will introduce the Club Standards & Benchmarking framework across the Boys Youth leagues from the 2026 – 2027 Licence period. In line with this, the Boys & Men Club Participation agreement will move to a 2-year cycle.

REASONING

Acknowledgement that the current 'Club Championships' model within Boys Youth League is not fit for purpose

Adherence to FIFA, AFC, UEFA and leading football nations recommendations and practices

Improve and increase the amount of high-quality youth football development environments in FNSW

Increase retention rate of players, currently;
2022-23 – 47%
2023-24 – 49.5%

Hold Clubs more accountable to the experience and environment provided to Youth players

Football NSW to increase its support & capability building to Clubs; planning, training and matchday visits and support

Decrease the 'win at all costs' mentality within Youth football

Improve player experience and wellbeing

Recognise and reward 'good' player development environments

Meets critical criteria outlined within the FIFA 'Give every talent a chance' report

Alignment with Girls Youth League

Improve disciplinary & behaviours on matchday

Increase transparency and investment into Youth football

V. Implementation of Club Standards across Boys Youth League; 2-year licence period

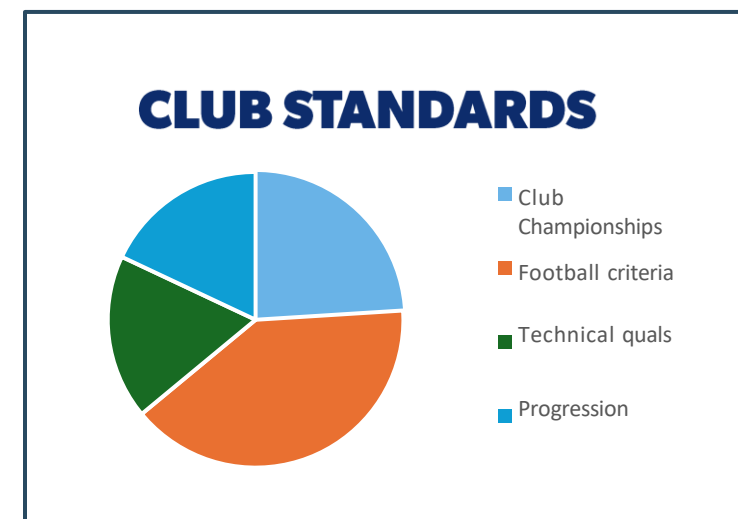
The Club Standards & Benchmarking framework will be implemented across the Boys Youth Leagues in 2026 - 2027.

A guide for the Boys Youth League Benchmark framework can be viewed via the Girls Youth – Club Standards Information Pack 2025 – 2026.

For further information [click here](#).

The Club Standards evaluates Clubs across five components. Each component is weighted, with the final assessment score determining the ranking of the Club within the Youth League structure and consequently whether a club is promoted or relegated from the Leagues.

STANDARD	DESCRIPTION
League compliance	This includes minimum requirements for participation in each league. i.e. Minimum of three training sessions per week
Club Championships	This is the accumulation of points for the Club across two years of Competition in the Under 14, Under 15, Under 16 & Under 18 grades.
Football criteria	The Clubs ability to submit detailed documentation as outlined in Appendix 1 of their football program, including Youth Development Plan, Player services, Coach Development Plan and Football operations.
Technical qualifications	This component is incorporates the Technical Qualifications and appointment of staff, including disciplinary across the two year period
Progression & Retention	This component includes the player retention of the Club over a two-year period, and, the progression of players from the Club to a higher tier and/or APL Academy.



V. Implementation of Club Standards across Boys Youth League; 2-year licence period



ACCOUNTABILITY

- o FNSW role within player, coach and club development
- o Club role within player, coach and club sustainability
- o Membership understanding of best practice & program expectations



BEST PRACTICE

- o Raising the standards and expectations of programs
- o Sharing of best practice program elements from Australia and globally
- o Continued evolution of program elements



CAPABILITY BUILDING

- o Identification of strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities within our game
- o Creation of specific development opportunities and services
- o Improve Club football sustainability

As per the Junior Development League implementation of the Club Standards & Benchmarking framework in 2025, each Club will be appointed a Football NSW Technical Advisor to support, assess and build capability of their staff.

As outlined within the Information Pack, Clubs will be accountable to the following;

- Football criteria – Planning document submission
- Football criteria – Delivery via observation of training and matchday
- League compliance requirements
- Technical qualifications of staff
- Player progression & retention

Due to the implementation of the Club Standards, the participation licence period will move to a 2-year cycle, enabling Football NSW to evaluate Clubs to frequently improve and grow the game.

Please see the Girls Youth Club Standards Information pack 2025-2026 for further information.

THE CLUB DEVELOPMENT PROCESS



CONSULTATION & COLLABORATION



ASSESSMENT



EDUCATION & SUPPORT



CAPABILITY BUILDING & VALUE ADD

VII. Removal of the Association Youth League (AYL). Release recommendation of the Association Development League

Football NSW cease to deliver the Association Youth League (AYL) competitions from 2026.

Football NSW will collaborate with interested Associations to implement the Association Development League model, commencing in 2026.

REASONING

The current AYL does not meet the objectives of a Club within the 'talented player pathway'

The current talented player club pathway is too broad, 57 teams per age group.

The current talented player club pathway is unaccountable and unmeasured

Poor retention rate of players in AYL;
2022-23 – 41%
2023-24 – 44%

Lack of competitiveness within AYL;
Av goal difference; 1.78 – 3.26
Least competitive of the Boys Youth competitions

Lack of competitiveness within AYL;
24% of games result in 4+ goal difference

AYL has the lowest referee coverage of FNSW leagues;
2023; 86% & 74.5%
2024; 99% & 84%

AYL creates many 'alternate' pathways within local football

Encourage investment of local Association Clubs & programs

Ongoing Club participation eligibility challenges

FNSW commitment to Club Standards within the Boys Youth Leagues

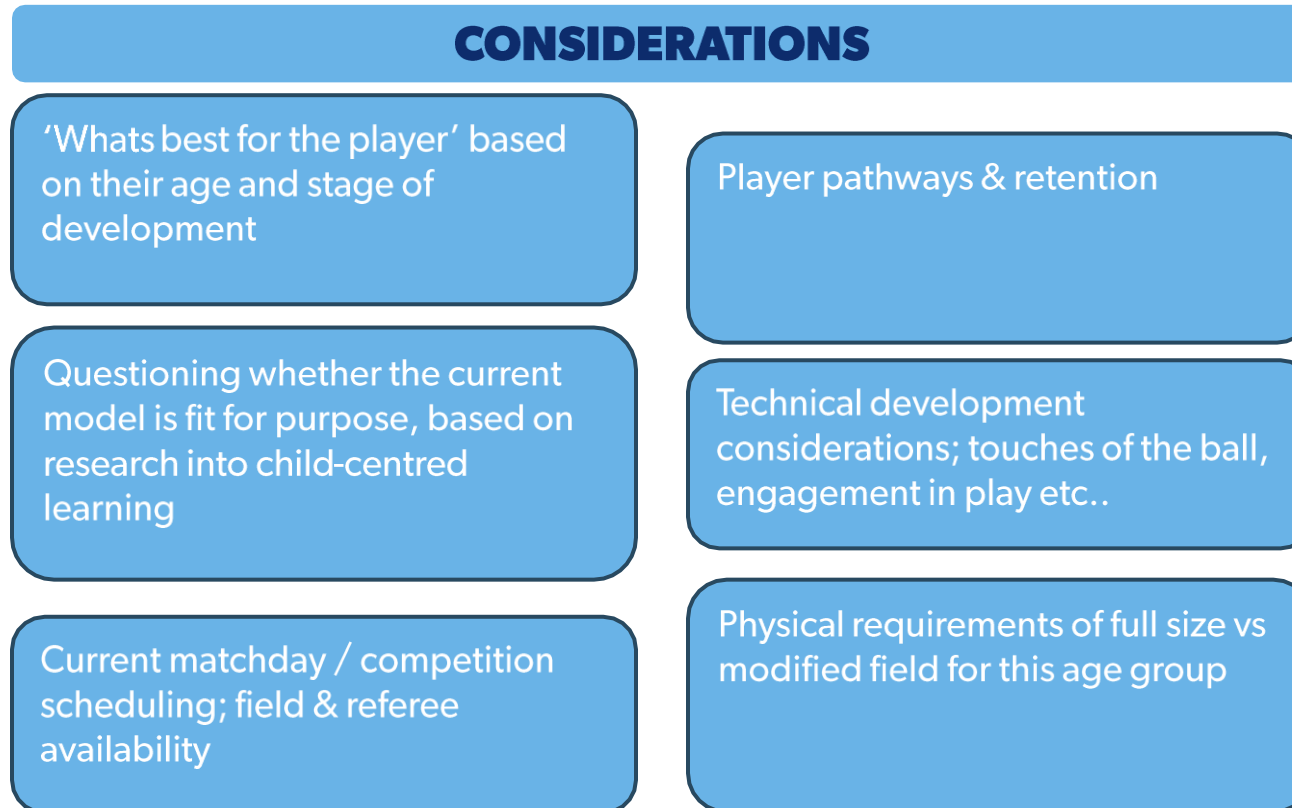
Proposed Association Championships to provide local representative pathway

Proposed inclusion of Western AYL & Southern AYL into BYL3 to maintain regional pathways

VIII. Conduct a detailed review into Under 13 playing formats during 2025 season

Football NSW acknowledges recommendations of FIFA, AFC and Football Australia to transition Under 13 to a modified playing format.

FNSW will conduct a review into playing formats for this age grade during the 2025 season with final determination in June 2025.



IX. No expansion of Under 17 age groups in Youth Leagues

Football NSW acknowledge the relevance of the Under 17 age group for developmental and participation purposes, however at this point in time do not believe the current environment can facilitate the additional Competition age grade.

REASONING

Club based facility availability and appropriate match day scheduling

Insufficient referee capacity and quality

Club resources to facilitate the Competition requirements, particularly due to the introduction of the Club Standards in BYL

Further consideration will be taken ahead of future Licence periods regarding the inclusion of the Under 17 competition

Insufficient suitably qualified coaches and player-support resources

X. Cease the delivery of Country Cup. Implementation of the Association Championships

Football NSW does not believe the current delivery of the Country Cup is 'fit for purpose' within the modern talented player development & pathway system.

The Talent Support Program (TSP) is the core individual player pathway for talented player identification and development, with progression via tournaments, state team selection and National team identification.

Intended acceptance of Regional AYL programs into BYL will strengthen regional-club pathway opportunities.

Football NSW announce the establishment of the Association Championships, commencing in 2026.

REASONING

Both tournaments pre-date the establishment of the regional-based Talent Support Program (TSP)

Further investment by FNSW through the implementation of the Regional JDL Club Standards

Proposed establishment of the Association Championships will ensure Regional-representative program participation opportunities

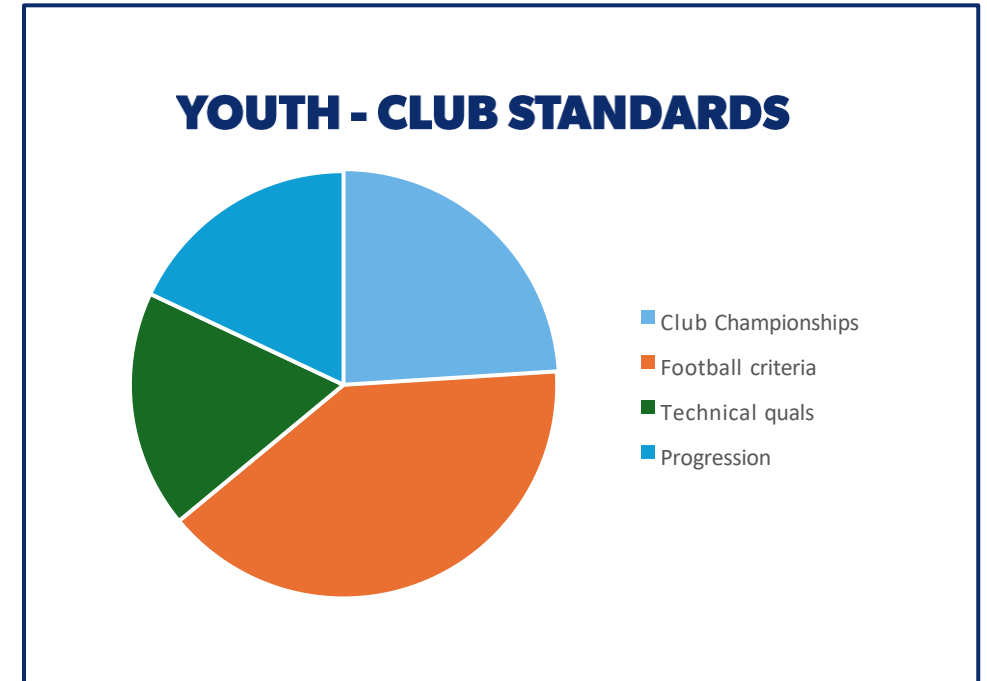
Strengthening of Regional Club pathways through the proposed acceptance of Western & Southern AYL into BYL3 from 2026

Significant evolution of regional pathways and football support

BOYS YOUTH COMPETITIONS: 2026 - 2027

SUMMARY

- Implementation of the Club standards & Benchmarking framework in Boys Youth League, 2026 – 2027
- Change of Boys & Men participation agreement to a 2-year licence period
- Thorough review into playing formats for the Under 13 age group to be undertaken and determined by June 2025
- Cease the delivery of the Association Youth League (AYL) competition
- Release recommendation of the Association Development League model
- Cease the delivery of the Country Cup
- Announce the delivery of the Association Championships, commencing in 2026
- Implementation of the regional JDL Club Standards in 2025
- Football NSW commitment to member Clubs as the core pathway for talented players and coaches





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If you have any questions please contact:

Troy McColl – Head of Competitions – troy@footballnsw.com.au

Edward Ferguson – Head of Football Development – edwardf@footballnsw.com.au

footballnsw.com.au