



FOOTBALL
NSW

**2026 FOOTBALL NSW
JUNIOR DEVELOPMENT
LEAGUES (JDL)**

CLUB INFORMATION
MIXED & GIRLS

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1. OVERVIEW

This document details Football NSW (**FNSW**) recommended structure for the 2026 Junior Development League (JDL) program for Mixed & Girls.

The Junior Development Leagues (JDL) was introduced in 2025, replacing the Skill Acquisition Program (SAP) and Girls Skill Acquisition Program (GSAP) that have previously existed. The Junior Development Leagues are known as 'Mixed JDL' and 'Girls JDL'.

The age groups within JDL remain consistent and compete within modified playing formats of traditional football including modified field size, player numbers, rules and ball sizes. Players within the JDL fit within Football Australia's Skill Acquisition Phase within the player development pathway. The Skill Acquisition Phase focuses on individual player development and performance is assessed on player involvement, technical advancement, mental engagement and enjoyment of the game.

The implementation of the JDL from SAP aims to create a line in the sand whereby Football NSW's approach to the program evolves towards a stronger focus on Club capability building, the sharing of best practice program elements and the accountability of Clubs and Football NSW to each other. This is achieved through the implementation of the Club Standards & Benchmarking framework which was first introduced during the 2024 season.

The Club Standards & Benchmarking framework is the Football NSW benchmarking, quality assurance and club support process to provide better services for our players, coaches and Clubs across the state. The Club Standards focus on youth development committed clubs by understanding their Planning, Delivery and anticipated Outcomes.

Club will be accountable to the football criteria and deliverables within the 2026 Junior Development Leagues Information guidelines – [click here](#)

The philosophy, behaviours and structures recommended are consistent to the Football Australia National Curriculum, and centre on the four (4) core skills, being:

- 1 v 1 Attacking and Defending
- First touch
- Running with the ball
- Passing/striking the ball

FNSW will not directly coach JDL teams. FNSW resources will be directed toward providing Club development, education and support to the licensee of the program.

2. VISION OF THE JUNIOR DEVELOPMENT LEAGUES

Football NSW will raise the quality of Junior Development programs throughout the state, underpinning the Youth Development pathway to achieve our Strategic target of creating the most effective youth system in Australia.

Football NSW will strive for all JDL programs to achieve Silver status as a minimum, with consistently high Technical qualifications, membership experience and football development outcomes.

3. PARTICIPATING CLUBS

Please see the list of participating clubs for the 2026 season - [click here](#) (page 7 and 8).

4. AGE GRADES

The Mixed JDL League will cater for the following age groups in 2026:

- U9's (for players born on or after 1 January 2017);
- U10's (for players born on or after 1 January 2016);
- U11's (for players born on or after 1 January 2015);
- U12's (for players born on or after 1 January 2014); and

The Girls JDL League will cater for the following age groups in 2026:

- U10's (for players born on or after 1 January 2016);
- U11's (for players born on or after 1 January 2015);
- U12's (for players born on or after 1 January 2014);
- U13's (for players born on or after 1 January 2013);

Consideration will be given for Relative Age Effect (RAE). Players deemed as RAE, in accordance with FNSW's regulations may play "down" an age group. Each applicable age grade is limited to two (2) RAE Players.

Further information about RAE can be found within the 2025 Competition Regulations section 3 art.10 on page 37-38 – [Click Here](#).

5. REGISTRATIONS

All players in the 2026 JDLs must be registered on the National Registration System.

2026 JDL Licensees will only be permitted to register players from their allocated 'JDL Player Boundary' as outlined below.

JDL PLAYER BOUNDARY	ASSOCIATIONS	STATE TITLE BOUNDARY
NORTH	Central Coast Football	Met Far North
	Northern Suburbs FA	
	Manly-Warringah FA	Met North
	North-West Sydney FA	
EAST	Canterbury DSFA	Met East
	Eastern Suburbs FA	
	Football St George	
WEST	Blacktown DSFA	Met West
	Granville DSFA	
	Hills FA	
	Nepean FA	
SOUTH	Bankstown DFA	Met South
	Macarthur FA	
	Southern Districts FA	
	Football South Coast	Met Far South
	Sutherland Shire FA	
RIVERINA	Riverina Branch	Riverina Branch
SOUTHERN	Southern Branch	Southern Branch
WESTERN	Western Branch	Western Branch

2026 JDL licensees will only be permitted to register players from the JDL Player Boundary in which the Licensee's home ground is located.

As part of the Club Standards & Benchmarking implementation Clubs will be audited on the above requirement and requested to provide clarity on outliers.

Additionally, a player who fits within the following categories is eligible to participate in a JDL program conducted by a particular licensee in 2026 even if that player lives outside the applicable geographic area:

- A child of a person who is a Life Member of the licensee or had been for at least 10 years a combination of any of the following: a registered player at the licensee or a director of the licensee or a member of the Management Committee (or similar committee in the event of there not being a Management Committee) of the licensee

FNSW may provide exemptions for players to participate out of area should they believe there is genuine merit in the application. The exemptions will remain valid for the duration of the player's participation in JDL unless their circumstances supporting the exemption change or they seek to change Clubs.

Clubs wishing to seek an exemption from the regulations, must complete the below form as soon as they become aware that the player's address is outside their boundaries. Failure to request an exemption for a player who is found to be out of the area will result in sanctions as per the Competition Regulations

- 2026 Eligibility Exemption Request form – GJDL and MJDL – [Click Here](#)

Players within a part time Girls JDL program will be required to register with a local community football club in the region in which the Girls JDL Club is located.

Breaches of the eligibility criteria will result in a fine to the licensee of \$2,000 per breach.

6. NUMBER OF TEAMS AND PLAYERS PER TEAMS

MIXED JDL

Each M-JDL club will be required to have two teams in each age group. Permissible players per team for M-JDL is as follows

Age Group	Field Players	Players per Team	Licensee Squad Totals
U9's	7	10	20 (16 boys + 4 Girls)
10's	9	12	24 (20 boys + 4 Girls)
U11's	9	12	24 (20 boys + 4 Girls)
U12's	9	12	24 (20 boys + 4 Girls)

Please Note: Licensees may elect to select more than 4 girls per age group. This will result in a proportionate decrease in the number of boys selected to conform to the maximum team player number.

GIRLS JDL

Each G-JDL club will be required to have a maximum of one team in each age group. Permissible players per team for G-JDL is as follows:

Age Group	Field Players	Players per Team	Licensee Squad Totals
U10s	9	12-14	14
U11s	9	12-14	14
U12s	9	12-14	14
U13s	9	12-14	14

7. JDL ANNUAL SCHEDULE

As recommended by the FNSW Technical Department, best practise for JDL clubs is recommended to provide, at a minimum, the following annual schedule for their SAP programs:

- 36-week training and competition program (for example, 4-6 weeks October/November to December plus 30-36 weeks January to August);
- Compulsory three training sessions per week (plus one game a week in the competition phase);
- Clubs must not engage private providers to coach within the program or outsource their JDL program

- Clubs must not make additional training opportunities mandatory for their JDL participants

All coaching/training/game-related costs associated with the implementation of a talented player development program, for the schedule as detailed above, must be included within the capped Player Registration Fee (**PRF**).

If a quality training and playing environment is provided, programs based on the above schedule deliver sufficient football training and playing opportunities for talented young players to develop optimally. There should be no need to seek additional football-specific training for the majority of players (noting that cross-training in other non-football activities would be suitable for talented young players and that all players are encouraged to embrace “informal” opportunities to practice/play I.E with family, friends, at home etc.). Football NSW encourages clubs to clearly provide information to parents about these principles.

Accordingly, clubs are **NOT PERMITTED** to charge players for extra football training over and above the recommended number of training nights detailed above. If they wish to offer additional sessions as part of their program, they must be included within the capped PRF.

8. COACHING QUALIFICATIONS

Following are the minimum coaching qualifications required by Coaches for each respective League and grade of the Competitions:

2026 JDL – [Click Here](#)

Competition	Role	2026 Minimum Coaching Requirements	2027 Minimum Coaching Requirements
Junior Development Leagues (GJDL & MJDL)	Head of JDL	B – Diploma & FNSW JDL Course	B – Diploma & FNSW JDL Course
	Head Coach	C - Diploma	C - Diploma
	Assistant Coach	C - Diploma	C - Diploma
	GK Coach	Foundation of Goalkeeping	GK B - Diploma

9. TRIAL PHASE

JDL clubs are responsible for conducting trials for their respective programs but must not do so prior to the trial date prescribed by FNSW.

The trial phase is **NOT** considered to be part of the 36 to 40-week training and competition programs indicated above. Trial dates vary between clubs, however, if a club has a certain number of weeks set aside for trials, those weeks do not count towards the 36 to 40-week training and league that JDL programs should be conducting.

It is also important to note that clubs are **NOT PERMITTED** to charge players a fee to trial.

Further, clubs cannot charge retention fees to players to secure a place in a program (unless those fees are to be offset against the capped PRF).

Failure to comply with this directive may result in sanctions being imposed on clubs (and on club staff) involved in these activities as determined by Football NSW in its absolute discretion.

The date that clubs are permitted to commence trial from the following:

Commencement: 12 October 2025

Please Note: Until and including, Saturday, 20 December 2025, clubs are **not** permitted to hold training or trials on Saturdays.

10. TRAINING PHASE

The training phase for the 2025/26 season, incorporating a break over the Christmas and New Year period, is as follows:

Commencement: October/November 2025

Conclusion: February 2026

As trial dates vary between clubs, a club's training phase can commence immediately following the completion of that club's trial phase.

During the training phase, it is expected that clubs deliver a detailed pre-season plan which includes both training and match day experiences. It is recommended that players are exposed to high performance programs that develop individuals to play as part of the team. It is important to note that clubs are **NOT PERMITTED** to charge players an additional fee for training during the November to March period (sometimes referred to as "pre-season" or "off-season"). Training from November to the start of the game phase must form part of the annual 36 to 40-week JDL program as detailed above.

Clubs will be permitted to coordinate their own friendly matches with FNSW-affiliated clubs or Associations during the training phase period. These matches must be organised in accordance with FNSW regulations, with clubs required to submit friendly match application forms for approval by FNSW.

Scheduling of friendly matches against non-affiliated teams is not permitted, as players would not be covered by the FNSW insurance program if such matches were to be played.

11. GAME PHASE

The game phase for the 2026 MJDL and GJDL has been set for the following period:

League Commencement: 7/8 March 2026

League Conclusion: 29/30 August 2026

*Denotes subject to change.

All training and matches must cease on the League Conclusion date. This will allow players a break between the end of the season and the commencement of trials for the 2027 season.

Match schedules for the JDL are scheduled to be released during the first week of December 2025 and will be accessible via the Competitions page on the Football NSW website - [Click Here](#)

12. MATCH FORMAT

To ensure optimal development opportunities in JDL, and provide a consistent platform underpinning Football NSW programs and competitions, JDL match formats will reflect the FA Small Sided Football formula:

Age Group	Player Per Team	Formation (Recommended)
Under 9's	7	1-3-3 or 1-2-3-1
Under 10's, 11's, 12's	9	1-3-2-3 or 1-3-3-2
Under 13s (Girls JDL only)	9	1-3-2-3 or 1-3-3-2

13. RESULTS, POINTS AND LEAGUES TABLES

No results, points and league tables will be kept during the game phase of the 2026 JDL. This includes no championship series.

14. MATCH DAY TIME SLOTS

Mixed JDL - Matches will be scheduled over four (4) time slots, as follows:

Match Slot	Age Grade	Duration of Match	Half Time
1A	U9 Match	Two Periods of 25 Minutes	

1B	U10 Match		Two (2) minutes between the whistle ending the first period to the whistle starting the second period
2A	U9 Match		
2B	U10 Match		
3A	U11 Match		
3B	U12 Match		
4A	U11 Match		
4B	U12 Match		

Girls JDL - Matches will be scheduled over two (2) time slots, as follows:

Match Slot	Age Grade	Duration of Match	Half Time
1A	U10 Match	Two Periods of 25 Minutes	Two (2) minutes between the whistle ending the first period to the whistle starting the second period
1B	U12 Match		
2A	U11 Match		
2B	U13 Match	Two Periods of 35 Minutes	Five (5) minutes between the whistle ending the first period to the whistle starting the second period – Girls SAP

15. GROUND MARSHALLS

Football NSW expects each home team to have a dedicated 'ground marshall' as a key contact in case of emergency and/or concerns for the safety of players, officials and spectators.

Each Club is expected to have two (2) jacketed field marshalls/officials per game. These individuals are expected to manage their teams spectators, including shouting, aggressive behaviour and placement around the field.

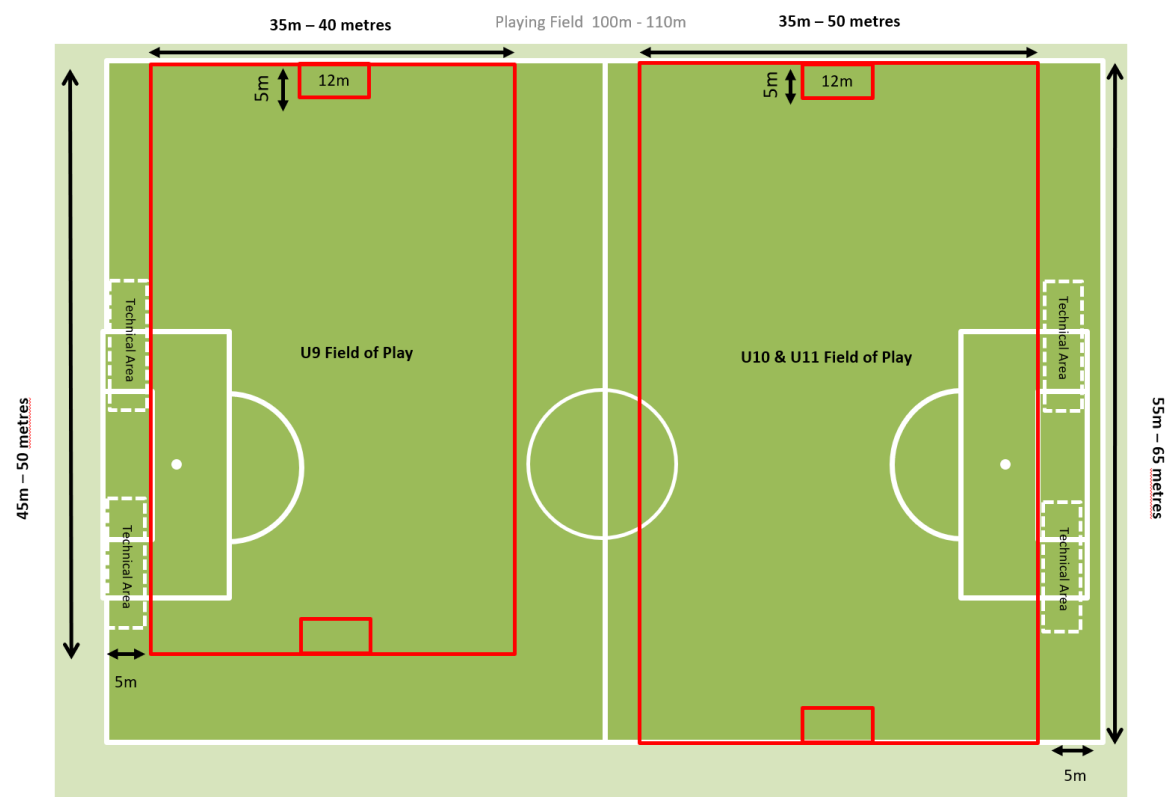
16. FIELD DIMENSIONS

Clubs will be required to adhere to the FNSW Game Leader Handbook during the JDL game phase, except where amended below (i.e. goals cannot be identified by markers or poles):

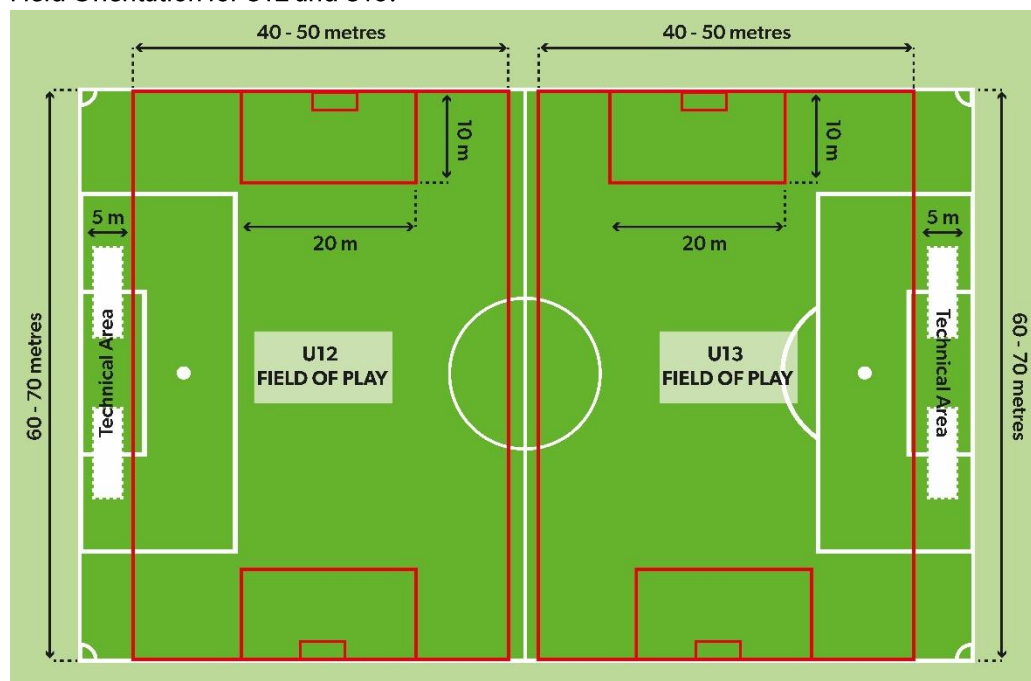
Category	U9	U10 & U11	U12 & U13
Field size	Length: 45m - 50m Width: 35m-40m	Length: 55m-65m Width: 35m-40m	Length: 60-70m Width: 40-50m
Field markings	Markers or lines markings or combination	Markers or lines markings or combination	Markers or lines markings or combination
Penalty area	Depth: 5m Width: 12m	Depth: 10m Width: 20m	Depth: 10m Width: 20m
Goal size	Height: 2m Width: 3m	Height: 2m Width: 5m	Height: 2m Width: 5m
Goal type	Portable goals	Portable goals	Portable goals
Ball size	Size 3	Size 4	Size 4

Further detail can be found in the FNSW Game Leader Handbook located on the FNSW website – [Click here](#)

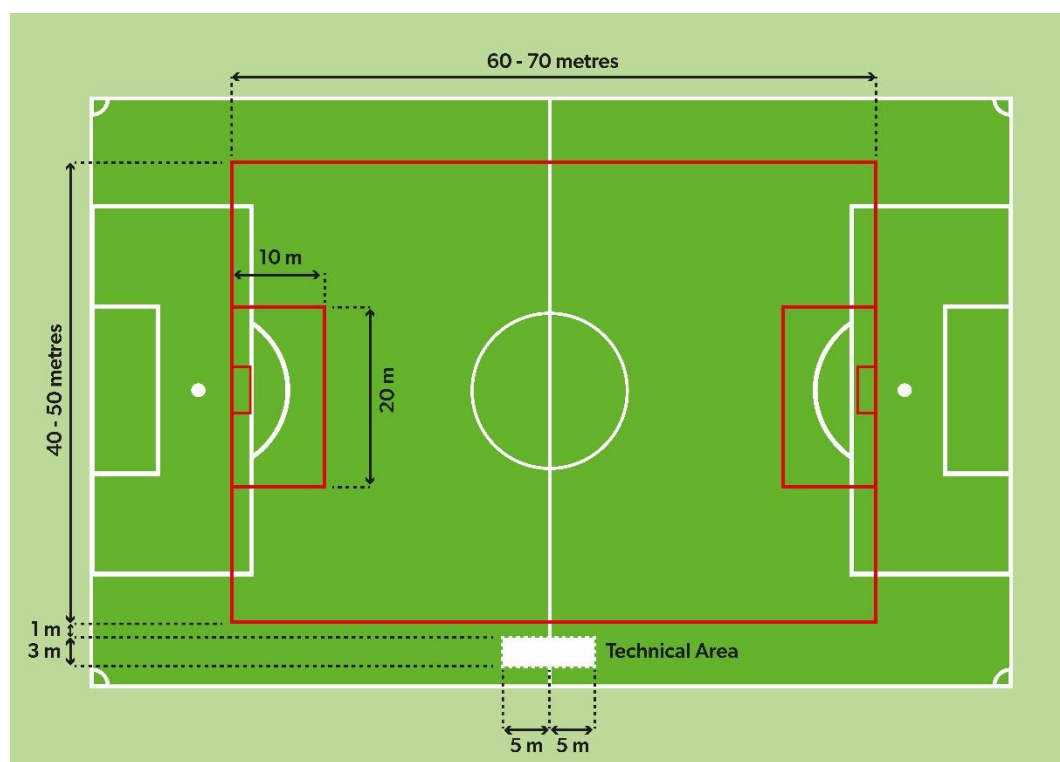
Following is the field orientation for each age grade U9, U10 and U11:



Field Orientation for U12 and U13:



Recommended Field Orientation for U12 and U13



17. REFEREES (GAME LEADER)

It is the responsibility of the licensee to appoint instructing referees or game leaders to their home JDL matches.

Football NSW encourages Clubs to ensure all Game Leaders are in Club or consistent attire; including closed in runners/boots, appropriate fitness gear, wristwatch and whistle.

- Game Leader Handbook – [Click Here](#)

18. PLAYER REGISTRATION FEES

Clubs participating in FNSW competitions are required to comply with the capped Player Registration Fee (**PRF**) set by FNSW for certain competition and age grades:

19. CAPPED REGISTRATION FEES

League	Grade	Maximum Club Fee (exclusive of FA NRF and FNSW Fee)	*Maximum total amount a club can charge a player (inclusive of FA NRF and FNSW Capitation)
Mixed - JDL	U9's – U12's	\$1,843.00	\$1,995.00
Girls - JDL	U10's – U13's	\$1,843.00	\$1,995.00
Part time – G-JDL	U10's – U13's	\$848.00	\$889.00
*This is the maximum amount a club may charge a player to participate in the relevant program.			

It is to be noted that the capped PRF is the **maximum** a club can charge and includes the FA National Registration Fee (**NRF**), the FNSW Capitation Fee and the Club Registration Fee.

Clubs are free to set their own Club Registration Fee. That fee may be below the capped PRF but it must **not** exceed it.

20. APPAREL AND EQUIPMENT

All clothing, apparel and equipment costs must be included within the capped PRF. Training and match apparel is to be supplied by the club, and must include the following items as a minimum:

- Playing Shirt X 1
- Playing Short X 1
- Playing Socks X 1
- Tracksuit (Jacket and Pants) X 1
- Training Shorts X 1
- Training Socks X 1
- Polo Shirt X 1
- Kit Bag X 1
- Training Shirt X 1

The above apparel is to be provided within the cost of the program, i.e. a fee for the apparel cannot be charged over and above the capped PRF. Clubs may choose to provide additional training and playing items but must do so within the capped PRF. Any other "special" club apparel items, such as beanies etc, can only be offered for sale as an option (i.e. not mandatory) and at a reasonable cost.

If players are required to wear any technology devices (e.g. GPS units) for football analysis, then these must be provided by the club within the capped PRF – noting that these items would then be retained by the club for analysis and re-used in subsequent years.

21. SUPPORT SERVICES

Should the club offer any other products and services such as video analysis, statistics, general dietary and wellbeing education etc., these are also considered part of a quality football program and must be provided within the capped PRF.

To clarify, all ancillary high-performance training and equipment costs (e.g. for sports science/sports medicine, physiotherapists and strength and conditioning) must be included within the capped PRF.

It should be noted that medical coverage at matches (Level 1 Sports Trainer at a minimum) must also be included within the capped PRF, however, one-one appointments with physiotherapists etc. outside the training/game day environment would be at the cost of the individual, with the practitioner that the individual chooses.

22. CLUB FUNCTIONS

Induction, pre-season and end-of-season presentations/functions, the cost of trophies/medals and a team photograph for every player in a club's JDL program must be included within the capped PRF.

In relation to shirt presentations, season launches, end-of-season functions and other specific program-related functions, the capped PRF must cover the admission/participation of at least the player, and ideally one parent. Clubs may then charge a reasonable fee for additional family members and friends who wish to attend.

If a club cannot deliver these functions within the capped PRF, then attendance at the function must be optional for JDL players. Any cost for JDL players, and their families and friends must be reasonable and must be on a 'cost-recovery' basis and no higher.

Selection/game time must not be adversely affected by a player's non-participation in any function.

23. CLINICS AND CAMPS

- If clubs run school holiday clinics, they must be advertised to the general public and not just targeted at the club's own JDL players. Participation in those clinics cannot be compulsory for players in the club's programs, and selection/game time cannot be adversely affected by non-participation.
- An activity (camp, tournament etc) that involves travel and overnight stays can be levied as an additional fee provided participation is not mandatory and that selection/game time is not adversely affected by non-participation. However, please note:
 - The activity must be provided to players/parents as a separate and optional activity;

- The cost of participation in the activity cannot be charged at the time of registration;
- The fee charged must be on a 'cost recovery' basis and no higher; and
- Some of these activities need to be sanctioned by Football NSW so that participants receive the benefit of FNSW's insurance program. We would urge participants to check with their club that such activities have been sanctioned by FNSW prior to participating.

24. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The capped PRF must also include the following:

- Other costs of registration, including the FNSW Capitation Fee (which includes insurance) and the FA NRF; and
- All club-related costs such as staff costs, pitch rental, utilities and similar. That is, clubs cannot charge any additional "Club Administration Fee", "Facilities Levy", "Coaching Levy" etc.

Essentially, clubs cannot charge for any other goods or services that FNSW would reasonably expect a player would receive as part of their registration with a football club operating a high-quality JDL program.

Clubs are reminded that the capped PRF is a maximum, it is not also a minimum. FNSW encourages clubs to develop business models that allow them to charge their players a PRF below the capped PRF.

The 2026 JDL aims to deliver an enhanced football development opportunity for coaches and players, providing them the platform and foundation to be the best they can be as individuals within the team environment.

FNSW will provide ongoing education and "coaching the coaches" support in working to monitor program delivery, ensuring the core JDL principles are maintained.



FOOTBALL NSW

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