



Why has Football Victoria (FV) introduced an U13 single age competition level for girls that participates in Victorian community (non NPLW) competition?

In December 2018, FV initiated a comprehensive review into the structure of Women and Girls' football in the State.

The review was supported by an independent sports consultancy firm, Sports Business Partners, and governed by a 26-person Steering Committee. The Steering Committee was Chaired by one of Victoria's most experienced Sports Administrators, Carol Fox, and included participants reflecting all areas of football in Victoria.

The Steering Committee unanimously endorsed the recommendations contained in Sports Business Partners' final report which was released to the wider football community in May 2019. The full report can be accessed [here](#).

The report canvassed the opinions of 925 survey respondents, held 6 stakeholder forums including referees, players, coaches and technical directors. They conducted 27 in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, analysed the competition models utilised by other competitive sports in Australia, and analysed 22 information reports into female sports in across the country.

In particular, recommendations 2.1. and 2.2. in the report state;

2.1 That single age groups are phased into the girls' competition structure for community football, starting with separating the current under13-14s competition into under-13s and under-14s in 2020, and followed by under-15s and under-16s in 2022 if feasible.

2.2 FV seek expertise to ensure game formats for the new under-13s age group provide a player experience which maximises enjoyment, social inclusion and interaction, and retention in football.

The introduction of the U13 single age level in Victorian community football was introduced into the 2020 FV competition structure as a result of these recommendations.

Why wasn't there single age group competitions in 2019?

For some years, FV has administered a dual-age community competition structure for the age groups U13s – U14s and U15s – U16s for the girls' game. One of the major reasons for this was the volume of players available at these age groups. FV continues to monitor the registration numbers at various age levels to ensure clubs' ability to field teams.

Why has FV decided to introduce a 9 v 9 format for this new age level in community girls football?

As per recommendation 2.2. in the report, FV sought the expertise of its Football Technical Department when determining the format for the introduction of this new age level of community football.



The FV Technical Team, led by FV Technical Director Boris Seroshtan and Talent Development Manager Girls Annick Fokchak, recommended a 9 v 9 format for this age level of football in 2020.

Some of the considered rationale for the change included:

- Late developers will be able to have more succession;
- More touches in the game with the ball for players;
- Players will not be overwhelmed by field size when going up an age group;
- Quicker decision making in tighter areas/spaces;
- Less focus on physical qualities of the player;
- More attacking and; defending opportunities in game play;
- More striking of the ball and goal scoring opportunities = more goalkeeping opportunities
- Provides a step in the game between 9 a-side and 11 a-side that bridges the learning and progression of players in an appropriate way; and
- Assist in referee development of the game as part of their training.

Does my daughter have to participate in the U13 9 v 9 competition?

No. If FV did not introduce the new U13 9 v 9 competition of football in 2020, players turning 13 in 2020 would have had to play in the U14 11 v 11 competition. Players who would prefer to play 11 v 11 in 2020 are welcome to pursue this option in FV's U14 competition.

This would have been the pathway players would have followed if FV did not introduce the new U13 9 v 9 competition format in 2020.

Why has FV chosen a 9 v 9 format for U13 Girls when the format for U13 Boys is 11 v 11?

In sport, there are a number of examples where the competition structure and game format in male and female sports differ. There are a range of reasons for why this occurs. Ensuring that all participants receive the best experience possible when playing the game is of utmost importance.

An example of this at FV is that we invest significantly in our Girls National Training Centre programs and our Emerging Matildas program. These are programs that we do not provide for Boys and Emerging Socceroos.

The report also indicated analysis of the age of female players showing that there is a drop in player numbers in the years in which they move into the lower age of a new division (i.e. 13 year-olds and 15 year-olds)

The men's and boy's competition review did not recommend any changes to the existing game format for boys. There will be no change to the boy's game format for season 2020. Our technical team will monitor the year's competition and review our competition format as we do at the completion of every season.



FV's technical team has made its decision based on the Women and Girls competition review, identifying this as a recommendation to determine the game format for the new U13s single phase age group.

There was no such recommendation from the Men's & Boys competition review. This is not to say that this won't be considered in the future, it just wasn't a recommendation that came out of the review.

The opportunity to consider the appropriate game format for this age group has arisen as a result of the recommendation to separate the current U13s-U14s competition into single age groups. The technical team based their decision on providing the best experience for all players.

What do I do if I have parents and players at my club that are disappointed with this decision?

We understand that not all recommendations will be considered favourably by all stakeholders at any given time.

This decision has been recommended after a comprehensive review of Women and Girls' football in the state (see above).

If a number of players and/or parents remain disappointed with the introduction of this new age level and format of competition in Victorian football, these parents and players are welcome to participate in FV U14 11 v 11 competition in 2020.

This is the format players would have been participating in had FV not introduced this new age level of girls competition regardless.

Please rest assured though that the questions of equality (including bias, unconscious or otherwise) are consistently front of mind in decision making at FV.

What are the game format competition guidelines for the introduction of the single age group for under 13s?

Please find details in the table below:

Competition	FV Community Under 13 Competitions (9v9)
Numbers	9v9
Field Size	Length: 60m (min) - 70m (max)
	Width: 40m (min) – 50m (max)
Goal Size	Height: 2m
	Width: 5m
Field Marking	Cones, Markers or Painted Lines are allowed
Penalty Area	10m depth x 20m width
Penalty Spot	8m from goal line
Duration of Game	2x 30-minute halves
Half Time	5 minutes
Referee	FV Appointed Green Shirt Referees
Linesman/ AR	Club Appointed Assistant Referees
Interchange	Maximum 5 Players
Ball Size	Size 4
Points Tables & Finals	Yes