

# Introduction

**This policy is designed to promote measures that will maximise the enjoyment and development of young players. As Andrew Demetriou explains – they are the Next Generation ...**

**T**he Australian Football League (AFL) is the governing body of Australian Football. As the “keeper of the code” we aim to actively support all levels of Australian Football from NAB AFL Auskick to the elite level of the game and every point in between. The AFL’s investment in the development of the game exceeds more than \$40 million and is designed to introduce and retain the next generation of young players and their families.

We want to maximise the recruitment and retention of players and umpires. Our research tells us that retaining both groups in the game is a function of quality and, at its most basic level, the quality of the experience is assessed by how the game is conducted. For this reason, in collaboration with our state affiliates and expert consultants, we have developed a comprehensive junior policy to provide clear direction for the provision of appropriate pathways for all boys and girls in safe, enjoyable and accountable environments.

We do know participation in our great game, in safe and enjoyable NAB AFL Auskick and junior club environments can significantly contribute to the physical, psychological and social wellbeing of young people. We recognise the value this sport has in

communities across Australia but we also recognise two other factors determine choice of sport. Firstly, young people today have an unprecedented amount of choice in terms of sporting and leisure activity. Secondly, we understand family time has become more precious than ever before with the pressures on parents today. Both factors lead me to one conclusion – that Australian Football must be the best experience possible.

Given the experience is most often delivered by our army of volunteers, who are also under much pressure, we do hope this policy provides a practical, easy-to-follow guide that makes effective implementation as easy as possible.

It is vital that providers of junior football are familiar with, and adopt, the procedures contained in this policy to ensure participating boys and girls have a fun, safe and positive football experience.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Demetriou'.

**Andrew Demetriou**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Australian Football League

# Why do we need a junior policy?

The AFL and its state affiliates have a view that any person wishing to participate in our great game should be able to do so in a manner that is appropriate to his or her skills, needs and aspirations, and that takes into account the facilities available. With this in mind, it is appropriate young players are introduced to the game through a sequentially modified match program that consists of modifications to the Laws of Australian Football. In other words, young players have different needs to adults.

We want to maximise participation in the game. This is best achieved by providing non-discriminatory and inclusive practices when delivering junior football in an environment where all children – regardless of their capability, cultural background, social or geographic situation, gender or sexuality – can sequentially develop their skills through appropriate activities, games and match rules. This policy is designed to support such an environment by outlining what is recommended as appropriate conduct of the game at junior levels.

The overriding objective of this policy is:  
*To provide an environment where young players can play the game and inexperienced umpires can sequentially develop their skills through activities, games, match rules and conditions commensurate with their stage of learning and level of ability.*

**It should be noted:**

- › the Laws of Australian Football as administered and controlled by the AFL apply to and guide this policy. This policy explains how variations to the Laws of Australian Football have been made to ensure the appropriate organisation and running of a junior match of football;
- › the procedures outlined in this document have been refined over a long period through experience, consultation and continual research;
- › the AFL recognises the need for various controlling bodies to determine their own arrangements within, but not outside, these guidelines;
- › young people grow and mature at different rates. This policy is considerate of this growth and maturation diversity and provides an appropriate and sequential range of programs and match rules to cater for the individual differences and needs of participating children; and
- › this policy is broadly divided into:
  1. AFL Junior Policy (5-12 years); and
  2. AFL Youth Policy (13-18 years).

