



MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BOLD STEP FORWARD FOR REGIONAL FOOTBALL AND NETBALL: ‘NORTHERN FUTURES PROJECT’ RELEASES KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Central Rivers Leagues Board, with support from AFL Central Victoria, has today released the recommendations of the Northern Futures Project (NFP), setting a bold course for a more sustainable and competitive future for community football and netball in the region.

Following extensive consultation with clubs from both the Central Murray Football Netball League (CMFNL) and the Golden Rivers Football Netball League (GRFNL), the NFP Steering Committee has presented eight key recommendations designed to address declining participation and operational challenges across both leagues.

Key recommendations include:

- **Concluding and celebrating the GRFNL in 2025**, recognising its historic contribution to the region.
- **Encouraging GRFNL clubs to pursue sustainable futures** through transfers to appropriate leagues.
- **Encouraging ALL clubs** to explore amalgamation opportunities with neighbouring clubs.
- **Expanding the CMFNL** by accepting capable and competitive clubs from GRFNL and/or other regions, with minimum participation criteria applied to ALL clubs.
- **Exploring flexible competition models**, including finals structure, home-and-away rounds, and CCSP (Player Points and Player Payment Caps) policies, to support an expanded league.
- **Collaborative planning** with AFL Central Victoria and surrounding leagues to manage transfers, amalgamations and restructure proposals in a strategic and unified manner.

The recommendations come in response to widespread concerns around declining player numbers, volunteer fatigue, and the viability of operating with reduced club numbers—particularly within the GRFNL, which faces the prospect of operating with fewer than six clubs.

Northern Futures Project Committee Chair Stuart King stated:

“These recommendations aim to preserve the spirit of local footy and netball while ensuring we’re building something viable and exciting for generations to come. Change is never easy, however the time has come where decisive action must be taken.”

The committee also noted that if no viable restructure is confirmed for 2026, the GRFNL may continue with a transitional minimum four-club competition for 2026 only.

The Central Rivers Leagues Board acknowledges the valuable input from all clubs and stakeholders and thanks the NFP Steering Committee for their dedication. Discussions will now continue with clubs and AFL Central Victoria to refine and implement the most sustainable pathway forward.

For further information please contact:

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