



MEMO 31-2023

DATE: 5th June 2023
TO: NNSWF Premier Competition Clubs
FROM: General Manager Football Operations
SUBJECT: Referee Availability

For Information or Action	Action required	Action completed by	NNSWF Contact	Total Pages
Action	N/A	N/A	N/A	2

I am writing to you to provide an update on our referee numbers and availability.

As you would likely be aware, our ability to fulfil 100% of appointments has been significantly impacted by the number of registered and active referees, having written to all clubs earlier this season. Unfortunately, this situation has not improved.

We need to be very clear in stating that one of the key reasons that referees are leaving our game is the behaviour of people at our matches. On top of some of the reported abuse of match officials, which is reported and dealt with under our regulations, the consistent and unending negative commentary and derogatory comments which surround our referees on match day is simply pushing referees to stop officiating in our competitions. This includes from players, coaches, volunteers and spectators. We have pushed this message for several years and ultimately, we are now at a point where the behaviour has not changed sufficiently to keep people from leaving the game.

As it stands, there have been a number of matches we have not been able to cover in the PYL. Whilst this is an extremely disappointing situation, it is also NNSWF's position that we do not send one referee on their own to cover matches, given previous commentary about the atmosphere and surroundings they are entering. We also must ensure that a referee is not appointed to a match well above their competency level (i.e. first year 14 year old referees onto under 18 matches).

Whilst Northern NSW Football are working on medium to long term strategies, there are a small number of practical steps we can take now to increase the number of matches covered for the remainder of 2023.

- There are a number of weekends which have a balance of matches on one day, and with many of our referees also players, this means we have more matches to cover with less referees available. As such, Luke



Blundell will be in touch with a number of clubs directly regarding moving match days between Saturday and Sunday to help us ensure we can cover more matches.

- For the final part of the PYL season which has yet to be fixtured, NNSWF will be allocating which days teams play in order to ensure this balance is best for match official coverage.
- We would encourage all clubs to look at any opportunities to move their under 18s to be part of their senior matchday – as having a balance of these matches can assist in certain circumstances.

We are clear that the presence of a referee of the appropriate level is a key factor in the enjoyment of participants. Whilst we will continue to aim to appoint referees to the biggest percentage of matches possible, I ask that in any matches that does not have full set of officials, you – as clubs - ensure that everyone involved in the match is taking responsibility for their own actions. The lack of an official referee is does not mean that players, coaches and volunteers should not abide by both the NNSWF / FA Code of Conduct and your own club standards.

Liam Bentley
General Manager Football Operations
Northern NSW Football