

## **FOOTBALL QUEENSLAND UPDATE ON FOOTBALL PARTICIPATION AND COVID-19**

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**Last updated:** Wednesday, 15 April

### **SUSPENSION OF FOOTBALL ACTIVITIES**

#### **Why has the decision been made to suspend all football activities?**

The decision made by Football Federation Australia (FFA) and Football Queensland (FQ) to suspend all football activities reflects advice of the Australian Government, and has been made to protect football participants and the broader community. Continuing football activity as normal would risk spreading the infection further. As the state's largest participation sport, we have a social responsibility to take action to help slow the spread of COVID-19.

#### **What does the suspension of football activity apply to?**

The suspension of football activity includes matches, training sessions, coach and referee courses and all other football related activities.

#### **Does this apply to futsal as well?**

Yes, all Football Queensland futsal activities have been postponed, including the 2020 FQ Futsal State Titles.

#### **When is football activity suspended until?**

The current temporary suspension of football activities in Queensland has been extended to 30 June 2020. The extension to the original date of April 14 2020 follows a [national statement by FFA](#) which confirmed that the temporary suspension of football would remain in place until at least 31 May 2020.

#### **Why has FQ maintained the suspension of football activity in Queensland until June 30, rather than 31 May like FFA?**

Each Member Federation has local factors to consider when determining a possible resumption date for football activities. FQ will continue to review the current proposed date of 30 June 2020 in line with the latest advice from the federal government and relevant health authorities, and will keep all stakeholders updated as more information becomes available.

#### **Does this mean football is cancelled for 2020?**

No, the suspension of football activities is temporary. We are looking to recommence our game as soon as we can and will continue to work with FFA to ensure football can return to normal as soon as possible. It is important to continue to support and register with your local club to ensure we can all continue to enjoy the game when football recommences.

## **REGISTRATION AND FEES**

### **Am I entitled to a refund of CLUB registration fees given the suspension of football activities?**

The suspension of football activity is a temporary measure, and the season has not been cancelled. If seeking a refund of club fees for any reason, your club's refund policies would be the first point of reference for fees associated with programs your club provides.

### **Am I entitled to a refund of GOVERNING BODY fees given the suspension of football activities?**

The suspension of football activity is a temporary measure, and FQ is working to ensure the season can resume as soon as possible. For this reason, the circumstances under which players should apply for a refund of governing body fees apply as normal. More information can be found in [Football Queensland's Refund Policy](#).

### **How are the governing body fees collected by FQ used?**

FQ's governing body fee for a junior player is \$38 and \$85.50 for a senior player.

FQ's governing body fee supports the delivery of the game through administration, insurance for players, coaches and referees, competition planning, grassroots coaching development and referee training and support. A large component of every participant's registration fee contributes to Injury Insurance, General Liability (Public and Products Liability), Professional Indemnity; Management Liability insurance and WorkCover insurances.

These significant costs cover each participant from the time of registration until the end of each calendar year. It covers players, coaches and referees in activities leading up to (pre-season, friendlies, training etc) and not simply from Round 1 of a competition whenever that might occur. Insurances continue to cover players who play in 'post season' competitions such as Summer 6s'. This cost is paid for by Football Queensland and provided by Football Federation Australia's Insurance Program.

During the time leading up to competitions, Football Queensland continually provides ongoing services to players delivering Member Protection Officers, Dispute Resolution Services (between clubs, players, refereeing) and grievance processing, a service utilised by clubs and zones.

Player registration fees also contribute to the costs of the IT platform that manages the registration of each player through PlayFootball, as well as competition management platform SportsTG. In addition, the fee contributes to dedicated staff resourcing to manage player registrations, ITC transfer processing and other player transfers across the game.

Football Queensland has been funding 100% of these costs for an extended period of time and recovers these costs through payment of registration fees. To date these costs have not been recovered.

## **Why did FQ update its refund policy?**

Following a recent review of FQ policies in the past four months, alongside 26 other policies, the FQ Refund Policy was updated to provide clubs with greater clarity around the refund process for governing body fees, eligibility and payments, and to assist clubs in communicating the refund process to their members. This update to the FQ Refund Policy was necessary to ensure all clubs are aware that a request for a refund of governing body fees must be submitted to and processed by the zone or association, Football Queensland and FFA.

## **CLUB TRAINING ACTIVITIES**

### **Can my club continue training?**

No, all forms of football activity including training sessions should cease until 30 June 2020. Clubs must not require players to gather together for any reason during the window of suspended football activity.

### **Do clubs need to shut down their development programs or specialist extra training programs?**

Yes, players and coaches are not permitted to take part in any football activity (except as stated above). This includes academy programs or extra training sessions that are directly or indirectly associated with your club. Clubs need to be vigilant in ensuring this does not take place.

Your club (and the players and coaches) are affiliated to FFA and you are required to follow the instruction that all football activities are suspended. Clubs, players and coaches will not be insured.

While the absence of insurance cover is one important factor, we must also keep in mind the increased risk of exposure to, and transmission of, COVID-19 that accompanies playing and training in groups.

### **What about private academies or external providers who may offer extra training or one-on-one sessions for players?**

We all have a civic duty and community responsibility to follow and comply with the Federal Government's protocols with regard to social distancing and 'stay at home' isolation so as to minimise the spread of COVID-19. As such, we discourage ANY such football activity with private academies and external providers.

Participation in any unsanctioned football activity is done at your own risk. This includes non-sanctioned futsal, modified football, small-sided football and private academy activities. If players make individual decisions to participate in such activities, they must seriously consider the potential ramifications for the football community and the broader community should they contract COVID-19.

We all hope to resume playing football in the near future. If, when we do resume, a player or coach tests positive for COVID-19, a series of containments and shutdowns will need to be implemented and these could jeopardise, and further delay, recently resumed competitions. Clubs, zones and FQ reserve the right to act appropriately should FFA's directive be ignored.

We also remind all participants that any football activity they participate in during FFA's suspension is not sanctioned by FFA or by FQ and therefore is not covered by the insurance policies provided as part of registration.

### **Am I insured if I play/train/have a kick around in a group and I get injured?**

If you play in a match (in any form), or train with all or some of your team/club during the period of suspension, these activities are not sanctioned by FQ and as such you will not be insured. The National Insurance Program that FQ subscribes to, and which provides personal accident cover to you, only applies when you are:

- Playing in official matches sanctioned by FQ or your zone; and
- Engaged in official training or practice (including practice matches) sanctioned by FQ, your zone or your club

However, given the unique circumstances we find ourselves in, our insurers are prepared to cover players under the personal accident policy if they are participating in a formal and official club virtual training/skills session conducted by their coach or another appropriately qualified club official (e.g. a Technical Director) and approved by the club.

Acknowledging the government's most recent 'social distancing' guidelines particularly in respect to gatherings of now, no more than two persons, such sessions would need to be conducted by the coach via a platform such as Zoom or Skype so that the coach could supervise the participants.

Further, it would be preferable if the coach used the functionality of the relevant platform to record the session. This is important as the recording can be used to substantiate that the injury was suffered while participating in training of this type. Any such recording involving children must have the explicit, written consent of parents or guardians, and anyone delivering such training is required to have a valid Working With Children Check.

During such sessions, we would expect players to be accessing the session individually, however, if they were to access it with one or two teammates, the Federal Government's social distancing protocols must be adhered to.

In the case of any injuries suffered during the period of suspension, there will be heavy onus placed on the participant to establish, to the satisfaction of the insurer, that the injury was suffered during the formal and official virtual training/skills session as opposed to any other private football activity.

It is incumbent on all players, coaches, managers and clubs to be vigilant in ensuring that, except as stated above, football activities do not take place and that everyone follows all stated instructions.

For absolute clarity, players and coaches may not be insured and claims may not be approved during the suspension period.

### **COMPETITION/LEAGUE STRUCTURES**

#### **What does this mean for our competitions and league structures?**

It is important to recognise that there are various competitions run by FQ and our affiliated zones across the state. With this in mind, at all levels of our game, organisations are currently working through a range of different scenarios. That said, it is fair to assume that football in 2020 will be vastly different to any other year as the world faces an unprecedented public health emergency.

At this stage, we have only lost a small number of games across the various competitions, and a few competitions are yet to commence. Whilst further games may be lost if the suspension period is extended, further information about this and competition/league structures will be provided in due course.

**What does this mean for the draws that have been released?**

It is inevitable that FQ's competitions team will need to amend almost all competition draws. Competition administrators are currently working through alternative scenarios and any changes will be advised when there is greater clarity about the ability to resume playing football. Currently there is still adequate time to play out and/or extend the season to ensure an appropriate competition is completed, even if a modified format for the season is required.

**Will FQ competitions still consist of a Finals Series where relevant?**

The FQ competitions team is working through alternative scenarios for the 2020 season to ensure players can participate in as much football as possible. Whether or not any amended schedules will include a Finals Series will be determined in due course, once the resumption of football has been confirmed.

**Is there a cut-off date for when the season would be called off?**

No. At this stage our expectation is that football will still be played in 2020. The COVID-19 situation continues to unfold and develop on a daily basis, so we will continue to follow advice from the Federal Government and work with FFA to ensure the best decisions are made for the wellbeing of our football community and the good of our game as a whole.

**What about other competitions such as the FFA Cup?**

The FFA Cup is administered by FFA, and FQ remains in ongoing discussions with FFA in relation to the format the competition will take when football resumes to ensure the FFA Cup tournament can proceed within the 2020 football calendar. Further details on this will be provided when possible.

**Will competitions with promotion and relegation as part of their competition structure continue to enforce this in the 2020 season?**

We are currently working on planning scenarios that to the best of our ability preserve the integrity of the football season, and as such promotion and relegation is currently being factored into all competition scenarios.

The enforcement of promotion and relegation amongst relevant leagues will continue to be reviewed as the COVID-19 situation develops and the possibilities for the recommencement of football are determined.

**Have any events outside of the suspension window been postponed?**

Yes, a number of events across the state have been postponed, including some outside the current window of suspended football activity. [You can see a full list of postponed events here.](#)

## **What happens if the situation hasn't improved by June 30?**

The COVID-19 situation continues to unfold and develop on a daily basis, and we will continue to work with FFA to ensure the best decisions are made for the health and wellbeing of all members of our football community, and for the good of our game as a whole. FQ remains committed to ensuring our sport can return to normal as soon as possible, and will provide regular updates to our stakeholders when new information becomes available.

## **STAYING CONNECTED**

### **How can players stay engaged in football and keep active from home until the season resumes?**

FQ and FFA have developed a number of ways for players to keep active and stay engaged throughout the temporary suspension of football activity. FQ's [MiniRoos Recess Challenges](#) and [Backyard Drills & Chills](#) sessions have been designed by FQ coaches to keep Queenslanders working on their skills from home. These can be accessed via the FQ Facebook page and website.

FFA has also launched the #PlayAtHomeChallenge and the #StayAtHomeChallenge to keep children occupied and practicing basic skills and simple drills at home. FFA also recently launched an online Skills Hub, developed in association with each of Australia's nine Member Federations. To access the Skills Hub and to get involved in the #PlayAtHomeChallenge visit [playfootball.com.au/skills-hub](https://playfootball.com.au/skills-hub).

Players are encouraged to conduct these activities with the utmost of care and at home in a relatively safe environment so as to minimise the risk of injury.

Please note, FQ and FFA's initiatives listed above are not official training sessions, and as such the personal accident insurance that participants receive as part of their registration to play football does not cover participants for participation in these types of activities, and players participate at their own risk.

### **Can I still register to play?**

Yes, many clubs are still taking registrations and will welcome more players. More information on clubs and registrations can be found at [playfootball.com.au](https://playfootball.com.au)

### **Who do I contact if I have further questions?**

In the first instance, players, coaches and parents/guardians should direct their questions to their club, who may in turn contact FQ for further clarification.

## **COVID-19 (CORONAVIRUS)**

What should any player or member of the football community do if they believe they have contracted COVID-19, or if they have symptoms that are concerning them?

FQ recommends all members of the football community follow the advice provided by the [Australian Government Department of Health](#) and [Queensland Health](#).

For more information on COVID-19, members of the football community should visit the Australian Government Department of Health and Queensland Health websites.

## **RESOURCES**

- [Australian Government Department of Health](#)
- [Queensland Health](#)
- [Football Queensland COVID-19 updates](#)