

Midweek Football Senior Premier Proposal

Background

Currently there are 8 Boys and 8 Girls teams that play in the WSSFA Senior Premier football leagues, which play on Saturday mornings mostly 8.30am or 10.00am kick-offs.

Many of the Premier Girls players also play in senior women's competitions and/or youth leagues for their chosen club. Most of this senior women's activity happens on Sundays and often it involves travel to Auckland or further afield. The U14 and U16 girls club NRFL youth league also involves a lot of travel and is played on Saturdays with most kick offs ranging from 9.am through to early afternoon.

The situation is at least as pressure-filled for the players involved in the Premier Boys league. Often these players are playing for their school at 8.30am and then catching a car or bus to Auckland immediately afterwards or in some cases coming off during a game to travel for a club game. In addition, some are playing again on a Sunday, once again in Auckland or further afield.

This places significant pressure on these players both in terms of their physical and mental health, often putting them into a situation where they are having to choose one environment over another or playing while overly tired, undernourished or injured obviously affecting their performance and experience across all of those environments.

A number of these players have also signalled interest in becoming involved in Referee and Coaching pathways. Moving games to a midweek schedule will increase opportunities for players to contribute to coaching and refereeing Saturday-fixtures.

We have seen a fantastic effort and significant progress from both schools and clubs to work together, particularly with coaches to create positive environments for the players to develop and stay in love with both football and physical activity over the past few years. There is a shared understanding that the players gain a lot from their interactions in both environments, both socially and from a football-development point of view.

We have also seen the results of the national secondary school survey which clearly say that the participants in school sport would like to be able to play mid-week to allow them time at weekends for other sports, work, family and social activities.

Proposal

We would like to propose moving WSSFA Premier Girls and Boys games to midweek fixtures under lights which we believe will alleviate these issues to the benefit of the participants.

All Premier Girls' fixtures would be scheduled on Thursday afternoon/evenings at Gower Park, with 4.30pm and 6.30pm kick offs (schools would still have the opportunity to work with WSSFA to host specific fixtures at school if appropriate).

All Premier Boys fixtures would be scheduled on Friday afternoon/evening at Gower Park 4.30pm and 6.30pm kick offs. Again, schools would still have the opportunity to work with WSSFA to host specific fixtures at school if appropriate).

Costs

Costs involved in midweek football would include field-hire, lights, and venue costs.

Currently WSSFA registration fees cover HCC field-hire costs. No change is expected to these costs.

The cost of lights, should there be any in 2024 from HCC, will be covered by WaiBOP Football for the period of these games.

Melville United having indicated that they would be seeking some contribution towards the venue costs over the included council charges, for things such as line-marking, corner flags, net provision etc. The club will put those costs together for discussion.

Once any additional costs are confirmed, WaiBOP, WSSFA and HCC will work together to provide support to cover or assist with these costs, including but not limited to approaching funders or partners for support.

The ideal situation is a position of little or no additional costs to participating schools for midweek Senior Premier games for the 2024 season.

Supported by:

