Victorian Churches Football Association

Match Rules

2026

The following Match Rules are specifically determined and published by the Victorian Churches Football Association (VCFA) Board.

All competitions shall be played under the laws of Association Football, and the VCFA Match Rules.

The Match Rules are binding on all participating members.

Version 1.2 July.

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Date amended	Summary of amendment
1 March 2012	Match Rules reviewed and amended to match all approved changes from 2010.
19 March 2012	Ladies division amendments - nine players division.
29 March 2012	Participation wording correction. 4.1 Preamble and Match duration times added nine and ten player conditions.
4 April 2013	Amendments to clauses: 2.3; 2.6; 4.1.1; 4.2.1; Delete 4.2.5; 4.4.1; 4.4.2; 4.5.3;4.5.11;4.8.1; 4.10.2; 4.10.5; 5.3;5.4.4; 5.5.2; 5.6.2 f); 5.6.2 h); 8.3; 8.5; 11.4.
12 April 2013	Title page inserted; Change to page numbering.
16 April 2013	Addition to clauses – Not applicable to Junior competition (4.2.1) Amendment to clauses 5.4.4; 5.5.1.
31 March 2014	Amendment to clauses: 3.5, 4.5, 4.6, 4.9, 4.10, 5.4, 5.5, 5.7, 5.8, 7.3, 7.7, 12.2, 13.2, 15.
23 March 2015	Amendment to clauses 2.3, 4.3, 4.5.2, 5.4.2, 5.5.2, 5.5.3, 5.5.4, 5.5.5, 5.6.1, 5.6.2 c), 5.6.2 e), 5.6.2 f), 5.6.2 g), 5.6.4, 5.6.5, 5.8.1, 5.8.1.3, 5.8.1.4, 5.8.2.2, 5.8.2.3, 5.8.2.6, 6.2, 11.4, 12.4 f), 13, 15, Penalties and VCFA Discipline Table items 2, 4, 7, 9 & 13. Addition of clause 4.8.2(d). Clause 5.6.2 d) deleted. Clauses 5.3.3, 5.6.2 d) to g), & 5.6.5 renumbered. Change to page numbering.
22 March 2016	Amendment to clauses: 4.4.2, 4.5.11, 5.8.2.2, 5.8.2.6, 11.1 c), 11.1 g) & 11.1 r). Addition of clauses 4.4.3, 4.4.4, 5.6.2 h), 7.8, 11.1 t) & 11.1 u). Clauses 13.2, 13.3 & 13.4 deleted.
6 April 2016	Amendment to clause 4.8.1. Addition to clause 7.8.
April 2019	Match Rules reviewed and amended to match all approved changes since 2016.
April 2021	Amendment to clauses: 5.8.2. and 7.1.2. Addition to clause 5.5 and 5.7.
March 2022	Amendments to clauses: 3.1, 3.3, 4.1, 4.1.1, 4.2.1, 4.2.2, 4.6.3, 4.8.1, 4.9.1, 5.1, 5.6.1, 5.7.2, 5.7.3, 11.1b, 12.1, 12.3a, i, j, k, 12.4.1; Addendum C (4) and Addendum D (3).
June 2022	Amendments to clauses: 4.6.5, 4.10, 5.7.7, 5.8, 5.8.1, 12.1.2 12.4; Addendum A.
January 2023	Amendments to clauses: 1, 4.1.1, 4.1.2, 4.8.2, 4.9.1, 5.6.3, 5.6.6, 5.8.6, 6.3, 11.2.4, 12.1.2, 12.1.3, 12.2.3, Addendum A.
May 2023	Amendments to clauses: 11.1(c), 11.1(d), 14, Addendum D, addition of Addendum E.
March 2024	Amendments to clauses: 2.3, 3.1, 3.3, 4.1, 4.1.2, 4.1.3, 4.5.2, 4.6.1, 4.8.2, 4.9.2, 4.11, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 5.8, 6, 10, 11, 11.2.4, 12, Addendum A, Addendum C, Addendum D.
January 2025	Amendments to clauses: 2.4, 2.4.3, 3.2.2, 3.3.2, 4.1, 4.1.4, 4.2.1, 4.2.4, 4.5.3, 4.5.4, 4.6.2, 4.6.4, 4.7.1, 4.8.1, 4.9.1, 4.9.3, 4.10.1, 4.10.3, 4.11.1, 4.11.2, 4.11.3, 5.4.3, 5.5.1, 5.6.2, 5.6.7 a), 5.6.7 b), 5.7.1 b), 5.7.1 c), 5.7.2, 5.7.2 d), 5.7.4, 6.3, 9, 10, 11.1 b), 11.3.1, 12.1.1, 12.1.2, 12.1.3, 12.3, 12.3 k), 12.3 l), 12.4.1, 14, Addendum A, Addendum C, Addendum E Remove clauses: 4.6.3, 4.7.2, 11.1 g), 11.1 h), Additional clauses: 4.10.5, 4.11.4, 7.1.3, 12.1.4, 12.3 d)

Date amended	Summary of amendment (continued)
March 2025	Amendment to clause: 7.1.3 (clarify intent for rule)
January 2026	Amendment to clauses: 2.3, 2.4, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 4.1.4, 4.2.7, 4.6.2, 4.6.3, 4.9.1, 4.10, 4.10.5, 4.11.1, 4.11.3, 5.1.1, 5.1.2, 5.5.1.a, 5.5.1.b, 5.5.2, 5.6.1, 5.6.3, 5.6.7.b.(i), 5.6.7.d, 6.2.a, 6.3, 7.1.3, 9., 11.1.d, 11.2.2, 11.2.4, 11.2.7, 11.3.2, 11.4.1, 11.4.2, 11.4.3, 11.4.4, 12.1.1, 12.1.3.a, 12.1.4, 12.2.1, 12.2.2, 12.3, 12.3.a, 12.3.f, 12.3.k, 12.3.l, 12.4, 13.5, 14 Addendum A, Addendum B, Addendum C, Addendum D, Addendum E Remove clauses: N/A Additional clauses: 2.3.1, 4.6.2.b, 4.6.4, 4.9.1.a, 4.10.6, 5.1.1.c, 5.4.3, 5.5.1.a.(i), 5.6.7.b.(ii), 5.6.7.b.(iii), 6.2.b, 12.1.3.b, 15, 15.1, 15.2
July 2026	4.6.2(a), 4.6.2(a)(i), 5.1.2, 5.2

1. PARTICIPATION

All participants in matches organised by the Victorian Churches Football Association Inc. (hereafter referred to as the "Association" or "VCFA") shall conduct themselves in a manner that reflects the Associations stated purpose of "For God through Football".

All participants shall observe the spirit and intent of the Laws of Association Football and the VCFA Match Rules. All matches should be played in the spirit of Christian sportsmanship and mutual respect.

The VCFA expects the Leadership group within each team to proactively manage players, coaches and club officials to ensure the Associations standards of behaviour are maintained at all times.

2. HOME GROUNDS

2.1. Each Club is expected to secure the use of a suitable ground for play in the competition. The Clubs are responsible for the payment of any fees associated with their use of the ground.

2.2. All Club grounds may be inspected by an authorized VCFA representative and certified suitable/acceptable for the VCFA competition.

2.3. When a home ground is unavailable due to either condition or lack of access, it is the responsibility of the Home Club to notify the VCFA General Manager of such, and use its best endeavours to organize a replacement ground, or to contact the involved Away Club to determine if a fixture can be reversed. Failure to take reasonable steps to get a replacement ground may result in loss of points, a fine or both.

2.3.1 Failure to play at a replacement ground or in a reversal, where the alternative is approved by the VCFA Operations Team, will be treated as a forfeit by the team which caused the match to be abandoned.

2.4. In all circumstances where a ground becomes unfit for play the Home Club must advise the VCFA General Manager as well as the designated contact from the Away Club. **Failure to do so, shall be treated as a forfeit by the Home Club and may also result in a fine.**

2.4.1. The home club is entitled to declare their ground unfit for play. Clubs need to be able to make the decision that their ground is unfit for play in line with their responsibility under their lease arrangements.

2.4.2. If a match is called off, the home club must submit evidence to the VCFA Match Secretary that the ground is clearly and beyond a reasonable doubt, unsuitable for play, and the club may be required to explain their actions to the Judicial Tribunal.

2.4.3. Where the Referee has indicated that a match should be called off, even if both team coaches/managers agree to play, then that match shall not be played, and the appointed Referee shall inform the VCFA General Manager and Match Secretary.

Where the Referee decides the match may proceed, but only one team is prepared to play, then the referee will abandon the match and declare a forfeit (refer to forfeit rules in 4.6).

2.4.4. In the case of a double header on the same ground unless in the Referee's reasonable opinion he/she feels the ground could recover sufficiently to allow play within the next two hours and the ground lessee concurs then the Referee will not need to wait for the second KO to declare a ground unfit for play.

3. GROUND MARKINGS AND EQUIPMENT

3.1. Ground Markings

The ground markings and goalposts shall comply with the requirements of the Laws of the Game and must have securely fixed, appropriate goal nets. The goal posts should be made of rigid alloy or plastic, that may be foldable for storage purposes. However, they must not be pop-up in type, nor flexible at all while in-use, nor sagging; in relation to small-sided-game structures.

3.2. Passageway and Technical Areas

3.2.1. Wherever possible, all grounds must be marked with a one metre 'passageway' (from the touchline). This line should be marked on any touchlines that spectators are likely to use. Spectators are not allowed inside this passageway.

3.2.2. All grounds must be marked with a Technical Area, for each team, one metre from the touchline and six metres by two metres in size.

Coaching staff, substitutes, medical staff and match officials are the only ones permitted inside the Technical Area. A maximum of 4x staff and 5x substitutes are allowed in the area at one time in order to assist the referee as to who the match participants are. Anyone inside the technical area must be listed on the team sheet.

In the case of a synthetic pitch or any ground with markings that don't comply, these must have cones to reflect the above specifications.

3.2.3. The 1-metre passageway between the Technical Area and the touchline can only be crossed by coaches and substitutes during an interchange but only after the Referee has stopped play. They must return to the Technical Area before play resumes.

3.2.4. Substitutes must cover their playing jersey to avoid confusion for match officials and players.

3.3. Association Issued Match Ball

3.3.1. If, prior to the commencement of the year's competition, the Association issues match balls to teams, each team (home and away) must provide the Association issued Match Ball to the Match Referee before the commencement of every scheduled match for that year. It is each team's responsibility to retrieve their match ball at the end of each scheduled match.

3.3.2. Replacement of Association issued Match Ball

A team that loses or has a damaged Association-issued Match Ball must replace the match ball at its own cost. Such replacement must be a current Match Ball or previously approved Match Ball in good condition. If the Match Ball is damaged during a scheduled match and

deemed by the Match Referee as unsuitable for further use, the Association, at the discretion of the VCFA Board, may replace the Match Ball at no cost to the team involved.

4. MATCH PLAY

4.1. Match Duration

Prior to the commencement of each year's competition, the Association will determine the competition draw and the match playing times. Match durations for matches on Association approved pitches will be:

Match Information Table

Age / Division	Competitive	Pitch Size	Match Length	Players	Ball Size
Seniors (Men & Women), Masters, Under 18 Boys	Competitive	Full Size Pitch	45-minute halves (x2)	11-a-side	Size 5
Under 16 (Boys & Girls)	Competitive	Full Size Pitch	35-minute halves (x2)	11-a-side	Size 5
Under 14, Under 15 (Mixed & Girls)	Competitive	Full Size Pitch	30-minute halves (x2)	11-a-side	Size 5
Under 13 (Mixed)	Competitive	Full Size Pitch	25-minute halves (x2)	11-a-side	Size 4
Under 12 (Mixed & Girls)	Competitive	Half Size Pitch	25-minute halves (x2)	9-a-side	Size 4
Under 10, Under 11 (Mixed)	Non Competitive	Half Size Pitch	25-minute halves (x2)	9-a-side	Size 4
Under 10 (Girls)	Non Competitive	Quarter Size Pitch	20-minute halves (x2)	7-a-side	Size 3
Under 8, Under 9 (Mixed & Girls)	Non Competitive	Quarter Size Pitch	20-minute halves (x2)	7-a-side	Size 3

4.1.1. In the event that a senior match runs late, determination should be made by the Referee as to whether the match play time and/or break should be shortened. Where only one senior match is fixtured on that pitch for the day the full playing time should be adhered to where possible. Where two senior matches are fixtured on that pitch on that day, the Referee shall divide the remaining time into two halves with a five-minute break to enable the match to

finish 15 minutes prior to a subsequent match, thus enabling the subsequent match to start on time.

4.1.2. In the event of junior matches running late, the referee should shorten the playing halves and/or break time to ensure the next scheduled match can commence on time. This can be done across multiple matches where required to enable reasonable playing time for each age group.

4.1.3. In the event that there are no other junior matches fixtured on that pitch on that morning the referee should consult BOTH the home and away coaches and seek agreement to play the full match time. If either coach is not agreeable, then the referee should shorten the halves to finish by the scheduled time.

4.1.4. In Premier League Senior fixtured matches, the referee will make allowance for time lost per the Laws of the Game. Please note, this does not apply to PL Reserves competitions.

In Shield/Cup Competition fixtured matches, the referee will make allowance for time lost as per the Laws of the Game for the highest level matches only (ie. Parry Shield and Gwen Wright Shield). No allowance for time lost will be applied in any junior cup matches.

4.2. Match Commencement and Abandonment

4.2.1. All matches (junior and senior) must begin at the scheduled times.

Where a team has the minimum required players to take the field (or more), the referee must instruct them to take the field and shall abandon the match if they refuse to do so.

4.2.2. In the event that one team is not on the field and ready to play 15 minutes after the scheduled kick off of a senior game, the Referee will abandon the match. The 15-minute extension does NOT apply to Junior matches. In the event of junior teams not able to meet the minimum required players to take the field, a 5-minute grace period will apply and the match should be shortened as per match rule 4.1.2 or 4.1.3 as applicable.

4.2.3. Immediately prior to the commencement of each match, both teams are to gather in a semi-circle at the direction of the referee, with the Referee and Assistant referees standing between the two teams.

4.2.4. Any player or person who is comfortable will pray (*a sample form of prayer is available on the VCFA website*) and then the teams will formally shake hands with each other and the match officials. This will occur by the home team moving along the line shaking the hands of the match officials and then the away team.

4.2.5. Matches which are abandoned must be reported by the Referee via the Match Report, with relevant details attached in a more detailed report.

4.2.6. Yellow and red cards issued during the match will remain, although they can be appealed against under procedures already contained in these Match Rules.

4.2.7. If a match is abandoned due to causes beyond the control of either team and the 75% rule is not able to be enforced (refer to 4.3), then the match will be replayed within a suitable time frame as determined by the Operations Team. If a match is abandoned due to causes attributable to either or both clubs e.g. behaviour of players, officials, spectators or any other influence at the time, then the result, points allocation and whether the match is replayed will be at the discretion of the Judicial Tribunal. A cause that is "attributable" to one or both clubs must in the opinion of the Judicial Tribunal be "clearly or directly attributable" beyond a reasonable doubt.

4.3. 75% Rule

In the event that there is a delay during the match due to serious injury, inclement weather, or for any other reason, the match duration will be shortened by the referee considering the impact on following matches – refer to match rule 4.2.1. In the event a match is truncated for any cause, the score will stand if 75% of the match is able to be played. If less than 75% of the match is played the outcome of the match will be referred to the Judicial Tribunal.

4.4. Serious Injury

In the event of an injury (including suspected injury) to the head, neck or back, or dislocation or bone fracture, the VCFA will not require that an injured player be moved unless it is deemed safe to do so by a medical professional, that being a doctor or paramedic. Nothing in this policy prevents a player from choosing to remove themselves, or their parent or guardian choosing to remove the player from the playing field if they deem it appropriate, however VCFA officials must never pressure or coerce a player to do so. In the absence of a clear decision by the player to leave the field of play, the player must be medically assessed before being moved.

If an injured player on the playing surface is injured and not deemed safe to move under this policy, play will be halted until it is safe to do so. The match will only restart after a serious injury once the injured player has been assessed and safely moved an appropriate distance away from the field of play. The match duration will be shortened by the referee considering the impact on following matches – refer to match rule 4.4.1.

In accordance with match rule 4.2, in the event a match is truncated due to injury, the score will stand if 75% of the match is able to be played. If less than 75% of the match is played the outcome of the match will be referred to the Judicial Tribunal.

4.5. Extreme Weather and Ground Conditions

4.5.1. Teams must go to the ground in anticipation of play, unless advised to the contrary. The Referee and/or the home club will then decide if play is possible. Correct and proper inspection of pitches MUST be made. Rain in itself does not necessarily constitute a hazard. In the event of hail, it will be up to the determination of the referee whether it is safe to continue playing (this could mean a simple break in play).

4.5.2. The 30–30 Rule must be applied during thunderstorms. When lightning strikes, count the time until the associated thunder, and if this time delay is 30 seconds or less, the match must be suspended and players and spectators must go immediately to a safe location. After the storm conditions have apparently dissipated or moved on, the referee must wait a further 30 minutes

before continuing with the match. Should thunder be heard within this period, recount from the last thunder heard. In accordance with match rule 4.2, in the event a match is truncated, the score will stand if 75% of the match is able to be played. If less than 75% of the match is played the match will be rescheduled and replayed in its entirety in accordance with clause 4.10.1.

4.5.3. In extreme weather conditions, the appointed referee has the right to postpone, delay or abandon any fixture. In the event of abandonment, the referee must immediately provide a report to the relevant Match Secretary.

4.5.4. If conditions are considered extreme by the referee, he/she has the discretion to allow one or more additional two-minute breaks each half and more if the referee deems necessary.

4.6. Forfeit

4.6.1. In the event that a referee abandons a match as a result of one or more of the teams failing to take to the field within the prescribed time frame as set out in 4.2.1 (or for any other reason) the referee shall forward a report to the Match Secretary and the Director of Match Officials. The match will be declared a forfeit by the team which caused the match to be abandoned.

The forfeiting club may appeal to the Judicial Tribunal which will then determine the outcome (considering any extenuating circumstances) and either affirming the forfeit or requiring that the match be replayed. In the absence of compelling extenuating circumstances outside the reasonable control of the forfeiting team the Judicial Tribunal will affirm the forfeit.

4.6.2. a) Senior Mens, Senior Womens teams that forfeit any Association match (including catch-up matches) will be fined (according to Addendum A). If a team forfeits a match and has not given reasonable notice that team will incur further fines and the value of the referee fees incurred.

a) (i) For Womens Division X teams, where the club committee/board of the team believes there are exceptional circumstances, the club may make an application in writing to the VCFA no later than three days after the scheduled match was due to be played for the forfeiture fines to be rescinded. The Judicial Tribunal will review any application for exceptional circumstances. In the event the Judicial Tribunal decides that there were exceptional circumstances, the forfeiture fines will be rescinded. For avoidance of doubt, exceptional circumstances for forfeiture fines to be rescinded does not include player injuries, player shortages or social events.

b) Junior (excluding non-competitive) teams that forfeit any Association match (including catch-up matches) will be fined (according to Addendum A) if they have not provided reasonable notice.

“Reasonable notice” is defined as being any time BEFORE 12pm on the day before the VCFA fixtured match.

“Notice” means selecting "Forfeit" through the Dribl system and providing a reason for the forfeit request.

4.6.3. If a league Senior Men's or Women's team forfeits, every other team at that club in a lower division shall be deemed to forfeit. The expectation is that clubs will push players up to field their highest teams or all matches will be forfeited and incur the appropriate fines **noting the exception, MPL and Divisions shall be treated as separate for the application of this forfeit rule, where the requirement to push players up will still apply within MPL and divisions independently and respectively. For example: Where an MPL team forfeits, their MPLR team shall be deemed a forfeit, but any Div 1 or below matches will still be permitted to play. In the same way, if a Division team forfeits, all lower Division teams shall be deemed a forfeit.**

4.6.4. **Masters League and Women's Div X are exempt from the requirement to push up.**

4.6.5. In addition to the forfeiture rule herein and any fine imposed, any club or team that breaches 4.6.2 and 4.6.3 without good reason, may be referred to the Judicial Tribunal. At its discretion, the Judicial Tribunal may impose further penalties on the club or team such as deduction of additional competition points.

4.7. Postponed and Forfeited Matches

4.7.1. In the event that a team cannot play a fixtured match (other than for extreme weather or ground condition), the match will be considered a forfeit against the team unavailable to play. If a team is unable to play a match and the club committee / board of that team believes there are exceptional circumstances, the club may make an application in writing to the VCFA within three days after the scheduled match was due to be played.

The Judicial Tribunal will review any application for exceptional circumstances. In the event the Judicial Tribunal decide that there were exceptional circumstances, they may mediate any penalty levied and/or the match must be rescheduled by the clubs involved pursuant to Match Rule 4.10. For the avoidance of doubt, exceptional circumstances for a match to be rescheduled does not include player injuries, player shortages or social events.

4.8. No Referee

4.8.1. When the Referee assigned to the Match has not arrived prior to the scheduled kick off time and no other qualified Referee is available at that time, a substitute Referee acceptable to representatives of both teams shall be chosen.

Where clubs are unable to agree on a substitute Referee the fixture will be abandoned and the home club must report to the relevant Match Secretary.

4.8.2. Should a substitute Referee be available in the absence of the Referee assigned to the match, the substitute Referee available shall take charge of the match as substitute Referee to enable the match to start on time, and continue to officiate until the assigned Referee arrives, or for the full term of the match should the assigned Referee not arrive before half-time.

After consulting with the Director of Match Officials, the substitute Referee must then complete the Match Report (including votes for "best and fairest" and "team discipline points") and

submit it together with Match Cards to the Junior or Senior Match Secretary accordingly. Undue abuse or misbehaviour towards a substitute referee shall be immediately referred to the Judicial Tribunal for such penalties as deemed appropriate by the Judicial Tribunal.

4.9. Match Steward

4.9.1. Both the home & away teams must provide a Match Steward (who is not involved as a coach or player), suitably competent to fulfill the duties of the role, for every junior and senior VCFA Match.

a) Each Match Steward should be wearing the "VCFA Match Steward" vest and be located between the home and away technical areas for the duration of the match unless carrying out their duties.
b) Each Match Steward must identify themself to the referee at the commencement of the game and the name of each Match Steward is to be recorded on the Dribl system.
c) In the event there is not a Match Steward available, the Referee has the option of halting the match or abandoning the match if in the reasonable opinion of the Referee the absence of a Match Steward is likely to have a material impact on his or her ability to perform their duties, or if there is a risk to the safety or well-being of players and or spectators. The decision to abandon a match may be appealed to the Tribunal by either club involved.
d) **A match steward must be a minimum age of 18 years old, and must be able to provide proof of age to the appointed Match Referee, if requested to do so.**

In the event there is not a Match Steward available, the Referee has the option of halting the match or abandoning the match if in the reasonable opinion of the Referee the absence of a Match Steward is likely to have a material impact on his or her ability to perform their duties, or if there is a risk to the safety or well-being of players and or spectators. The decision to abandon a match may be appealed to the Tribunal by either club involved.

4.9.2. A Match Steward, wearing the Association vest shall have the authority to ensure that the VCFA Match Rules (as set out below) are adhered to. The duties of a Match Steward include, but are not limited to:

a) ensuring that only substitute players, coaches and club officials of each team are allowed inside their own Technical Area.

b) ensuring that spectators do not enter the 1 metre passageway.

c) assisting the Referee should any communication be required with spectators.

d) ensuring that standards of behaviour are adhered to as per Match Rule 11

e) to appear before a Judicial Tribunal or other constituted VCFA body as a witness to any incident taking place in or around the match.

4.9.3. All spectators, substitute players, coaches and club officials should follow the directions of a Match Steward when he/she acts in accordance with his/her duties. Any indiscretions can be reported by a Match Steward to the Referee or through his/her club committee.

4.10. Rescheduled and Catch - Up Matches

4.10.1. Where a match is required to be rescheduled pursuant to these match rules, the VCFA General Manager shall direct the clubs to the date, time and location for the rescheduled match to be played.

The date will be determined according to the nominated Catch-Up Rounds identified in the published VCFA Season Calendar, or if there are no available Catch-Up Rounds, at the discretion of the VCFA Operations Team.

4.10.2. Failure to play the rescheduled fixture shall be treated as a forfeit by the team unable to participate. If both teams are unable to play the match result will be recorded as no result and neither team shall be awarded competition points.

4.10.3. If either club believes that they made all reasonable efforts to ensure that the match was rescheduled and played, they may appeal to the Judicial Tribunal for a determination as to the outcome of the fixture and any other sanctions.

4.10.4. Upon receiving an appeal, the Judicial Tribunal may award three competition points to the appellant club and waive any fine which would otherwise be issued to that club if and only if it is satisfied on the balance of probabilities that:

a) The appellant club made conscientious and good faith efforts to reschedule and play the match; and

b) The failure to reschedule and play the match was due to unwillingness or failure substantially on the part of the opposition club.

4.10.5. For Junior non-competitive competitions no abandoned, forfeited, or cancelled match, will be rescheduled.

4.10.6. **For Junior competitive competitions, matches will only be rescheduled and/or replayed as determined by the VCFA Operations Team, in accordance with these match rules (Refer to MR 4.10)**

4.11. Fixture Requests

4.11.1. Any fixture change request must be agreed by both clubs and must be submitted in writing 21 days before the match in question.

The initiating club must complete VCFA Form 7 available on the website or upon request from the VCFA Operations Team.

4.11.2. In situations where fixtures are not known or published with 21 days' notice available, clubs must apply directly to the VCFA General Manager for consideration of the fixture change request.

4.11.3. Where, as a result of a fixture change request any match played on a different day to the initially scheduled date for that round, any player taking part in the match will be ineligible to play in any other match of that round, not to the exclusion of what is

permissible as per MR 5.8.4. Any team playing additional players to what MR 5.8.4 allows, will be deemed as an ineligible player, and as such shall forfeit the match, and further penalties may apply in accordance with Addendum A.

4.11.4. Differing to fixture requests, clubs will be asked to submit scheduling requests for alignment of teams or ground availability.

These scheduling requests must be submitted as part of the Team Nomination form and are subject to approval by the VCFA Operations Team.

5. PLAYERS

5.1. Number of Players

Any Team List that has total players in excess of the maximum as stated below will be considered as having played ineligible player(s).

Eleven-a-side match

The minimum number of players per team shall be seven. The maximum number of players shall be sixteen (eleven on the field and five interchange).

Nine-a-side match

The minimum number of players per team shall be six. The maximum number of players shall be fifteen (nine on the field and six interchange).

Seven-a-side match

The minimum number of players per team shall be five. The maximum number of players shall be twelve (seven on the field and five interchange).

5.1.1. For Women's Division X matches, if either team has given written notice to their opposition by 8pm on Thursday preceding the match that they may not have 11 players, the opposition shall:

a) reduce the number of their players on the field so that the playing numbers are equal; or

b) field 9 players;

whichever is the greater number. For the avoidance of doubt, if no notice is given both sides shall be entitled to play 11 players on the field.

c) **Further noting, that if a team who has requested to reduce numbers, at any stage prior to kick off wishes to increase the number of players on the field, this can only occur by mutual agreement with the opposing team, prior to kick off.**

5.1.2. **In every other respect Women's Division X matches shall be treated as an ordinary eleven-a-side match as per these match rules, other than affording them to be exempt from the requirement to play up (as per MR 4.6.3), and affording them the ability to appeal forfeit fines due to exceptional circumstances (MR 4.6.2 a)(i).**

5.2. Player Transfer

Any player wishing to transfer from one club to another during the season must first complete a VCFA Player Transfer Request Form to obtain the approval of both clubs, and have the completed form sent to the VCFA General Manager by the club the player is wishing to transfer to.

If the original club, with which the player is registered, refuses clearance, the player may appeal to the Judicial Tribunal through the **VCFA General Manager.** The Judicial Tribunal has the discretion to approve or not approve the clearance.

5.3. Team Registration

5.3.1. The VCFA will determine the competition structure prior to the season and will have the discretion to determine whether additional teams (either from existing clubs or new club applications) will be accepted for that season's competition.

5.3.2. The VCFA Board has the right to impose conditions of registration on teams that had a poor discipline record in the previous season or seasons, or in the case of new teams, if the VCFA Board believes there are grounds for imposing a conditional registration.

5.4. Player Registration

5.4.1. All intending Players must be registered with the Association via the VCFA Online Registration System (Dribl). Each Player must supply his/her name, date of birth, address, an email contact, phone number details and clear, current passport-style photograph (and email and telephone contact details for parents or guardians in the case of players under 18 years of age).

5.4.2. Registrations of both senior (men and women) and junior players must be undertaken through the online VCFA registration system (Dribl) and in doing so EACH player acknowledges and accepts the VCFA Terms and Conditions.

5.4.3. **Dual Registration. A Player may only be registered with one Club at any one time during the competition season. Any player found to be registered to more than one club will be deemed to be an ineligible player with the Club they subsequently registered with, and penalties may apply in accordance with Addendum A.**

5.4.4. During the season a player can be registered at any time up until the VCFA nominated Registration Cut-Off date.

The VCFA nominated Registration Cut-Off date will be identified in the VCFA Season Calendar document available on the website, or upon request from the VCFA Operations Team.

Any registration after this date must be submitted in writing to the VCFA General Manager for approval.

5.4.5. All players (including juniors) must be registered before playing any matches. (Refer to Addendum A for penalty applied to a team playing an unregistered or ineligible player.)

5.4.6. Junior players are expected to compete in their age-appropriate competition as per eligibility match rules. Please refer to Addendum E for the VCFA guidelines and requirements for juniors playing above their age eligibility in juniors and/or in senior competitions.

5.5. Player Eligibility

5.5.1. In the interest of safety for all players, only biological male players are eligible to take the field in the Men's Premier League 1, Men's Premier League 1 Reserves, Men's Premier League 2, Men's Premier League 2 Reserves, Men's Division 1, **Men's Division 2**, **Masters**, U18 Boys and **U16 Boys** competitions, **where it is the Club's responsibility to ensure that players are registered to their eligible division.**

Where a female player wishes to participate in the U16 Boys competition, the club may request an exemption to do so from the VCFA General Manager.

5.5.2. Only biological female players are eligible to take the field in the Women's Premier League, Women's Divisional competitions and Junior Girls competitions, **where it is the club's responsibility to ensure that players are registered to their eligible division.**

5.5.3. Both male and female players may participate in all other Senior Divisions and Junior Competitions.

5.6. League Match Cards and Team Lists

5.6.1. All match rules are applicable to all fixtured VCFA competitions including juniors, seniors, masters, league and cup competitions unless otherwise determined or noted. For example, junior concessions.

5.6.2. All teams must complete and submit their digital match sheet via Dribl for each junior and senior match, prior to match kick off. The referee will not commence the match until both match sheets have been submitted.

5.6.3. Teams may add or remove players from the match sheet only up until the match sheet is locked by the Dribl system. Any player listed on the locked match sheet will be deemed to have played in the match, and any player who is not listed will be ineligible to play, and penalties will apply pursuant to Addendum A. Dribl will lock the match sheet at the scheduled commencement of the second half of the match.

5.6.4. The match sheet must be completed correctly (match details, shirt numbers, and players participating, etc.) and every player must have a clear, current passport-style photograph uploaded.

5.6.5. The Referee must make himself known to both teams prior to the match commencement.

5.6.6. Refer to Addendum A for penalties for late submission of match sheets, irregularities or unauthorized modifications.

5.6.7. Registrations and Identification

a) Referees will conduct checks of players' identities against the photograph provided in the Dribl system. Referees may ask to see the photo ID of any player to confirm their identity.

b) (i) If a player cannot be identified by reference to the photograph or information registered with Dribl and is unable to provide photo ID the player will be deemed to be an ineligible player.

For junior competitions, the match will go ahead but the referee will inform the players' coach and note in the match report that they believe an ineligible player was played. The onus will be on the players' coach and/or club to present sufficient evidence that the player was eligible to play by way of an officially recognised form of identity within 72 hours of the relevant Match Secretary issuing the request to the club.

(ii) Where there is reasonable grounds to believe a player listed on a match sheet is ineligible for the division by the match Referee:

For senior competitions, the Referee will direct the player to provide proof by way of an officially recognised form of identity (eg. Drivers licence), if no proof can be provided, the player will be deemed an ineligible player.

For junior competitions, the match will go ahead but the referee will inform the players' coach and record in the match report that they believe an ineligible player was played. The onus will be on the players' coach or a club representative to present to the relevant Match Secretary sufficient evidence that the player was eligible to play, by way of an officially recognised form of identity (birth certificate, passport) within 72 hours of the relevant Match Secretary issuing the request to the club.

(iii) Where an opposing team or club believes they have reasonable grounds that a player listed on a match sheet is ineligible for the division, they must raise a dispute to the relevant Match Secretary and VCFA General Manager within 48 hours of the match in question, noting that any frivolous or vexatious disputes will be penalised.

c) The Referee will check that the number of players named on the match sheet matches to the number of players (including interchange players) on the ground.

d) The Referee will confirm the accuracy of the match sheet and record any players issued with yellow/red cards during the match via the Dribl system. The relevant Match Secretary will notify the appropriate clubs of any suspensions applicable after the issue of yellow**/red** cards.

5.7. Player Attire and Equipment

Each club is responsible to ensure that their players are correctly attired within the requirements of the Laws of the Match. Shirts, shorts and sock colours/designs shall be consistent within the one team.

5.7.1. Team Uniforms

a) New team uniforms must have the prior approval of the Association. The VCFA will not be responsible for any costs incurred by clubs who order new uniforms prior to written approval from the VCFA.

b) Clubs must provide digital images of all current versions of their playing strip (including shirt (front and back), shorts and socks) and alternate playing strip to the VCFA for inclusion on the VCFA clash register prior to the commencement of each season (when paying Association affiliation fees).

c) Clubs are required to have a home playing kit and an alternate (clash strip).

Clubs are to wear their home playing kit at all matches, EXCEPT where a clash is identified and recorded in the clash register (available on the website, or upon request from the VCFA Operations Team).

Refer to Match Rule 5.7.2 for clash rules.

d) Players are not allowed to wear undergarments/skins etc in colours that are different to their shirts, shorts or socks, unless neutral coloured.

5.7.2. Clashes

In case of a clash of shirt colours as per the VCFA clash register, all players of the away team shall change or not play.

a) For Senior competitions only, In the event the away team's socks are the same colour as the home team's socks (as per the VCFA clash register) then it is the responsibility of the away team to change their socks to a uniform non-clashing colour.

b) The goalkeepers shall wear colours which distinguish them from the field players.

c) It is the away team's responsibility to provide an alternate strip where required except when it is only the home team goalkeeper whose shirt colour clashes with the away team.

d) In the event of a clash of strips, if no alternate playing shirt is available and if the Referee cannot distinguish between the teams, the Referee will abandon the fixture.

e) In the event a fixture is abandoned due to a clash of playing shirts, the match will be forfeited 3-0 to the home team. If there are any exceptional circumstances that the clash could not be anticipated or avoided, the away team may appeal to the Judicial Tribunal.

5.7.3. Team Shirt Numbers

Every player except for the goalkeeper shall have a distinguishing and exclusive number upon the shirt which shall agree with the player's number on the match sheet prepared for reference and for the Referee's use during the Match.

Altering a team shirt number with tape is not acceptable. Referees may use discretion in non-competitive (SSG competitions who do not record a result) matches where appropriate.

In the event a team wishes to change its goalkeeper but does not have another keeper jersey the Referee is to make a note of any change in shirt numbers.

5.7.4. Shin Guards

Shin guards are compulsory and must be made of a suitable material and be of an appropriate size to provide reasonable protection and be covered by the socks. Players are responsible for the size and suitability of their shin guards.

5.7.5. Jewellery

In the interest of players' safety, players must remove all jewellery (including necklaces, rings inc. wedding bands, all wrist bands such as watches, fitness trackers, heart monitors, etc; earrings, piercings, leather bands, rubber bands, medical bracelets, metal clips, etc.) prior to entering the field of play. Using tape or sweat bands to cover jewellery is not acceptable.

If any player refuses to do so, the Referee will exclude that player from participating in the match until such jewellery is removed. If a player is discovered to be wearing jewellery during play, the referee will caution the player, order the player to leave the field of play and that the item in question must be removed before the player is allowed to re-enter the field of play.

5.7.6. Medical Identification Bracelets

Where a player is required to wear a medical ID bracelet for the legitimate purpose of providing information about the player's medical condition or treatment, the player:

- must inform the Referee of that fact prior to the commencement of play;
- agrees to participate in the match on the basis that he/she shall comply with this rule and that he/she voluntarily assumes the risk of so doing;
- must be accompanied to the match by a dedicated spectator who observes the player throughout the full length of the match;
- must leave the medical ID bracelet with that dedicated spectator, with instructions to present the medical ID bracelet to any person seeking to provide medical treatment to the player; and
- must immediately re-affix, or have the dedicated spectator re-affix, the medical ID bracelet to the player at the conclusion of the player's involvement in the match.

If the Referee becomes aware that a player has not fully complied with this rule the player will be ordered to leave the field of play and will be excluded from the remainder of the match until the player complies with this rule.

5.7.7. Eyewear

Players who require glasses during matches must wear spectacles with plastic frames and plastic lenses OR glasses specifically designed for use while playing contact sports. A band must also be worn that holds the glasses in place securely. Any player wearing eyewear must be made known to the referee BEFORE the pre-match prayer and confirm that their eyewear meets match rule requirements. A coach or team manager may do so on a player's behalf.

If a player is discovered wearing glasses during the course of play, the referee shall stop the match, approach the player (in Seniors) or coach (in Juniors) and ask them to confirm that the eyewear meets match rule requirements. If not clarified, the coach will substitute the player until the glasses can be checked. No caution (yellow card) should be issued for infringements of this rule.

5.7.8. Blood Rule

In the event that a player suffers an injury which results in the loss of blood, the Referee will request that the player receive attention outside the field of play subject to rule 4.4. The injured player will only be permitted to re-join the match when the Referee is satisfied that the injury has been safely covered and contained. If the player's attire is splattered with blood, he/she will only be permitted to re-join the match when he/she has changed his/her attire.

5.8. Team Lists

5.8.1. Subject to the below match rules, there are no restrictions on how many players can be moved each week between teams in the same club or how many games a player may play on one day. Refer to junior concessions in 12 for further clarification.

5.8.2. For the last four rounds of the home and away season the lowest Division a player will be able to play in is the division in which that player has played the highest number of matches. Where a player has played an equal number of matches in two (or more) divisions (and they have not played more matches in any other division) they will be considered on the team list of the highest of those divisions.

Example: if a player has played 5 matches in division 1, 7 matches in division 2 and 6 matches in division 3, they will be eligible for division 2.

5.8.3. If any team does not play on a given match day for some reason (e.g. postponement, bye, mid-week catch-up games, abandonment, forfeit or any other reason) players of that team cannot play in a lower division on that day. For the avoidance of doubt, this means if a team's match is postponed players of that team can only play in the same or higher division match that day.

In addition, when the postponed game is rescheduled, no players from a higher division team can participate in the postponed game. For the purpose of this rule, a player will be associated with the team they have played the most games with up until the date of the fixture in question, and where they have played an equal number of matches in two (or more) divisions they will be considered on the team list of the highest of those divisions.

5.8.4. Despite Match Rule 5.8.2 and Match Rule 5.8.3 above, in any situation, a club may play up to three higher division listed players but only in the next lower division in which that club has a participating team.

Example: If a Club has teams in Divisions 1, 3 and 4, three Division 1 listed players can play in Division 3, three Division 3 listed players can play in Division 4. The three Division 1 listed players cannot play in Division 4.

5.8.5. For the purposes of this match rule, Premier League competitions with Reserves divisions shall be treated as a single division in relation to player eligibility and there shall be no restrictions on player movement between the Premier and Reserves teams in a given competition.

5.8.6. A registered junior player participating in a VCFA senior competition is not restricted by player movement as per 5.8.2 and 5.8.3.

6. SHIELD/CUP COMPETITIONS

6.1. Shield/Cup Match Cards and Team Lists

Match sheets in accordance with Rule 5.6 must be submitted to the Referee before the commencement of each match.

6.2. Prohibition on Player Transfers

A player named on a team's match sheets in a previous match of the Shield or Cup Competition is "cup-tied" to that team and is prohibited from being named in another team in any subsequent match of the Shield or Cup Competitions unless an exemption is requested and approved in writing by the VCFA.

a) For avoidance of doubt, a previous match includes a match played at an earlier time on the same day or in a previous round on an earlier date. Any player so named will be treated as an ineligible player.

b) **For further avoidance of doubt, exemptions will only be considered in the instance that the request is for a player to play in a higher Cup, no exemption will be considered to play for a team within the same Cup that a player has previously played in, nor a lower Cup.**

6.3. If a player wishes to participate in a Shield or Cup semi or grand final, they must have played in a minimum of five matches during the current fixtured season.

7. INTERCHANGE

7.1. Interchange will be allowed at all levels of play in the Association and there shall be no limit on the number of interchanges or when they occur, except for Men's Premier League Senior Competitions as per 7.1.3.

7.1.1. Interchanges must occur during a break in play with the approval of the referee and without undue delay of the match.

7.1.2. All interchange players must leave at the nearest point on the boundary line. The incoming player cannot enter the field of play until the other player has left and must enter at the halfway line.

This rule does not apply to the junior competition. Juniors must both leave and enter at the halfway line.

7.1.3. Men's Premier League Senior Competitions and the Parry Shield will have a hybrid Interchange rule. The hybrid rule will limit the number of stoppages made in a match to five (5). There are no limits on how many substitutions can be made at each stoppage, and unlimited substitutions can be made at half time.

7.2. If an Interchange is made without the permission of the Referee, or if an interchange player enters the field of play before the player being rested has left the field of play, the offending player shall be cautioned and the Referee may ask the player to leave the field of play.

8. REFEREES and ASSISTANT REFEREES

8.1. If they are not provided by the VCFA, each team will provide a reasonably capable Assistant Referee for each match before play can commence. The Assistant Referee will assist the Referee in control of the Match, and must be prepared to accept direction from the Referee as to how the Assistant Referee role is to be performed. An Assistant Referee is expected to concentrate on the match without favouring or coaching one side rather than the other when the ball is in play.

8.2. For the avoidance of doubt if the Assistant Referee is the coach of one of the teams they will be entitled to manage substitutions and communicate with players from their team when the ball is dead or out of play.

8.3. Before the start of a Match, the Referee shall provide Assistant Referee's flags and instruct Assistant Referees in the duties to be observed in assisting the Referee. During the Match, the Referee shall watch for and acknowledge an Assistant Referee's signals. At all times the Referee has the discretion to judge the match situation irrespective of an Assistant Referee's signal, and this should be made clear in the instructions given before the start of the Match.

An Assistant Referee who proves unsuitable to the Referee through lack of attention or other reason shall be replaced. If a suitable Assistant Referee is not available the Referee may abandon the Match and report the circumstances to the Senior or Junior Match Secretary. Refer to Addendum A for the penalty imposed for non-compliance with this requirement.

8.4. If the Assistant Referee is a player, he/she must wear a tracksuit or other jacket that clearly distinguishes him/her from players.

8.5. Where an Assistant Referee has been provided by a team, he/she will run the appropriate line with his/her team’s defence.

8.6. For all other requirements of VCFA-sanctioned referees, assistant referees and junior referees, please refer to Addendum C.

9. REFEREE EVALUATION FORMS

Following each VCFA Senior Match, both teams (home and away) must submit a Referee Evaluation Form via the VCFA's nominated reporting system, no later than 5pm on the next day.

Clubs will be fined for non-compliance as per Addendum A.

10. MATCH RESULT REPORTING

Either team may enter a final score into the Dribl system. It is ultimately the responsibility of the home team to ensure a final score is entered within 3 hours of a match concluding. Clubs will be fined for late submission of match results as per Addendum A.

11. DISCIPLINE

The Association affirms that the following behaviour at matches will not be tolerated. This includes physical violence, blatant foul play, blasphemy, swearing, or abuse towards other players or the referee. Alcohol may not be consumed or sold until after the conclusion of the last fixtured VCFA game at a given venue and then only ensuring that all the liquor licensing requirements and local by-law requirements have been met.

11.1. Suspension of Players

a) A player who is sent off during a match must leave the vicinity of the field of play and the Technical Area (defined as where the match officials, reserve players, coaches etc. are located) and retreat to the changing rooms (if available), their car or at least 50 metres from the ground.

b) All players (seniors and juniors) who are sent off are, as a minimum, ineligible to play until after the next official match sanctioned by the VCFA in which their team plays (a bye, cancelled, forfeited or abandoned match is not considered a match unless the forfeit is by the opposition team).

In addition, a player sent off from a VCFA sanctioned match cannot participate in any other match of that round or match week (where a match week is from Sunday-Saturday).

c) Five cautions given to the same player during the season (or two during a match) shall be followed by suspension for a minimum of one match/week from the competition (a bye, cancelled, forfeited or abandoned match is not considered a match week unless the forfeit is by the opposition team).

d) Any suspension or compounded suspension imposed through the season for any reason of misconduct (including red card, successive five notations of cautions, off field incidents) the mandatory match suspension will be doubled in the next instance, any subsequent mandatory

match suspensions shall be tripled, and the player must present himself/herself to the Judicial Tribunal panel before being allowed to return to participate in the VCFA.

e) In straightforward cases in which the Referee substantiates a sending-off, the player sent-off shall be suspended in accordance with the guidelines in Addendum B - VCFA Discipline Table (this table is not an exhaustive list, and the Judicial Tribunal has the authority to vary it as it sees fit).

f) Outstanding suspensions at the end of the winter competition will be carried over to the next winter competition. Yellow and Red Cards gained during shield and cup competitions will be treated as if issued during the home and away competition.

g) The Referee may show a yellow and/or red card to any player within the field of play or substitute, coach, manager, physio or any person within the technical area. Within the technical area, if the person(s) committing the offence is unable to be identified, the 'coach' will incur the caution. The person shown the card shall be subject to all match rules and other consequences stemming from receipt of a yellow or red card under these Match Rules and the Laws of the Match.

11.2. Behaviour of Players and Spectators

11.2.1. The Judicial Tribunal shall decide what are considered to be appropriate penalties dependent upon particular circumstances.

11.2.2. Referees or Assistant Referees are not expected to accept dissenting or abusive remarks from players. Players who dissent from a referee's decision during a Match are entitled to be cautioned. Players who address abusive remarks to other players, to the referee, or to assistant referees or spectators during a Match will be sent-off. Refer to Addendum B for penalties imposed on players who make disparaging or abusive remarks to match officials before, during or after a Match.

11.2.3. Each club is responsible for its own spectators' behaviour whether they are playing at home or away. Referees, assistant referees and visiting players and supporters should be protected from undue harassment.

11.2.4. Where fencing is in place behind goal lines, NO spectator is permitted to stand within 5 metres of the goals, including behind or to either side of the goal posts, when a match is in play. If no fencing is present behind goal lines, spectators are not permitted to stand behind the goal line at any point and must be restricted to standing behind the touch lines of the field of play.

11.2.5. Any participant guilty of misconduct towards the referee or an assistant referee must be requested to leave the ground immediately. Refer to Addendum A for penalty imposed on spectators who are registered players or officials of Affiliated Clubs and are reported by a referee as being guilty of misconduct towards the referee or an assistant referee.

11.2.6. No person is allowed to enter the field of play during a match, without the specific permission of the referee. Should the referee consider an injured player requires assistance, the referee will clearly signal for such assistance from club or team officials. The Judicial Tribunal may

impose penalties for contravention of this requirement, considering the referee's report of the incident.

11.2.7. Any spectator or club official who in the opinion of the Match Steward, performing their duties as per MR 4.9, or the referee is guilty as outlined in these rules, must, if requested by the Match Steward leave the ground immediately which means leaving the field of play and remaining at least 50 metres from the ground for the remaining duration of the match and any subsequent match at that venue on that day.

11.2.8. VCFA camera crews may attend VCFA matches and events. Club officials, players and spectators must not approach or make requests of them and must immediately move away from the camera crew when asked to do so. The Match Steward should ensure that VCFA camera crews are afforded the same respect as Match Officials and that they are not harassed during the conduct of their duties or as they leave the ground. Severe penalties may be imposed for any breach of this rule at the discretion of the Judicial Tribunal.

11.3. Racist Remarks at Matches

11.3.1. Association Matches are held in public places. Members of the public are generally free to attend and view Matches, whether casually or as supporters of playing teams. Offensive racist remarks made and overheard in public are unlawful under the provisions of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975. The term “offensive racist remarks” includes remarks that are reasonably likely in the circumstances to offend, insult, humiliate, or intimidate another person or group of people on the basis of race, colour, or national or ethnic origin. Any person aggrieved by racist remarks or racist acts may make an official complaint to the Race Discrimination Commissioner, or to the Equal Opportunity Commission.

The Association firmly states that offensive racist remarks are not acceptable at Association Matches and advises clubs that every opportunity should be taken to make all of their participants aware that offensive racist remarks and racial vilification have no place in the Association’s competition or its environs.

The Association has therefore adopted disciplinary procedures to make clear to all participants the Association’s attitude towards offensive racist remarks or behaviour.

All alleged instances of racist remarks will be referred directly to the Judicial Tribunal, and all parties to the incident will be required to appear before the Judicial Tribunal.

11.3.2. Racist remarks made by any participant (player, match official, coaches) or spectator towards any other participant (player, match official, coaches) or spectator, and heard by the referee or reported to the referee by an official assistant referee, will not be tolerated and will be expediently disciplined by the offending player being sent-off the field of play for "racist remarks" and referred to the Judicial Tribunal for further penalties at the discretion of the panel of the Judicial Tribunal.

11.4. Blasphemy, Foul or Abusive Language

"*Blasphemy*" is the term given to the use of the Name of God or of His Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, in an irreverent way, or as an expletive or a profanity in an expression of rage or hurt,

or as a mannerism of speech to shock others, or to insult, instead of being used as a means of worship, adoration, or prayer.

"*Cursing*" and "*Swearing*" are general terms for coarse language that may include calling down misfortune on someone or invoking a deity to carry out the wish expressed; cursing and swearing may include blasphemy.

"*Obscenity*" refers to that element in coarse language that is lewd or suggestive in reference to sexual matters.

"*Vulgarity*" has the connotation of reference to bodily processes not normally mentioned in polite speech, and may include blunt, tasteless, or crude language.

11.4.1. Any form of blasphemy uttered by a player and heard by the referee or reported to the Referee by an official assistant referee, will be expediently disciplined by the offending player being sent-off the field of play for "blasphemy".

11.4.2. Any form of swearing, cursing, obscenity or vulgarity uttered by a player and directed towards another player, Referee, Assistant Referee, Match Officials or spectators and heard by the Referee or reported to the Referee by an official Assistant Referee, will be expediently disciplined by the offending player being sent-off the field of play for "foul and abusive language".

11.4.3. A player who swears without using blasphemy and not directing the player's remarks towards another person, but swears nonetheless, will be disciplined by the Referee administering a caution for "unsporting behaviour – language" before the restart of play or when the ball next goes out of play.

11.4.4. Interchange players not on the field of play directing any of the reprehensible forms of speech towards another person, and heard by the referee or reported to the Referee by an official assistant referee, **will** be disciplined with a red card and sent off from the technical area, for "foul or abusive language", and will not be entitled to participate any further in the match as an interchange player.

12. JUNIOR COMPETITION

12.1. Junior Teams

12.1.1. Where there are sufficient teams in any junior age group to form two or more divisions, these divisions will be determined by the VCFA Operations Team.

Team nominations to divisions will be assessed annually, considering but not limited to ladder standings from previous seasons, registered players, and club communications.

12.1.2. Clubs with more than one team in a Junior age group (no divisions) are expected to maintain a fixed allotment of players to a team, rather than moving players from team to team to benefit from the extra numbers of players available. However, a player may be added to another team list of the player's club by having the player added to the team's match sheet. Only two

players can be added in this way for any given match. A player can only be added on to another list for a maximum of five times, and then it has to be decided whether the player is to be transferred permanently onto that team list.

Clubs with teams in multiple divisions within the same age group cannot add players from a higher division to a lower division team sheet at any time.

For example: an U13A player cannot participate in an U13B match, however, players from lower divisions can play in a higher division, subject to the restrictions mentioned above.

No junior player may be shared within the same division within the last 4 rounds of the junior competition.

For clarification, there is no restriction on players from younger age groups playing in an older age group competition, i.e. no maximum number of players that can be added to a team sheet and no restriction on the number of matches they can play in a season.

Refer to Addendum A for the penalty of playing an ineligible player in a team.

12.1.3. Age Groups

a) Each year the Board will decide the form of competition and the players' age group that will be catered for. A player's eligibility to compete in an aged-based competition shall be determined by a player's age on 1st January each year.

For example: if a player is 15 as of the 1st of January they will be eligible for U16's, however if a player turns 15 any time after 1st of January they are eligible for U15's (being 14 years old on the 1st of January). This applies to both mixed and girls competitions.

When determining which age group a girl qualifies to play in a mixed competition, one year may be deducted from her age, thereby allowing her to play in a younger age group.

For example: if a female player is 15 as of the 1st of January then she will be eligible for Mixed U15s.

b) For avoidance of doubt, the eligible age is defined by reference to the calendar year, not the start or finishing dates of any season or competition. The onus is on the club to ensure all players are registered in the correct age division and that the information provided is true and correct, where any club who registers a player incorrectly will be penalised for playing an ineligible player, in accordance with these Match Rules.

No Juniors player shall play in an age group lower than their eligible age group unless they have an approved age exemption status.

12.1.4. If exemption from match rule 12.1.3 is required, clubs must complete and submit an age exemption application. Clubs must review and consider the VCFA age exemption policy (available upon request to the VCFA General Manager) before submitting an age exemption application.

Applications will be reviewed by the Operations Team and only once approval is granted may the player participate in the lower age group.

Players will be identified as exempted players by having the letters EX recorded after their surname on the match sheet. Clubs may appeal the status of an exempted player by email from the club president or club committee to the VCFA General Manager.

12.2. Concessions for Junior Teams

12.2.1. Goal Kicks for Under 13 grades should be taken in front of the goal area and level with the penalty spot. Opposing players shall stand a minimum of 10 yards (9.15 metres) clear.

12.2.2. Corner Kicks for Under 13 mixed grades shall be taken from midway between the corner and the penalty area, on the goal line. Opposing players shall stand a minimum of 10 yards (9.15 metres) clear.

12.2.3. In relation to throw-ins, NO concessions, i.e. no second chance, will be given for foul throws beyond the U12 age group. For Under 8's to 12's competitions, where a foul throw occurs, the referee will gently give clear instructions to the offending player and allow him/her to retake the throw. The throw will not be taken by a different player. After a second chance, the ball is then given to the opposition.

12.3. All SSG Competitions (U8, U9, U10, U11 and U12 Mixed, U8, U10 and U12 Girls)

The following requirements are specifically applicable to the VCFA's small-sided-match competitions:

a) The goal posts should be made of rigid alloy or plastic with a net attached, and must be securely anchored to the ground. They may be foldable for storage purposes, however, they must not be pop-up in type, nor flexible at all while in-use, nor sagging; in relation to small-sided-game structures.

b) Goal kicks are to be taken from within the semi-circle and/or penalty area with 10 metres clearance from any opposition player.

c) Penalty Spot – 5m meter line for Quarter Sized Pitch. 8m point for Half Sized Pitch. Only the goalkeeper and the kick-taker to be within the semi-circle/box when a penalty kick is being taken.

d) Clearance - 5 metres from all free kicks.

e) Corner posts - minimum 1.52 metres high (5 feet).

f) Offside - the offside rule applies only in the SSG age groups of U12 Mixed and U12 Girls.

g) Referee - one instructing Referee to each match. Linesmen are only required in competitions with the Offside Rule, but they are encouraged in all junior competitions. One linesman should be provided by each club to support the instructing referee.

h) Attire – As per match rule 5.7, Referees should be suitably attired for ease of identification. Goalkeepers are to wear colours distinct from those of the other players. Players are to wear shin-guards under their football socks.

i) Ground Markings - to be completed before the match may start. SSG ground markings must be in a contrast colour to full pitch markings where required (i.e. where an SSG pitch is marked on an existing full-sized pitch). Low profile cones can be used in lieu of line marking on external lines only. But are not encouraged to be used on stand-alone SSG pitches where lines can be marked.

j) Heading the ball is to be discouraged (but not penalized) in matches on quarter-sized pitches.

For clarification it is NOT an offence to head the ball, but it is to be discouraged by coaches and the instructing Referee.

k) Goal scoring – all SSG age groups, except for **U12 Mixed** and U12 Girls: If a team is leading by 3 goals, that team may not score further goals from shots taken inside the penalty area.

l) Best & Fairest votes, results, and ladders – all SSG competitions, except for the **U12 Mixed** and U12 Girls competition, will be non-competitive with no competition results, ladders or best and fairest awarded.

12.4. Junior match result reporting

a) In all junior competitions, the home team is responsible for ensuring their club referees correctly complete and submit the Match Report including Best and Fairest votes, via Dribl.

b) While SSG competitions will not publicize the results and ladders, it is still a requirement that all results and match sheets are submitted appropriately.

c) Penalties may apply for late or non-submission of referee reports, refer Addendum A.

Small Sided Games (SSG) Formats		
Playing Format	U8 Mixed	U10 Mixed
	U8 Girls	U11 Mixed
	U9 Mixed	U12 Mixed
	U10 Girls	U12 Girls
Numbers	7v7	9v9
Field Size	1/4 Pitch	1/2 Pitch
	Length: 40m-50m	Length: 60m-70m
	Width: 30m-40m	Width: 40m-50m
Field Markings	Alternate colour line markings. *Low profile cones may be used for external markings only.*	Alternate colour line markings. *Low profile cones may be used for external markings only.*
Penalty Area	Semi-circle: 5m deep x 12m wide *Penalty kick to be taken at top of 5m line*	Rectangle: 10m deep x 20m wide *Penalty kick to be taken at designated 8m spot*
Goal Size	2m x 3m	2m x 5m
Goal Type	May be portable MUST be anchored Must be made of solid metal or plastic material (*not flexible)*	May be portable MUST be anchored Must be made of solid metal or plastic material (*not flexible)*
Ball Size	Size 3	Size 4
Goalkeeper	Yes	Yes
Playing Time	20-minute halves (x2)	25-minute halves (x2)
Half Time Break	5 minutes	5 minutes
Referee	Instructing referee	Instructing referee
Linesmen	Encouraged (*clubs to provide*)	Only U12 Mixed and U12 Girls
Competitive (Ladders)	No	Only U12 Mixed and U12 Girls
Best and Fairest	No	Only U12 Mixed and U12 Girls
Throw-ins	Yes	Yes
Corners	Yes	Yes
Offside	No	Only U12 Mixed and U12 Girls
Substitutes	Maximum five (5) substitutes	Maximum six (6) substitutes
Heading the ball	Discouraged	Discouraged

13. MATCH RULES

13.1. Match Rules that are not likely to (materially) impact on the outcome of matches can be changed by the Board at any time.

13.2. Match Rules that are likely to (materially) impact the outcome of matches can only be changed by the Board before the start of the season.

13.3. If the Match Rules do not cover a situation which arises then the Judicial Tribunal shall determine the appropriate response and penalties in line with existing responses and penalties for other offences and can make recommendations to the Board to have the Match Rules changed.

13.4. The concept of precedent will be applied to the application of Match Rules so a ruling in one instance will guide future cases on the same matter.

13.5. Match Secretaries should not interpret match rules. If there is any doubt a matter should be referred to the Judicial Tribunal for a decision.

14. PROMOTION AND RELEGATION

Promotions and relegations will be as per the current Promotion and Relegation policy document available on the website, or upon request from the VCFA Operations Team, noting that Masters and Women's Div X do not operate within the promotion/relegation structure of all other Senior competitions.

15. MASTERS

The VCFA Masters League will follow the Laws of the Game and the VCFA Match Rules, and where relevant will follow the match rules for the VCFA Divisions League, not Premier League, but not to the exclusion of the stated exemptions where the rules allow.

15.1 To be eligible to play in this competition, players must be:

a) male (as per MR 5.5.1a), aged 40 years or older, or turning 40 at any time during the competition year, OR

b) one of three aged between 35 - 39 (identifiable on Dribl).

c) penalties as per Addendum A will apply for any ineligible player added to a match sheet.

15.2 The Masters competition is treated as a separate social division, exempt from the requirement to play up (as per MR 4.6.3), and does not operate within the promotion/relegation structure of all other Senior Men's competitions. In every other respect Masters matches shall be treated as an ordinary eleven-a-side match as per these match rules.

ADDENDUM A: Penalties

In some offences below, as determined by the VCFA Board, there may be a grace period of the first three rounds before penalties are implemented.

The penalties below are for failure to adhere to the above Match Rules.

Clubs must ensure they have read the VCFA Match Rules and understand that failure to adhere to them will result in the below penalties being enforced.

Note: *this Addendum applies to both junior and senior teams.*

OFFENCE	PENALTY
Match sheet completed incorrectly (e.g. player recorded with the incorrect shirt numbers, players not on sheet, etc.)	$50
Late submissions of Match sheet	$50
A team playing an unregistered or ineligible player.	$200 fine, forfeit of match. Repeat Club offences refer to Judicial Tribunal, may include but not limited to loss of additional competition points, monetary fine, etc; players not permitted to be added to any match sheet until determination from Judicial Tribunal
No Match Steward provided	$25, repeat offences referred to MRP
No Association issued Match Ball suitable or provided	$50
Pitch and or equipment not meeting VCFA Guidelines (no corner flags, no ground markings, no goal nets, etc.)	$50
Incorrect player attire (e.g. shorts with pockets, inconsistent team kit shorts and socks, etc.)	$50
Failure to provide a digital image of current playing strip and socks, and current alternative strip and socks	$50 (payable each week until image is provided)
Failure to have an alternate strip, according to the clash register	$100
Failure to have clash socks, according to the clash register	$50
Late or non-submission of match results / reports, including junior referee reports	$50
Late or non-submission of Referee's Evaluation Report	$50

Forfeiting of senior matches	$200
Forfeiting of senior matches without prior notice, or after 12pm the day before the match	$200, plus full referee fees; and may be referred to Judicial Tribunal to incur a further fine and/or sanction
Forfeiting of junior (competitive) matches without prior notice, or after 12pm the day before the match	$100; repeat offences referred to Judicial Tribunal
A team not providing a suitable Assistant Referee	$50
Players abusing Referees or Assistant Referees.	Refer to Judicial Tribunal for protracted suspension from Play, as per Addendum B, and the imposition of a penalty up to $500 by the Judicial Tribunal.
Players assaulting Referees or Assistant Referees.	Refer to Judicial Tribunal for protracted suspension from Play, as per Addendum B, and the imposition of a penalty up to $500 by the Judicial Tribunal
Spectators who are registered Players or Officials of Affiliated Clubs and are reported by a Referee as being guilty of misconduct towards the Referee or an Assistant Referee.	Penalty to be determined by Judicial Tribunal, including imposition of a penalty up to $500 payable by the club.
Spectators who are not registered Players and are reported by a Referee as being guilty of misconduct towards the Referee or an Assistant Referee.	Penalty to be determined by Judicial Tribunal,including imposition of a penalty up to $500, payable by the club.
Racist remarks	4 week suspension as per Addendum B, plus Refer to Judicial Tribunal

ADDENDUM B: Disciplinary References

The below are references to disciplinary sanctions for match day offences, which will be applied in accordance with the adjudication responsibilities of the VCFA Match Review Panel (MRP) and Judicial Tribunal (JT), and where all sanctions applied are at the discretion of these respective appointed bodies, in due consideration of each matter.

Offence Reference	**Offence**	**Minimum Sanction** Mandatory match suspension – 1 match
PLAYERS:		
R4 or R5	Denying the opposing team an obvious goal-scoring opportunity	Mandatory match suspension
R6	Use of offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or gestures – directed at any person other than a Match Official NB non-directed, without blasphemy – caution.	Mandatory match suspension
R6	Use of blasphemy	Mandatory match suspension
R1	Serious foul play (eg when challenging for the ball) – minor	Mandatory match suspension
R1	Serious foul play - moderate	Mandatory match suspension plus: Negligent - 1 additional matches Reckless - 3 additional matches
R1	Serious foul play - severe	Mandatory match suspension plus: Negligent - 3 additional matches Reckless - 3 additional matches; refer to JT for any additional penalties
R2	Assault on a player (eg. violent conduct when not challenging for the ball) or against any other person other than a Match Official, including an attempted assault - minor	Mandatory match suspension plus 1 additional match
R2	Assault on a player - moderate	Mandatory match suspension plus 3 additional matches
R2	Assault on a player - severe	Mandatory match suspension plus 3 additional matches; refer to JT for any additional penalties
R2 or R6	Serious unsporting conduct towards an opponent or a person other than a Match Official	Mandatory match suspension

R6	Use of discriminatory language and/or gestures, including racist, religious, ethnic or sexist conduct	Mandatory match suspension plus 3 additional matches. Any racist remark will also automatically be referred to JT for any additional penalties
R3	Spitting at or biting a player or any person other than a Match Official	Mandatory match suspension plus 5 additional matches
R8	Inciting a brawl	Mandatory match suspension plus 5 additional matches; refer to JT for any additional penalties
R2 or R6	Returning to field after being issued a red card	Minimum suspension in accordance with the red card offence; refer to JT for any additional penalties
PLAYERS:	**Specific Offences Against a Match Official:**	
R6	Use of offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or gestures against a Match Official	Mandatory match suspension plus 2 additional matches
R6	Use of blasphemy against a Match Official	Mandatory match suspension plus 2 additional matches
R2 or R6	Unsporting conduct towards a Match Official including to show dissent	Mandatory match suspension plus 3 additional matches; may refer to JT for any additional penalties
R2	Assault of a Match Official	Mandatory match suspension plus refer to JT for up to 6 months and any additional penalties
R3	Biting, spitting or similar unseemly behaviour against a Match Official	Mandatory match suspension plus refer to JT for up to 6 months and any additional penalties
TEAM OFFICIALS:		
R-TO5	Entering the field of play to interfere with play or an opposing player	Mandatory match suspension
R-TO6, R-TO7 or R-TO10	Deliberately leaving the Technical Area to act in a provocative or inflammatory manner or enter the opposing Technical Area in an aggressive or confrontational manner	Mandatory match suspension
R-TO3	Use of offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or gestures - directed at any other person other than a Match Official NB: Non-directed, without blasphemy - caution	Mandatory match suspension
R-TO3	Use of blasphemy	Mandatory match suspension

R-TO1 or R-TO2	Assault on a player, Team Official, spectator or any other person other than a Match Official (including physical or aggressive behaviour to such individuals)	Mandatory match suspension plus 1 additional match; may also refer to JT for any additional penalties
R-TO8	Deliberately throwing/ kicking an object onto the field of play	Mandatory match suspension
R-TO9	Delaying the restart of play by the opposing team (eg. holding onto the ball, kicking the ball away, obstructing the movement of a player)	Mandatory match suspension
R-TO3	Use of discriminatory language and/or gestures, including racist, religious, ethnic or sexist	Mandatory match suspension plus 3 additional matches. Any racist remark will also automatically be refer to JT for any additional penalties
R-TO4	Biting, spitting or any other unseemly behaviour against a player, Team Official or any other person other than a Match Official	Mandatory match suspension plus 5 additional matches; refer to JT for any additional penalties
TEAM OFFICIALS	**Specific Offences Against a Match Official:**	
R-TO3	Use of offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or gestures against a Match Official	Mandatory match suspension plus 1 week
R-TO3	Use of blasphemy against a Match Official	Mandatory match suspension plus 2 additional matches
R-TO5 or R-TO6	Deliberately leaving the Technical Area or entering the field of play to interfere with or confront a Match Official (including to show dissent towards or remonstrate with a Match Official)	Mandatory match suspension plus 3 weeks; refer to JT for any additional penalties
R-TO1, R-TO2 or R-TO3	Unsporting conduct toward a Match Official, including to show dissent	Mandatory match suspension plus 3 additional matches; refer to JT for any additional penalties
R-TO1 or R-TO2	Assault of a Match Official	Mandatory match suspension plus refer to JT for up to 6 months and any additional penalties
R-TO4	Biting, spitting or similar unseemly behaviour against a Match Official	Mandatory match suspension plus refer to JT for up to 12 months and any additional penalties

Notes:

Serious Infringements - Red Card (Expulsion) Codes

- R1 Serious foul play
- R2 Violent conduct
- R3 Biting or spitting at and/or an opponent
- R4 Denying the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal scoring opportunity by a handball offence (this does not apply to a goalkeeper within his or her own penalty area)
- R5 Otherwise denying a goal or an obvious goal scoring opportunity to an opponent as prescribed by Law 12 of the Laws of the Game
- R6 Using offensive, insulting, or abusive language and/or gestures (NB: Non-directed, without blasphemy - caution)
- R7 Receiving a second caution in the same Match.

Definition of serious foul play

Typically, but not limited to, a player is guilty of serious foul play if he/she uses excessive force or brutality against an opponent when challenging for the ball when it is in play.

- Minor: no injury to victim
- Moderate: victim needed to leave the field, but was able to return to play
- Severe: extreme risk of severe injury or player could not take further part in the match.

Violent Conduct/Active Retaliation

Typically, but not limited to, a player is guilty of violent conduct if he/she uses excessive force or brutality against an opponent when not challenging for the ball. A player is also guilty of violent conduct if he uses excessive force or brutality against a team-mate, spectator, Match Official or any other person.

- Minor: no injury to victim
- Moderate: victim needed to leave the field, but was able to return to play
- Severe: extreme risk of severe injury or player could not take further part in the match.

ADDENDUM C: Referees Policy

1. QUALIFICATION

1.1. All Referees within our Association are required to qualify through completion of the Association's Referees' Course, a FV Referees' Course, or through a course of similar standard.

1.2. a) In order to officiate senior matches from the centre, referees must be 18 years of age or older, unless approved by the Director of Match Officials or in exceptional match day circumstances at the discretion of the General Manager and clubs involved.

b) For all MPL and WPL assistant referees must be 15 years of age or older, unless approved by the Director of Match Officials; assistant referees must also be qualified.

1.3. **Referees of junior matches must be at least 13 years of age to officiate, and at least three (3) years older than the age group being refereed (for example, a referee should be 16 or older to referee U13 competitions).** Clubs are encouraged to ensure a responsible adult representative be present and contactable at all home grounds during junior matches to provide support and duty of care to any referees of minor age.

2. COMMUNICATION

2.1. Communicating with Spectators: Referees should only communicate with spectators via the Match Steward and, if deemed worthy, comments on spectator behaviour should be made in the Referee's Match Report or Incident Report.

2.2. Communicating with Assistant Referee: Before the start of a Match, the Referee shall provide Assistant Referee's flags and instruct Assistant Referees in the duties to be observed in assisting the Referee. During the Match, the Referee shall watch for and acknowledge an Assistant Referee's signals. At all times the Referee has the discretion to judge the match situation irrespective of an Assistant Referee's signal, and this should be made clear in the instructions given before the start of the Match. An Assistant Referee who proves unsuitable to the Referee through lack of attention or other reason shall be replaced. If a suitable Assistant Referee is not available the Referee may abandon the Match and report the circumstances to the Senior or Junior Match Secretary.

3. INTERCHANGE

3.1. Referees should not limit the number and timing of interchanges so long as they occur during a break in play and with the approval of the Referee and the interchange player is ready and waiting at the halfway line.

3.2. Referees will check players boots and equipment before the start of the match for all players. The only exception is for players arriving after the start of the match, whose boots and equipment will be checked upon entry into the field of play for the first time.

3.3. The Assistant Referee (closest to the Technical Area) should co-ordinate "interchange" – that is the Assistant Referee should assist the Referee by ensuring:

- that the interchange players are ready for interchange;

- that interchange occurs at the correct time (only after the Referee has approved the interchange);
- that interchange occurs at the halfway line;
- that the correct numbers of players exit and enter the field of play during the interchange;
- that the Referee is made aware when a team wishes to make an interchange; and
- that the Referee is notified when the interchange process has been completed before the Referee restarts the match.

4. MATCH RESULT REPORTING

4.1. A Referee who has issued a red card must forward an Incident Report to the Match Secretary by email no later than **5PM** on the following day.

4.2. The Referee should advise the team manager, or the team coach where a team manager is not present, of the official match result before leaving the ground.

4.3. In the Men's and Women's Competitions, Referees are asked to pay particular attention to relevant match reporting in to the online system (as well as the votes for 'Best and Fairest' and 'Team Discipline') as soon as possible, and in any event no later than midnight on the day of the match.

4.4. Ground Markings / Equipment Reporting
Referees are required to note in the Match Report whether:
- Both teams (home and away) provide the Association issued Match Ball
- The Association Match Ball is damaged during a match
- All Pitch facilities and markings correct (this requirement includes individually and severally: whether Goal Posts are correctly set up, Corner Flags are provided, Goal Nets are provided, and Ground / Line Markings including Technical and Clearance areas are correct).
- Player attire is being adhered to, with notation, if necessary, of any individual breaches.
- The home and away teams have provided a Match Steward wearing the approved VCFA vest.

5. SUSPENSION OF PLAYERS

When a player is cautioned or sent-off during a match, the Referee will make a note of the incident, and in an Incident Report, notify the Match Secretary of the circumstances of the incident.

A player who is sent off must leave the vicinity of the field of play and the Technical Area (defined as where the match officials, reserve players, coaches etc. are located).

ADDENDUM D: Match Review Panel and Judicial Tribunal

1. MATCH REVIEW PANEL

1.1. The VCFA Board will appoint match review panel members at the start of a season. At least two members of the panel will meet after each round to review match card issues and red card reports from Referees.

1.2. The Match Review Panel is an administrative process that reviews and confirms match card issues and red card reports and ensures the penalties below are administered consistently. The Match Review Panel may only consult with a Referee regarding a red card report to confirm classification according to the disciplinary references (Addendum B).

1.3. The Match Review Panel will provide outcomes of match card issues and red card report reviews to the Match Secretary for communication to clubs.

1.4. Following the receipt of the Incident Report from a Referee, the Match Review Panel, following the Match Rules guidelines, will advise the Match Secretary of the penalty imposed on the offender who will in turn communicate with the club. If the club has not received notification of the penalty by Thursday then the club must contact the Match Secretary to confirm the status of the player.

1.5. If a club wants to appeal the Match Review Panel's decision or appeal a Referee's original decision, the matter should be appealed within seven days of the notification of penalty being sent to a Club by the Match Secretary, to the Judicial Secretary to convene a Tribunal, which will be known as a "first and final appeal". Any notice of appeal must be sent to the Judicial Secretary by email. Only a VCFA Club may appeal a decision – individuals are not eligible to lodge an appeal.

1.6. For the avoidance of doubt, cautions (yellow cards) issued by a Referee can only be appealed under exceptional circumstances.

1.7. If the Match Review Panel feels a matter is not straight forward and needs further review, the matter will be referred to the Judicial Tribunal who will consider and determine the appropriate outcome in accordance with these Match Rules.

1.8. Where a matter has been referred directly to the Judicial Tribunal the relevant club shall be given notice of the referral and a chance to provide evidence and submissions to the Judicial Tribunal before any outcome or penalty is determined.

1.9. Following a determination by the Judicial Tribunal at first instance ("the Original Tribunal"), a relevant club may appeal the decision within seven days of the notification of outcome being sent to a Club by the Judicial Secretary, and the matter shall be re-heard de novo by five members from the panel of the Judicial Tribunal, a majority of whom must not have participated in the Original Tribunal ("the Appeals Tribunal"). All parties may make submissions on appeal, and the Appeals Tribunal shall have the benefit of all evidence presented at the Original Tribunal and the written reasons for decision of the Original Tribunal. The Appeals Tribunal may affirm the decision of the Original Tribunal or publish reasons for any alteration of the original decision.

2. JUDICIAL SECRETARY

2.1. The Judicial Secretary will receive any direct referrals of tribunal matters from the MRP per clause 1.7 above and any appeals of Referee decisions or MRP outcomes directly from appellants per clause 1.5 above.

2.2. The Judicial Secretary will then convene a properly constituted Tribunal consisting of the Tribunal Chair or Vice-Chair and two Ordinary Panel Members.

2.3. It is the responsibility of the Judicial Secretary (and the Judicial Tribunal) to facilitate the processes of the Judicial Tribunal in a way that affords all parties procedural fairness. This requires that:

a) decisions are not made without the parties being given prior notice of the case against them;

b) parties have a fair opportunity to answer the case against them; and

c) parties receive an unbiased hearing.

2.4. To that end, the Judicial Secretary must:

a) give proper notice of the referral to a Judicial Tribunal to the relevant club(s);

b) give copies of relevant evidence to be relied upon to the relevant club(s), except where the Tribunal Chair reasonably determines that the provision of such evidence would be contrary to the interests of the one or more parties AND that failure to provide the said evidence will not unduly prejudice any party to the hearing;

c) request, collate and distribute all evidence intended to be relied upon by all parties to members of the Judicial Tribunal ahead of the tribunal hearing;

d) give relevant club(s) a meaningful opportunity to be heard by the Judicial Tribunal, whether by way of written submissions, telephone conference, video conference or in-person appearance;

e) convene Tribunal Panels to ensure that there is no perceived bias in the constitution of the panel, such as an affiliation between a panel member and a club involved in the matter to be heard. Where a panel member is invited to sit on a Tribunal where there would be a perceived issue of bias, they should decline the invitation.

2.5. The Tribunal will consider the matter, determine any relevant outcomes or penalties, and the Judicial Secretary will inform the relevant member(s) of the outcome directly.

3. JUDICIAL TRIBUNAL

3.1. The Judicial Tribunal will, for all VCFA competitions:

a) Hear any appeals relating to decisions of the Match Review Panel;

b) Investigate any red card or other incidents that the Match Review Panel decides require further investigation;

c) Investigate any reports from Referees or Match Stewards regarding behaviour of spectators, coaches or club officials;

d) Investigate any reports from clubs and may impose penalties on clubs that in the opinion of the Tribunal make vexatious or petty reports.

3.2. The Judicial Tribunal will comprise a Tribunal Chair (appointed by the VCFA Board) and two Tribunal members (selected from a panel). The Judicial Secretary shall attend Tribunal Meetings and take minutes.

3.3. The Tribunal Chair shall be selected by the Board and may delegate their duties as Chair to any other Tribunal Member as the need arises, and any such delegate shall be referred to as Vice-Chair.

3.4. The panel of Ordinary Tribunal Members will be selected by the Board from members of VCFA clubs or other persons deemed suitable by the Board. The Tribunal may, if there are insufficient Ordinary Tribunal Members to carry out its functions, deputise additional Ordinary Tribunal Members to join a Tribunal by the agreement of the Tribunal Chair (or Vice-Chair) and the VCFA President (or Vice President).

3.5. A Tribunal Secretary will be appointed by the Board. The Tribunal Secretary will be responsible for coordinating the meetings of the Judicial Tribunal.

3.6. A quorum of the Judicial Tribunal will be the Chair (or Vice Chair) plus one other member of the Judicial Tribunal.

3.7. The Judicial Tribunal will sit each week during the season that there are matters to be considered by it if possible. If the Judicial Tribunal is unable to schedule the hearing of a direct referral or appeal during the week following the reported infringement then the player will be eligible to play until the Judicial Tribunal is able to schedule a hearing subject to written confirmation from the Judicial Tribunal (such approval being at the absolute discretion of the Chair or Vice Chair of the Judicial Tribunal).

3.8. Meeting procedure shall be determined by the Chair and shall generally conform to recognised principles of procedural fairness and be consistent with the provisions of the Association's Constitution and other Association reference documents.

3.9. Evidence shall be dealt with in a structured and legally appropriate manner. The Tribunal may consider any relevant and reliable evidence it deems fit at its sole discretion including, but not limited to: referee reports, witness statements and video evidence.

3.10. The Judicial Tribunal will determine who needs to appear before it – prioritising that all parties have a genuine opportunity to be heard. In cases of serious misconduct, Referees may be required to attend in person or give evidence by telephone or online.

3.12. The Judicial Tribunal may be convened to consider any serious complaints against the behaviour of a referee – this will be limited to serious misconduct only (not poor performance).

3.13. Failure of a person to attend a Tribunal hearing when requested will not provide grounds for a re-hearing of the matters decided upon at that Tribunal hearing and will not annul the rulings made or the disciplines imposed at that hearing.

3.14. In the event that a club appeals a decision to the Judicial Tribunal and either the Judicial Tribunal upholds the original ruling or the club withdraws its appeal then a fee of $200 will be charged to the club to deter frivolous or unmeritorious appeals. The Judicial Tribunal may, at its sole discretion, waive the fee if it is satisfied that the appeal had sufficient merit to warrant review.

3.15. The Judicial Tribunal shall have the power:

a) To impose fines on members;

b) To impose suspensions from play on players registered with the Association;

c) To hear appeals from clubs with respect to established yellow card (in exceptional circumstances) and red card match disciplines;

d) To moderate or to increase suspension penalties in the interest of players, clubs, and the Association or to impose any different form of penalty including (but not limited to) the reduction of competition points as it sees fit;

e) To require players suspended for certain offences to return to the Tribunal after they have served a suspension (but before they return to the competition) and show cause as to why they should be permitted to return to the competition; and

f) To deduct competition points or make recommendations to the VCFA Board to suspend a team from the VCFA competition. Suspension of a team will require Board ratification and expulsion of a team will require both Board and Association ratification. If any team is suspended or expelled, the suspension or expulsion will apply to any player who has played four or more matches and which represent 75% or more of their matches played in the suspended or expelled team for that season. The Tribunal may make a recommendation to the Board about a Club's ongoing membership in the association.

ADDENDUM E: Junior Age Eligibility

This Addendum is aligned to Match Rule 5.4.6 and is intended to provide clubs with a guideline for acceptable age eligibility regarding junior aged players competing in senior competitions or playing in a higher age group than their eligible age group.

Clubs must exercise a duty of care when considering requests from players and/or parents on children playing above their age grouping, or the need to play children above their age group in order to fill team numbers, whether that be in junior or senior competitions.

1. Juniors playing in Senior Competitions

1.1. The VCFA requires clubs to exercise a duty of care when playing junior players (under 18 years of age) in senior competitions.

1.2. The VCFA requires players to meet the following criteria:

- All Men's Premier League, Men Senior Division 1, and Senior Divisions: minimum 15 years of age
- All Women's Divisions: minimum 14 years of age
- Player has suitable physical ability to compete in senior competitions;
- Player has suitable emotional and social capability to compete in senior competitions; and
- Player has suitable skill level to compete in senior competitions.

1.3. Where a club wishes for any junior age player to participate in a senior competition, a consent form must be signed by a parent / guardian and retained by the club and sent to the VCFA General Manager for approval, prior to allocating the junior player to a senior match sheet (form available on VCFA website, or upon request from the VCFA Operations Team).

1.4 **Where a Club wishes for any junior player who is younger than the minimum age to participate in a senior competition (ie. a male under 15 years of age or female under 14 years of age), the Club President must request a *Junior Player - Senior Age Dispensation Application Form* from the VCFA General Manager for the junior player to be considered for such, and where the junior player cannot be allocated to a senior match sheet without approval in writing being received from the VCFA General Manager.**

2. Juniors playing in a junior age group above their eligibility

2.1. The VCFA requires clubs to exercise a duty of care when playing junior players in older age groups and should consider (but is not limited to) the following:

- Player has suitable physical ability to compete in older age group competition;

- Player has suitable emotional and social capability to compete in the nominated age group competition; and
- Player has suitable skill level to compete in the nominated age group competition.

2.2. Where a Club wishes to register a player into an age group two (2) years above their qualified age group, a consent form must be signed by a parent / guardian and retained by the club and sent to the VCFA General Manager for approval, prior to allocating the junior player to the requested age division match sheet (form available on VCFA website, or upon request from the VCFA Operations Team).