

19 August 2020

To the Netball Community throughout New South Wales

In a year like 2020 it is important to reflect on what is most important in life. Community sport in the modern era has never known a time like the past five months.

None could have imagined or foreseen the challenges and strains that 2020 has put on all sectors of the NSW sports industry at both grassroots and elite levels.

We have no doubt that many tears were shed this week when it was announced that Netball NSW had made the difficult decision to cancel the 2020 State Titles – our flagship events which bring thousands of players from all over NSW together annually, as well as our 2020 Social Masters and Masters State Titles competitions.

The Junior and Senior State Titles are netball in NSW's most iconic events, which both celebrated their 50th anniversaries in 2018 and were inducted into our Netball NSW Heritage Hall of Fame that same year (as the formerly known State Age Championships and State Championships). Sadly, 2020 is the first year they won't go ahead.

Sometimes the hardest thing and the right thing are the same. Since this pandemic started, Netball NSW's priority has been to safeguard the health, safety and wellbeing of our communities, and this decision rightfully put them first. Over recent months we have held honest and frank conversations with the hardworking team at NSW Health who eventually advised it would not be safe to hold our State Titles in 2020. This is a decision we respect.

Putting community first is at the heart of everything Netball NSW has done this year. As we speak, there are some positive numbers regarding the lowering of COVID19 community spread in NSW, but it is not a time to become complacent.

These cancellations were just the latest in a string of heartbreaking developments for our netball community. We think of the 2020 NSW State Teams who worked so hard to get selected and prepared for the National Netball Championships in Tasmania, our Marie Little OAM Shield Team, and our QBE Swifts Academy and GIANTS Academy athletes who missed out on the cancelled Australian Netball League. As we speak our NSW Swifts and GIANTS players, coaches and staff have left their loved ones at home to make a Super Netball hub happen in Queensland.

Most in our netball family will have their own stories and connection to the State Titles over many years. For several of our Directors those memories involve over three decades of consecutive participation, many friendships built and an odd post-game beverage shared. Others of us remember fondly the joy and pride of being selected as a young player, or umpiring, managing, administrating, or cheering on as a parent, family member or supporter.

What we should be very grateful for is that – despite a global pandemic - netball at the local level has been able, for the most part, to return. Some Clubs or Associations had to make the very difficult decision not to play, but those calls were not made lightly.

In this uncertain time, we urge our community to continue to act with compassion, kindness and care as we work through this together, and take all necessary precautions to protect yourselves and each other. We say thank you again to the many remarkable Association Executive and volunteers who are bearing an enormous workload and continue to go above and beyond to keep our community netballers on court safely.

When times have been hard, netball has always pulled together. More than ever, we encourage you to keep an eye on those around you to ensure they are okay and be willing to reach out to those around you for support if you need it.

Netball NSW would like to acknowledge the months, weeks, days and hours of planning that went into trying to make the State Titles – and all competitions – a reality. A huge amount of logistical and operational planning was conducted by our staff and fantastic volunteer workforces at our Associations. We thank all those Associations who had generously offered to host these events this year in already challenging times.

We also acknowledge that countless hours of training and game play took place on courts all over NSW in preparation. For all the players, always remember how special it was that you were selected to represent your Association at a State Titles. We share your disappointment but celebrate your achievements.

It might sound easy to say but none of this will be in vain. The learnings, the teamwork and the spirit displayed replicate a lot of what can be achieved on court. It is our strong belief that everyone – players, coaches, managers, officials, volunteers and staff – will come out on the other side of this with a better, clearer view of how we can grow collectively and individually. Let's all take this opportunity to grow our game, use our collective wisdom to shape our future and attract more participants.

Netballers are strong. We are resilient. We will be back, better than ever, when this is behind us.

When the first centre pass of the 2021 State Titles is thrown, the groundwork laid this year will ensure even stronger foundations going forward.

Yours sincerely



Louise Sullivan

President – on behalf of the Netball NSW Board