

Thursday, 15 July 2021

To our NSW Netball Community....

After living through the difficulty of 2020 there is no doubt that we all hoped the worst was behind us with regard to COVID-19. For the first half of this year things definitely looked that way with our community and Suncorp Super Netball seasons both starting strongly.

Unfortunately, the fact that we remain in the midst of a global pandemic has reared its head again in Greater Sydney. Therefore, we write today to provide an update from Netball NSW on the current COVID-19 situation and how it is affecting the various areas of our organisation.

As you all know, difficult decisions needed to be made in recent weeks around the Junior State Titles (postponed until September) and National Netball Championships which were cancelled for the second year in a row to the devastation of our State teams. The Greater Sydney community netball season is suspended under Government orders until at least Friday, 30 July pending further health advice.

When we started writing this note both of our SSN teams, the NSW Swifts and GIANTS Netball, were located in Melbourne and living and training with a large degree of normality after periods in quarantine in both Queensland and Victoria. Proudly our Clubs are placed first and third on the ladder after round 10 with four rounds to go. While the move to Melbourne was anticipated to be the final location for the season, given the quickly changing circumstances in Victoria currently, an urgent review by SSN stakeholders overnight and this morning has resulted in all SSN teams relocating to South Australia to play out the balance of the season in a condensed format.

Leading into the season Netball Australia's contingency planning for a COVID affected Super Netball season saw them establish an equalisation fund which was aimed at minimising the financial pain for any Club adversely affected by any possible COVID outbreak and related expenditure or loss of revenue. This is now firmly in place and will be one of the ways in which Netball NSW can mitigate against the cost of having our teams away from Sydney.

For Netball NSW's broader position, we also continue to constantly work through our own scenario modelling and the material financial impact of the loss of six home games for our SSN Clubs for the remainder of the 2021 season, together with other risks and how those can be mitigated. As we did in 2020, Netball NSW has taken immediate steps to respond to the new business challenges we are now facing. We will provide a further update to our members on that financial outlook when we can, focusing as we always do with our comparatively limited resources on the fine balance between our grassroots and elite priorities.

From a community netball perspective, it is great to see that our regional Clubs and Associations have been able to return to play following the school holiday break. We sincerely hope this remains the case for the rest of the season. Similarly, school programs and upcoming Regional League competitions can continue, albeit under the current COVID Safe requirements for regional areas. We again thank all

of our volunteers for the efforts you are making for those activities to be able to continue in a safe manner for all.

In Greater Sydney, as we know, the outlook is not so positive. Netball NSW is currently attending regular briefings from the Minister for Sport (Natalie Ward) and the Office of Sport on the current situation. At a briefing held this week the message was simple. Stay home. The Government can not reiterate strongly enough how much they need the cooperation of sporting and community groups to reinforce the message to their constituents. Our Netball Clubs and Associations can take a leadership position by ensuring our people are abiding by the rules and playing their part to get Sydney, and netball, back on track. We are grateful for your help and cooperation in this regard.

Discussions are also taking place with the Government on what the restrictions may look like once Sydney does come out of lockdown, particularly with regard to community sport. At present, it is too early to say when that will be, and the Office of Sport are not in a position to give any firm guidance. However, as soon as that information is available to us, we will share it with the wider netball community promptly, just as we have for almost 18 months now. Rest assured that Netball NSW is once again leading the way in advocating to the Government and liaising with colleagues across the sporting sector to work towards the best possible outcome for community sport as restrictions ease.

On the planning side, Netball NSW are continuing to work positively towards the re-scheduled Junior State Titles, the Regional State Cup, Academy Challenge, Masters State Titles, Social Masters and Koori Tournament all due to take place in September and October. We hope the landscape is more positive by then. We also continue to prepare for the implementation of the PlayHQ system in 2022, including providing familiarisation and training opportunities in coming weeks and months.

As a netball community we have been through lockdown before and come out ready to play and leading the way from a safety and compliance perspective. We know we can do it again. Ultimately the most important thing at this time is the health and safety of everyone in our community, so please follow the health guidelines so that Sydneysiders can join our country netballers back on the court as soon as possible.

Netball NSW will continue to provide updates as the situation evolves and our [website](#) is regularly updated with the latest COVID related information and links. We thank all of our Netball NSW staff and volunteers across the state for the help and commitment you are all offering, in what we know is a difficult time.

Should you have any questions or require further clarification please do not hesitate to make contact with one of our staff members. Thank you again to everyone in our netball family for coming together to support our sport through another uncertain time.

Stay safe and best wishes,

Louise Sullivan
President

Tain Drinkwater
Chief Executive Officer