***This is an edited version of All Clubs Communication from Melbourne Eastern Basketball Association 23 June, 2020*.**

**RE: Nunawading Basketball Update**

Dear Junior Clubs,

As you are aware, due to COVID-19, Nunawading Basketball, along with most community sport suspended operations from the 13th March. It has now been more than 3 months since the last game of basketball was played at Nunawading and the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted our community in ways we could never have predicted. This period has been incredibly challenging for everyone across many fronts including physical health, mental health, and economic issues. Thankfully, we are nearing the end of our shutdown with the 14th June announcements by Premier Daniel Andrews advising of a resumption to competition for junior players from the 22nd June.

Basketball Victoria have released their “Return to Sport” Guidelines which provide baseline recommendations for the resumption of basketball across training, development programs and competitions. In addition to the Basketball Victoria guidelines, we have been working on the development of our own “Reactivation Strategy” that will seek to ensure the safety of our members, staff, and volunteers. Prior to a resumption of competitive play there are many factors that need to be considered. For example, the Association must consider and address all COVID Safety Requirements, Venue Access, Capacity and Compliance (including Council Facilities, Public Schools and Private Schools).

After completing a thorough review of our junior domestic competitions, we have identified several areas for improvement. The efficiencies and improvements will allow for an adjustment to cost bases while simultaneously improving our product offerings. The items listed below provide a brief overview of the decisions made with respect to the Winter 2020 and Summer 20/21 seasons as well as the improvements identified that will be introduced upon our return to competition. We appreciate that there is a lot of information to digest and we will continue to assist and support all clubs as we transition into the post-COVID world of sport.

1. **Winter 2020 Season is CANCELLED**
   1. The Victorian Government has advised that junior competition can resume from the 22nd June. Nunawading Basketball will be taking a cautious, measured approach to reactivation to ensure the safety of all members, staff, and volunteers. Based on these dates and after consultation with several clubs there will be insufficient time to conduct a reasonable Winter 2020 season. As such, **the Winter 2020 season is cancelled**, and we will run into an extended Summer 20/21 season.
2. **Summer 20/21 Season Will Be Extended**
   1. Given the Return to Play announcement by the State Government on 14th June, Nunawading Basketball will be extending the Summer 20/21 season and follow the below timeline:
      1. Registrations Open: Monday 22nd June 2020
      2. Registrations Close: Friday 17th July 2020
      3. Competition Start Date: Saturday 8th August 2020

7*x Rounds of Grading (includes 1st Sat of School Hols 19/9)*

*18x Rounds of Regular Season*

* + 1. Final Date For 2020: Thursday 17th December 2020
    2. First Date For 2021: Friday 29th January 2021
    3. Grand Final Start Date: Friday 26th March 2021

While the timeline above is the schedule we’ll all be working towards, we acknowledge that the Premiers’ recent announcements (20th June) and tightening of restrictions may impact whether this date will be able to be achieved however we will continue to update all clubs as we navigate our way through the coming weeks.

* 1. Rather than start all over again, the decision has been made to allow clubs to roll-over registrations of players that had already been collected via PlayHQ meaning the teams selected can also remain for the new season if the club wishes. Only new registrations to a club will need to be actioned.
  2. Due to the cancellation of the Winter ’20 season, the decision has been made to maintain the age group/ age qualification dates for the upcoming Summer 20/21 season. This was done to allow clubs who have already completed registrations/selected teams to minimise the workload for a resumption under the revised season structure. For the Winter ’21 season the age groups will revert back to normal.
  3. The Grading Phase has been extended for the Summer 20/21 season by 1 week to allow grade secretaries an additional opportunity to compare specific teams to ensure grading is accurate as they may not be able to move around the courts/venues in the initial weeks of the season due to restrictions.

1. **2x Saturday Playing Dates to be Introduced**
   1. Each season (Summer/Winter) will have one additional round added to the fixture.
   2. Summer Season: The 1st Saturday of the March/April School Holidays will be fixtured as the Grand Final day for the summer season each year. This extra round will not occur where the Easter Weekend is scheduled for the first weekend of the school holidays (as is the case in 2021).
   3. Winter Season: The 1st Saturday of September/October School Holidays will be fixtured as the Grand Final day for the winter season each year.
   4. Additionally, the Under 8 Encouragement Day that has historically been played on Elimination Final Day will now be extended out to be played on Grand Final Day to give the Under 8’s an opportunity to experience the excitement of Grand Final Day.
2. **Midweek Girls Consolidated onto Monday**
   1. Over recent seasons the number of girl’s teams registered into the midweek competitions has decreased significantly. As such, we will be consolidating the U12 (Wed), U14 (Wed), U16 (Tue) and U18 (Tue) girls’ competitions onto Monday nights. We will also be introducing a ‘girls only’ beginner program to be run on Mondays as well so that we make it a truly great girls’ night of basketball at Nunawading (with the senior women’s competition at night). Monday night was chosen as we have found a significant amount of domestic and representative training is scheduled on Tuesdays and Wednesdays as well as competing with other sports such as representative netball. Over the coming months, we will also be introducing other initiatives to grow girl’s participation at Nunawading.
   2. With the midweek girl’s competition being consolidated onto Monday’s, we will experience venue capacity constraints due to the additional games fixtured. As such, the Boys U10 Monday competition will be moved to Fridays in line with the rest of the boy’s midweek competition (U12-18).
3. **Midweek Girls to be Graded Based on Skill Level**
   1. One of the biggest concerns of our junior competition is the decreasing number of teams in our midweek girls’ competition. While there are several theories as to why we are seeing numbers decline, there is considerable evidence suggesting the imbalance in skill amongst the smaller ages/grades is a major factor. By consolidating the Midweek Girls Competition onto the same night, we are now able to trial a new grading process for the midweek girl’s competition. For the Summer 20/21 season we will be grading teams under a similar process used by Netball, that is based on skill not necessarily age. For example, if there is an U12A girls’ team that wins by considerable margins each week they will be moved up to play against older teams who, in theory will be similar skilled. We believe that this will provide greater equality from top to bottom with every team finding their place with like-skilled teams. We will review whether this model is successful at the end of the season in readiness for the Winter 2021 season.
   2. It is important to note, that as all teams will be playing in the same competition, players will no longer be able to permanently play for two or more teams concurrently on a Monday night in the junior competition due to the possibility of having to play against each other.
4. **Restructure of $3 Door Entry & Team Sheet Fees**
   1. Two years ago, the Senior Domestic Competition removed the $3 individual door entry fee for all competitions and consolidated it into a single team sheet only fee. The Board of the Nunawading Basketball Centre have now advised that the junior domestic competitions will move under the same model. From the Summer 20/21 season the $3 door entry charge will be removed and rolled up into a flat team sheet fee of **$84 per team per match**. This price has been calculated based on the Winter ‘20 team sheet price of $41 plus our rolling 3-year average attendance of 14.32 people per team at $3 each. This model will encourage more family and friends to attend games creating a better atmosphere within the venues and around the competition while also reducing the need to reach into your pocket for change each week to pay to enter.
5. **CASHLESS Team Sheet Fee Payment Process**
   1. Under the Basketball Victoria “Return to Sport” Guidelines it is recommended that Associations introduce cashless payment options. Nunawading Basketball has been ahead of the curve having utilised the Teammo digital payment platform for the past few seasons at a senior domestic competition level for team sheet payments and walkovers with great success. **Upon resumption, Nunawading Basketball will require all junior domestic clubs/teams to make their team sheet payments electronically prior to match day.**
   2. After consultation with clubs, there are 2 consistent approaches by clubs regarding team sheet fees:
      1. Clubs include the cost of team sheet fees into a player’s seasonal registration fees and then distribute these funds to the team manager to make weekly payment; or
      2. Clubs do not include the team sheet fees into a player’s season registration fees and the team manager is then required to collect a small amount weekly or a lump sum upfront from parents. (*edit: Vermont Vultures chosen option*)

As such, Nunawading Basketball will be providing clubs with two alternatives for paying their team sheet fees.

1. Upfront payment via Invoicing.
2. Weekly payment via Teammo (*edit: Vermont Vultures chosen option*)
   1. Under the second digital method (Teammo), clubs will have the ability to continue to pay their weekly team sheet fees digitally via the Teammo platform. The team manager can send out notifications to their team members requesting contributions and then the team manager will make payment via the platform. The system then marks the game as paid to confirm that it can proceed as scheduled. All matches must be paid for at least 48 hours prior to the fixtured day/time. A procedure document will be created and distributed prior to the season commencing.
   2. These new methods will also be used for Walkover and Grand Final Team Sheet Payments.
3. **Match Timeslots/Timing Rules Will Be Modified**
   1. Under the Basketball Victoria “Return to Sport” Guidelines, Associations must implement a 20-minute break between games to vacate the previous group and sanitise match equipment prior to the players of the next game entering the venue. As a result, all junior competitions will be extending its timeslots out to 55 minutes. Given the requirements of Basketball Victoria unfortunately must reduce each half by 1 minute to 17-minute halves. By doing so we will be able to fit in many more games each day resulting in fewer teams missing out allowing more players to return to basketball.
4. **Introduce Bronze Medal Playoff Matches**
   1. After speaking with several clubs and community members prior to COVID-19, an idea was put forward to introduce bronze medal playoff matches to be played on grand final day as a way of creating more interest and atmosphere for the teams competing. For the Summer 20/21 season we will be trialling bronze medal matches for the Under 10-14 age groups.
5. **Spectators/Parents/Guardians**
   1. As noted above, Nunawading Basketball will be taking a cautious, measured approach to reactivation. A major focus is the safety of the children involved with the association. A benefit of delaying a return to competition will be the hope that as restrictions ease further, parents/guardians will be permitted to enter the venue for games. At time of writing we are advising that it is expected that each player will be permitted to have one (1) parent/guardian attend their match.
   2. While we cannot prescribe the downloading of the COVIDSafe App, we would encourage all attendees to download the App to assist with tracing in the event of a positive case identification. We also encourage all clubs, team managers and parents to complete the COVID-19 Infection Control Training course provided by the Health Department to assist with compliance at team trainings etc.

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/covid-19-infection-control-training>

1. **Canteen/Water Fountains**
   1. Please be advised that the canteen and water fountains at the Nunawading Basketball Centre will not be available until further notice. Players are advised to bring their own **pre-filled** drink bottle(s) to matches.

We must stress that the advice above may be subject to further changes based on Government advice over coming days/weeks. Nunawading Basketball recognise that there are several significant changes being made to the way we operate our competitions and on behalf of the Boards/Committees of the Nunawading Amateur and Melbourne East Basketball Associations, we thank you for your patience and understanding as we work our way through the issues faced and recover from these unprecedented times.

Sincerely,

Mark Hallett

Chief Executive Officer

Nunawading Basketball