



## Bendigo FNL Season 2021 – FINAL SERIES ANNOUNCEMENT

*\*For immediate distribution\**

The Bendigo FNL Board of Management in consultation with affiliated clubs regrettably wish to announce that the finals series has been cancelled for season 2021.

Recent announcements regarding the easing of current regional Victorian lockdown restrictions, including outlining an immediate return to community sport for minimum training purposes only, prevents all regional leagues and associations from scheduling any competitive finals matches until after the current restriction settings are proposed to ease again at 11.59pm on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 2021.

Despite the current finals roadmap which was implemented several weeks ago, these latest Government updates offer further uncertainty regarding an actual timeframe for a return to competitive community sport.

A key consideration in finalising the decision to end the 2021 season included concerns for the welfare of all players and a duty of care to ensure that any return to competition plan was allowed adequate preparation time for participating players, teams, clubs, and volunteers. BFNL teams have now played a maximum of one match (zero in some cases) since July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021. This is compounded by the recent inability for players to train in a competitive group capacity since August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021, and the continued different restrictions on our Metropolitan members.

As a result of the cancellation of a significantly compromised home and away 2021 season, the BFNL Board wish to advise that premierships (including minor premierships) will not be recognised or awarded for season 2021. The BFNL will also not award any individual awards such as league best and fairest winners, as several competitions have become far too compromised.

This is certainly not the desired outcome the BFNL were striving for, with ongoing decisions made to afford the league the best possible chance of a return to competition this season. The BFNL understand the continued uncertainty has become one of the most challenging facets of season 2021, and whilst disappointing, trust this decision will provide appropriate certainty and closure.

The BFNL sincerely thank all players, volunteers, committees, officials, members, umpires, and other key stakeholders associated with or interested in the BFNL for their continued understanding, patience, and cooperation during this very challenging time. Although frustrating at times, we are extremely grateful that competitive community sport returned in some form during season 2021, bringing joy and relief to so many.

The BFNL look forward with genuine positivity that the 2022 season will proceed on time with a return to some level of normality. Community sport provides significant physical and mental benefits to those associated with local sporting clubs, however, relies on community presence at our matches which we hope returns from round 1 2022.

The BFNL thank our many corporate partners for their ongoing support – including the Bendigo Bank, Bendigo Mazda, Workforce XS, the Bendigo Club, Harmac Homes, Sportspower Bendigo, Bart 'n' Print, High St X-Ray, Red Onion Creative, Sherrin, Bendigo Party Hire, Bendigo Advertiser, Fresh FM, Bendigo Times, Cleanaway, Coffee Storm, Gold Central Victoria, and Great Ideas Awards and Gifts.

Please stay safe, and trust that the BFNL will return stronger and hopefully uninterrupted for season 2022.

- Ends -

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