

## WASHED OUT FOOTBALL AND ITS IMPACT

*The SSFA Executive Committee (EC) and Clubs share the frustration of players that are impacted by the weather and disappointment that is inevitable when games are washed out.*

*Sharing some of the challenges that are faced may lead to a better understanding of the process.*

### Will we be playing football this weekend?

Matches are expected to progress as drawn this (and every scheduled) weekend unless otherwise advised by your Club (with last minute changes also posted on the SSFA's website – [www.shirefootball.com.au](http://www.shirefootball.com.au)). Check the **draw** on the SSFA website for any amendments to-date.

### Impact of Volume

SSFA have over 18,500 registered players, participating in more than 780 matches each weekend on approximately 64 fields (and are the largest football Association of any code within Australia). The logistics of running such a competition is extremely complicated. On a Saturday alone we have games involving nearly 11,000 players, across more than 1,000 teams.

### Field Constraints

The Council allocates the grounds to Football (Soccer) for only 22 weeks a year and is unable to provide any more. After this date, for two weeks they remove rugby and AFL posts, set up cricket pitches, and undertake field maintenance. Summer sports (including Cricket and Summer Football) then access the fields for 22 weeks. The fields however are not used for the two weeks before or after Christmas and another two weeks are then utilised to install rugby and AFL posts and to undertake maintenance before the winter allocation commences again.

In short, the winter allocation is for 22 weeks of the year with football using 64 fields.

The SSFA then use 18 rounds for normal competition and 3 rounds for finals (with 1 spare weekend in the finals for a wash out). Unfortunately, we have no spare week, let alone weeks, to make up any washed out rounds. The rule book declares that the spare weekend must be kept only for a wash out of a finals game.

The only day that we could potentially use to play more Football is the Monday of the June long weekend and, if ratified by the General Meeting of Club delegates, we do play that day when the weather permits – but not without acrimony from some participants.

### How and When is it decided if we will play?

#### **The Association does not call the fields in or out based upon hearsay!**

A volunteer from each club (who know their allocated fields the best) is required to inspect their fields and contact the designated Association wet weather person **by 6:30am** on doubtful weekend days – the Club is responsible to make the 'call'.

If insufficient fields are deemed playable by the Clubs – that is there is not enough spare capacity to move games on **that day** after fields are called out – the days play will be 'called off' by the SSFA.

A decision is made day-by day on the weekend and is wholly and solely based upon safety of players – not the need to protect fields, not with a preference given to any age group or competition, or any other reason. Decisions are made as soon as possible after every avenue is investigated to have the entire round played.

### Alternates often suggested

Play Saturday catch up on Sunday ... At best the Sunday field allocation allows for less than 30 games to be replayed from Saturday as the rest of the weekend allocation is full with almost another 7,000+ players involved in Sunday competitions. If we had 150 games (less than one third of our Saturday games) to catch up from just one [1] Saturday it would take five [5] weeks.

Play during the week under lights ... we have ten (10) fields with game accredited lights, and they can only play two (2) matches per night. So, if we stopped those clubs training for a week and run night games on every weeknight it would take just under eight (8) weeks to catch up. Night games require not only significant investment in lighting but also council DA approval with consent of neighbours. Hence we are presently restricted to a handful of fields where impact on neighbours is limited. Not to mention the challenge of volunteers at night for canteen / ground control and ground marking etc and the need to kick off or finish at what are often stated as 'inconvenient' times.

Extend the season.....see previous comment re limit of 22 weeks of field availability.

### Outcome

SSFA Rule 18.D Entire Rounds not Played states that

- (i) If a complete round of Saturday and Sunday matches for Round 1 to Round 9 of the competitions is not played for any reason, including weather or ground conditions, the Rounds affected will be redrawn to be played as soon as possible. In certain circumstances where redrawing these rounds would be impractical, the E.C. may vary this arrangement to ensure the smooth running of the competition.
- (ii) If it is necessary to abandon completely any unplayed competition rounds prior to the finals, the E.C. will abandon Round 18 and, if necessary, additional rounds regressively from Round 17 to provide a finals series as covered by Rule 9. A. (c)

### In Short

Unless you hear otherwise from your club, or read about it on the SSFA or your club's website, you should expect to be playing. As always, contact your club if you have any questions.

Please note that SSFA and the club officials who make the call to the SSFA deeming the fields playable or otherwise are only in the game to see more football not less. If we had an opportunity to play more football – we would!

*Regards*

*SSFA Executive Committee*

