

LARA FOOTBALL AND NETBALL CLUB

FUTURE PLANNING GROUP

FINAL REPORT

June 2026

Strong Governance

Strong Club

Strong Community

Commissioned by the Lara Sporting Club Board

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SECTION 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive Summary

The recommendations contained in this report provide a road map for the reintroduction of senior level football and A Grade netball for the Lara community, and a structured governance model to enable a healthy Lara Football and Netball Club across all aspects of the club.

The report itself is only words on paper.

The essential component that must underpin any change is people. People willing to invest time, energy and the will to enact change. These people must be Lara people committed to working towards a brighter future of the club.

The system runs the club. The people run the system.

This report focuses on the two elements: the people and the system. It identifies a significant lack of, or flawed, governance and management systems. The recommended changes and provided governance templates are designed to establish a standalone Lara Football and Netball Club that will bring people together as a single entity.

Member Survey Evidence

The recommendations in this report are member-validated, not FPG-imposed. Key findings from the member survey include:

- 93% rate strong leadership as very important for the rebuild.
- 89% rate belonging and inclusiveness as very important.
- 61% of respondents are dissatisfied with the club overall.
- 65% rate football leadership as ineffective or very poor.
- 74% disagree that player recruitment targeted the right standard.
- 85% say the club has no clear or visible mission.
- 70% think Lara should move to another league.

Key Recommendations Summary

- Establishment of a Lara Football Netball Club, working toward independent incorporation from the Lara Sporting Club through a phased five-year transition.
- Lara senior and reserves football teams and the A Grade netball team to return to competition in the 2027 season, subject to meeting formal Go/No-Go criteria by 1 October 2026.
- Affiliate to compete in the BFNL league, subject to AFL Victoria and AFL Barwon oversight and direction.
- Establish a Football and Netball Committee with elected leadership and full sub-committee structure including Junior Football, Junior Netball, Women's Football, Senior Netball, Senior Football, Coaching, and Player Wellbeing.
- Develop and implement comprehensive Player and Coach recruitment processes with formal timelines and decision points.
- Redesign the final stage of the LSC Facility Masterplan to construct a fit-for-purpose clubhouse.
- Develop rolling Strategic and Business plans.
- Prioritise junior-to-senior transition pathways across all programs.

- Embed child safety, concussion protocols and player wellbeing into formal club policy.

It is now time for all the Lara community to take combined, planned and structured action.

SECTION 2: BACKGROUND

Background and Introduction

Introduction

In February 2026, the Lara Football Section Committee took the decision to enter a period of recess for the Lara Football Senior and Reserves teams from the Geelong Football Netball League (GFNL). The football recess announcement was made in early February 2026, a very late decision given the 2026 season commenced on 11 April 2026. This timing gave the netball section almost no time to manage the consequences.

With only 22 players registered to represent Lara in the GFNL in season 2026, the Lara Football Committee resolved to take this position based on the inability to attract sufficient players. Within weeks of the announcement, questions about the club's overall viability spread through the community. The movement of partners, family members and social connections of departing footballers to other clubs resulted in 26 senior netball players deciding to leave by early March 2026, representing more than half of the 2025 senior netball cohort of 51 players.

The Lara Sporting Club resolved to establish the Lara Future Planning Group (FPG) to recommend a viable, sustainable pathway across the entire Football and Netball programs. The FPG commenced its work on 16 March 2026 with a mandate to:

- Diagnose the causes of previous instability.
- Develop a realistic return-to-competition model for Senior and Reserves Football and A Grade Netball.
- Recommend structural, cultural and operational changes required to support sustained on-field performance and off-field excellence.

Historical Perspective

Year	Milestone
1881	Club founded
1929 and 1930s	Premierships in the Geelong Athletics Districts League
1947 to 1988	Competed in the Geelong and District Football League (GDFL)
1986 and 1988	GDFL Senior Premierships
1989	Joined the Geelong Football League (GFL)
1994 and 2002	GFL Senior Premierships
1975	Lara Sporting Club formed
1995	Football Club joined Lara Sporting Club as a section
1999/2000	Netball Section established and joined GFNL
2002 and 2003	A Grade Netball Premierships
2013	Last senior football finals appearance
2026	Senior football and A Grade netball enter recess

Community Demographics

Lara, Victoria, is experiencing strong population growth, with a 16.3% increase between 2016 and 2021. The population is projected to increase by a further 10,133 persons by 2041, reflecting a 44% increase over 17 years.

- Population grew from 16,375 in 2016 to 19,014 in 2021.
- Most common age group is 30 to 39 years, with a median age of 37.
- Lara is known as a family-friendly area, popular with couples with children.
- Projected to grow by over 40% by 2041.

This demographic profile represents a significant and growing opportunity for a well-organised, family-focused Football and Netball Club.

SECTION 2A: METHODOLOGY

Methodology

Members of the FPG were allocated areas to lead an evidence-based enquiry to establish why the clubs are in their current position, what factors have led to this position over time, and how the club compares when referenced against AFL Barwon Club benchmarks. The scope of the research was across senior football, senior netball, junior football, junior netball and female football.

Research Areas

Playing Performance:

- Teams and participation.
- On-field and on-court performance.
- Coaching.
- Junior development and transition.
- Return to competition.

Governance:

- Governance, leadership and culture.
- Organisational structures.
- Management and operational systems.

Financial Performance:

- Business and finance.
- Sponsorship and fundraising.
- Membership.
- Coterie groups.

Other Areas:

- Communications, internal and external.
- Facilities.
- Demographics.

Information Gathering Process

The methodology was positioned across three elements: Information Gathering, Analysis of Information, and Drafting of Findings and Recommendations. The Information Gathering Process included:

- Meetings with various club groups and committees.
- Meetings with individuals.
- Submissions from individuals.
- Club-wide member survey.
- Advice from external consultants.
- Discussions with other clubs, both internal and external to AFL Barwon.
- Sourcing of templates, models and systems from various football and netball clubs.
- Conversations with clubs that had entered and returned from recess.

SECTION 3: FINDINGS

Findings

There is strong evidence that identifies that the club has deep cultural, leadership, and structural challenges, particularly within the football program. These issues have developed over a minimum of a quarter of a century and are not a result of any one person, committee or era.

Member Survey - Key Findings

Survey Finding	Result
Overall dissatisfaction with the club	61%
Football leadership rated ineffective or very poor	65%
Disagree that player recruitment targeted right standard	74%
Club has no clear or visible mission	85%
Strong leadership is very important for rebuild	93%
Belonging and inclusiveness are very important	89%
Support moving to another league	70%

Football vs Netball Contrast

The survey reveals a stark contrast between football and netball. Football descriptions from members include 'toxic culture', 'divided', 'inner circle', 'no pathway for juniors', 'popularity contest', and 'accountability is non-existent'. Netball descriptions include 'supportive', 'fun', 'inclusive', 'a strong community anchor', 'well organised' and 'responsive leadership'. Football is the primary reason members leave. Netball is the reason many stay.

Contributing Factors

The major contributing factors to the club's downturn, validated by survey data, include:

- Lack of connection between juniors and seniors (56% rate as major impact, the number one factor).
- Poor recruiting and planning (53% rate as major impact).
- Poor planning (50% rate as major impact).
- Loss of club identity and pride (48% rate as major impact).
- Lack of accountability and standards (44% rate as major impact).
- Poor communication and distrust.

Football Performance

Since 2014, and notably after the club's last finals appearance in 2013, the club's men's program has recorded the following win/loss ratios: Seniors 7%; Reserves 6%; Under 18s 11%. These figures represent a sustained, long-term decline that requires structural and cultural change to address. For context, the win/loss ratio required to make AFL Barwon competition finals, averaged over the past five years, is: Geelong FNL Seniors 77%, Reserves 78%, Under 18s Div 1 72%; Bellarine FNL Seniors 72%, Reserves 72%. Lara's figures are well below sustainable club levels.

Male Player Participation

Age / Year	2021 2022 2023 2024 2025 2026
U9	55 42 42 60 54 51
U12	- 47 59 55 55 39
U14	- 51 50 44 46 40
U16	- 32 45 48 42 32
U18	- 30 31 29 29 28
Total Male Underage	302 230 255 259 258 213
Senior	61 64 49 63 66 18
Total Male Football	363 294 304 322 324 231

Female Player Participation

Category / Year	2021 2022 2023 2024 2025 2026
Total Female Underage	86 62 73 108 94 46
Female Senior	27 30 16 21 16 28
Total Female Football	113 92 89 129 110 74
Combined Male and Female	476 386 393 451 434 305

It is critical to note that there is a significant drop in junior male and female player numbers in 2026, following the recess of the senior and reserves football teams. Success at senior level has a cultural impact on club perception and directly affects the retention of junior players.

Netball Participation

Age Group	2022 2023 2024 2025 2026
Netta	27 25 27 28 31
9 & U	N/A N/A N/A N/A 9
U11	32 43 45 54 32
U13	21 22 43 41 43
U15	34 21 32 22 42
U17	22 8 10 10 22
U19	8 7 9 8 9
Seniors	51 50 52 51 44
Total (Winter)	195 176 218 214 232

Netball remains the club's shining light. Winter netball participation grew from 195 in 2022 to 232 in 2026, and when Summer Netball is included, combined netball participation has almost doubled, from 195 in 2022 to 385 in 2026. The one area requiring close attention is Winter Seniors, which fell from 52 in 2024 to 44 in 2026, a direct reflection of the 26 senior players who departed in early 2026 following the football recess. The withdrawal of the A

Grade team prior to the 2026 season was not a netball failure but a direct consequence of the football recess, and the underlying growth trend across the program remains strong.

Culture and Club Environment

There is little or no club 'vibe' that is associated with a high-functioning, successful and sustainable community football and netball club. There are many contributing factors to this, including a governance model that does not include a standalone, autonomous Football Netball Club and the absence of purpose-built clubhouse facilities for football and netball.

"The club does not feel like someone's second home."

AFL Barwon clubs interviewed reported that they cater between 220 and 350 meals at their club each Thursday night during the season, inclusive of junior and senior players, coaches, volunteers, families, sponsors, members and supporters. Their goal is not to generate profit; they view it as an investment in their community and club spirit. Lara does not have the facilities to be able to provide this key aspect of club life, which also applies to any club functions, particularly junior and post-match all-of-club activities.

Governance, Leadership and Culture

Good governance is the foundation on which every successful club is built. It does not just keep the club compliant; it sets up the club for long-term success. When roles are clear, structures are strong, and planning is aligned to a shared vision, the club creates the stability and direction needed for members, volunteers, players, coaches and programs to flourish.

This section provides a high-level assessment of the governance, leadership, and cultural environment of the Lara Football and Netball Sections, operating as sporting sections under the Lara Sporting Club Incorporated (LSC). The LF and LN Sections encompass both a Football Section and a Netball Section, each with separately elected volunteer committees, and together represent more than 500 players across senior, reserve and junior competitions.

Key Finding: There is an absence of Section charters, position descriptions, Strategic and Business Plans for each section, including Mission, Vision and Values statements, and meaningful documented Board engagement with the Sections. The governance relationship between the LSC and the LF and LN Sections is operating below the standard that the Sections' complexity and risk profile require.

The LSC Relationship - Challenges for Football and Netball

The structural relationship between the Lara Sporting Club Board and the Football and Netball Sections creates a range of practical challenges that have limited the ability of both sections to function as autonomous, high-performing sporting organisations. These challenges are not the result of poor intent from either party, but of a governance framework that was not designed for the scale and complexity that the sections now represent.

Governance Disconnect

The LSC Board governs the Football and Netball Sections through a single provision, Rule 46 of the LSC Constitution. This provision establishes the bare framework for Sections to exist but provides no operational guidance, governance standards or support obligations.

The consequence is that the Sections are held to significant compliance requirements by the LSC while receiving minimal governance support in return.

Key governance gaps identified by the FPG include:

- No formal position descriptions for any Section committee role. Every incoming Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer or other officer takes on their role without any documented guide to what that role requires.
- No Section-level Strategic Plans, Business Plans or Mission, Vision and Values statements.
- No structured induction or handover process for incoming committee members. Institutional knowledge is lost when individuals leave.
- No documented Board-Section engagement process. There are no scheduled quarterly meetings, shared agendas or action registers between the LSC Board and Section committees.
- No formal succession planning framework at either the Section or LSC level.

Financial Relationship and Constraints

The LSC's Section Financial Management Policy (adopted January 2026) is explicit: the LSC will not directly supplement a Section's bank account or operational shortfalls. Financial support is limited to facility and utility provision. Operating costs for the combined Football and Netball Sections sit within the AFL Barwon club median range of \$600,000 to \$650,000 per year, generated entirely by the Sections through sponsorships, player registrations, food and beverage sales and fundraising events.

This financial structure places an extraordinary burden on volunteer committees who must generate income, manage budgets, negotiate sponsorships and remain solvent without financial safety nets. The LSC can intervene, restrict and discipline the Sections, but the Sections remain standalone in their responsibility to meet their financial commitments.

The Gaming Licence - Challenges and Practical Impact

The LSC holds a gaming licence under the Gambling Regulation Act 2003, which imposes strict legal obligations on who may access the Club's licensed premises. This creates a range of significant practical challenges for the Football and Netball Sections:

- Junior players and their families cannot freely access what is functionally their clubrooms. Access is conditional, restricted to non-gaming areas, and subject to conditions imposed by the Victorian Commission of Gaming and Liquor Regulation (VCGLR).
- Junior players must be always accompanied by a responsible adult while on Club premises.
- Minors must leave Club premises no later than 11:00pm unless specifically authorised by the General Manager.
- The Sections are unable to use the clubrooms freely for junior presentations, social gatherings or team activities without navigating regulatory conditions.
- The Thursday night community meal culture that defines strong AFL Barwon clubs is not achievable at Lara under the current arrangement.
- Sponsors and potential partners attending club events encounter a facility that does not project the image of a vibrant, welcoming community club.
- There is no formal protocol for communicating these restrictions to junior members, families, coaches and volunteers, representing a compliance and reputational risk.

The gaming licence is not the cause of the club's cultural challenges, but it is a significant amplifier. A club that cannot freely bring its junior players, families, volunteers and supporters together in one place will always struggle to build the community connection that

drives retention, recruitment and sponsorship. The transition to an independent Football and Netball Club with its own purpose-built facility is the long-term resolution.

Governance Recommendations - LSC Relationship

- Establish a formal, documented Board-Section engagement process with scheduled quarterly meetings between representatives of the LSC Board and the LFNC Committee, including agendas, minutes and action registers.
- Develop a partnership agreement with the LSC that supports the growth and development of the LFNC but is mutually exclusive in terms of governance, leadership, structure, management and operations.
- Develop a formal protocol for communicating and managing the gaming licence access restrictions to all LFNC members, families, coaches and volunteers.
- Develop position descriptions for all LFNC Committee and sub-committee roles as an immediate priority.
- Construct a formal induction and handover process for all incoming committee members.

Volunteer Sustainability, Leadership and Communication

The Football and Netball Sections are entirely dependent on volunteers to function. From the President to the canteen coordinator, from the team manager to the first aid officer, every critical role is performed by a community member giving their time without remuneration. This is the lifeblood of community sport and it must be protected, supported and celebrated. The FPG findings indicate that the current approach to volunteer management falls well short of what is required to sustain the club's operations, let alone grow them.

Volunteer Burnout and Key-Person Dependency

The FPG found clear evidence of volunteer burnout and dangerous key-person dependency across both sections. A small number of individuals are carrying disproportionate workloads across multiple roles:

- There is no structured succession planning at any level of either section.
- There is no formal recognition or celebration framework for volunteers.
- There is no committee capability development program to build the skills and confidence of incoming volunteers.
- Volunteers take on roles with no position description, no induction and no clear scope of responsibility.
- The absence of documented systems means that when a volunteer leaves, their knowledge and processes leave with them.

Leadership Development

Strong volunteer leadership cannot be assumed. It must be cultivated. The FPG recommends that the new LFNC Committee invest in formal leadership development as a priority, including:

- Engaging a consultant to design and deliver a governance, cultural and leadership training program for all committee members and club leaders within the first six months of the new committee taking office.
- Establishing a formal mentoring arrangement between the LFNC Advisory Panel and new committee members, particularly in the President, Treasurer and Secretary roles.
- Budgeting for committee professional development as a line item in the annual budget, not as a discretionary spend.

- Building a volunteer recognition program that publicly acknowledges contributions at every level, including at the AGM, in club communications and at match days.
- Establishing a volunteer register that documents the skills, availability and interests of current and prospective volunteers to enable better matching of people to roles.

Internal Communications

Poor communication has been consistently identified as a contributing factor to the club's decline. The FPG found that information did not flow reliably between the committee and members, between senior and junior programs, between football and netball, or between the club and its broader community of supporters and former players.

The consequences of poor internal communication include:

- Members and families feeling uninformed and disconnected from the club's direction and decisions.
- Volunteers operating in silos without visibility of what other parts of the club are doing.
- Rumour and speculation filling the information vacuum left by the absence of consistent, transparent communication from leadership.
- Sponsors and partners receiving inconsistent or incomplete information about club activities and value.

Communication Recommendations

- Appoint a dedicated Communications and Marketing coordinator within the People and Communications sub-committee as an immediate priority.
- Develop and implement a club-wide Communications Plan covering: a regular member newsletter (minimum monthly during the season); a social media content calendar; a club website kept current with news, results, events and committee information; and a communications protocol for significant club announcements.
- Establish a Junior Football and Netball newsletter or digital communication channel specifically for junior families, issued at least fortnightly during the season.
- Implement a formal all-of-club meeting or forum at the start and end of each season, bringing together football, netball, juniors, seniors and volunteers.
- Develop and apply a crisis communication protocol so that the committee responds to significant events with a single, clear and timely message.
- Invest in a club management platform to centralise communications, registrations, event management and volunteer coordination.

Culture, Leadership and Playing Group Findings

The FPG research found the following specific issues within the football program:

Leadership and Direction:

- Leadership of the football department is viewed as ineffective, with improvement required in direction and decision-making, connection between juniors, seniors and netball, equality of opportunity, communication and transparency, and culture and player welfare.
- Current and former players, ex-committee members and other key stakeholders are strongly dissatisfied that too many people ignored or avoided confronting issues, resulting in the club's decline.

Player Trust, Retention and Recruitment:

- Players have left the club not solely because of wins and losses, but due to a lack of trust in what they were being told, combined with ongoing on-field failure.

- Players, current and former, no longer feel that the club is their club. The sense of identity, pride and belonging has diminished.

Junior Pathways and Alignment:

- There is a clear lack of pathway from juniors to seniors. Junior teams are playing in lower-level competitions, leaving players unprepared for senior football.
- No dedicated Junior Committee has existed to support alignment and direction.
- The Under 18 program was adversely affected by the U18 coach operating in isolation from the senior program and ongoing tensions between coaching staff.

Game Day Culture and Standards

Game day is the most visible expression of what a club stands for. It is the moment when players, coaches, volunteers, families, supporters, sponsors and opponents all form their impression of the Lara Football and Netball Club. For too long, that impression has not reflected the club this community deserves.

Current State

The FPG found that game day culture has been poor for a sustained period across both the football and netball programs. Issues include:

- Coaches failing to establish, communicate and enforce behavioural standards on and off the field.
- Sideline conduct that falls below the standards expected of a community sporting club, including emotional outbursts and negative commentary that have had a measurable adverse impact on player morale and the experience of families and supporters.
- A lack of visible leadership from senior players in setting and protecting game day standards.
- Poor alignment between the standards expected at training and the standards experienced on game day.
- Insufficient welcome and engagement processes for visiting teams, umpires and match day officials.
- Game day facilities that do not project the image of a well-functioning, welcoming and professional community club.

Game Day Culture as a Recruitment Tool

Game day culture is not simply about on-field behaviour. It is one of the most powerful recruitment and retention tools available to a community club. When players, their families and the broader community experience a well-run, welcoming, vibrant and proud game day, they want to be part of it. AFL Barwon data consistently shows that clubs with strong game day culture retain players and volunteers at higher rates, attract better coaches and players during the off-season, and maintain stronger sponsorship relationships.

Game Day Culture Recommendations

- The incoming coaching panel must develop, communicate and enforce a Game Day Standards document covering: pre-game preparation and warm-up conduct; sideline behaviour expectations for coaches, officials and volunteers; post-game conduct including engagement with opponents and umpires; and standards for training sessions as the foundation for game day performance.
- The LFNC Committee must formally adopt and publish a Spectator and Volunteer Code of Conduct that applies at all home and away games for all age groups,

covering language, behaviour toward umpires and match day officials, social media conduct during and after games, and consequences for breaches.

- Establish a Match Day coordinator role within the People and Communications sub-committee, responsible for home game day presentation, canteen operation, official welcome processes, sponsor visibility and post-match functions.
- Senior players must be formally identified and briefed on their role as culture carriers. A senior player leadership group should be established with clear expectations around setting standards, supporting junior players and representing the club.
- Re-introduce post-match functions for all age groups as a priority. The post-match function is the primary mechanism through which club culture is built and sustained week to week.
- Implement a formal match day debrief process for the coaching panel following each game, focused not only on performance but on culture, standards and behaviour.
- Develop a Match Day Experience guide for volunteers, covering how to welcome families, engage new members, support visitors and create a positive environment for all attendees.

Member Voices

"Closed mindset, poor management of funds, no direction or pathway. No vision for success. No redevelopment of facilities."

"The divide between seniors and juniors is appalling - a complete disconnect between junior and senior."

"Lots of promises of programs to work with the juniors and it was all talk. Senior committee were always about the seniors and always forgetting that the juniors become your seniors."

Football Performance Recommendations

- Adopt and implement the proposed Football Department structure immediately.
- As a matter of priority, commence a Return to Lara Footy program that builds a senior and reserves playing and coaching list in readiness for a return to competition in 2027. Engage with the Lara Past Players Coterie Group, the NPC Coterie Group and all football sectors to assist.
- Establish a Leadership, Recruitment, Retention and Junior to Senior Transition program.
- Establish a Coaches Recruitment and Retention Sub-Committee.
- Construct and implement a Football Department Professional Development Plan covering: leadership training and mentoring; football department structures; player, volunteer and coach welfare; club culture; technology; player and coach development pathway strategies; best practices in medical treatment, strength and conditioning, psychology and nutrition; and all-of-club communications.
- Explore the re-establishment of an internal Lara Little League as a non-competitive, family-focused program for 8 to 11 year olds. It should complement Auskick, not replace it. Establishment of close links with primary schools in the Lara area is essential.
- Assign resources to ensure Auskick and junior football grow and are linked to the junior and senior football programs.
- Review and construct a coach recruitment profile and appointment process that identifies potential coaching structures and makes appointment recommendations to the Football Department and LFNC Committee.

SECTION 4: GOVERNANCE AND STRUCTURE

Governance and Organisational Structure

Proposed Football and Netball Committee Structure

The FPG recommends the establishment of a Football and Netball Committee (F&N Committee) as the elected governing body of the Lara Football and Netball Club. This committee will operate under the oversight of the Lara Sporting Club Board during the transition period, with the intention of progressing toward independent incorporation over five years.

The proposed structure is a three-layer committee-led model:

- Layer 0 - LSC Board: Overall governing body. Constitutional oversight and accountability during the transition period.
- Layer 1 - Advisory and Support: Advisory Panel (up to three members) and Independent Finance Reviewer.
- Layer 2 - Football and Netball Committee: The elected governing body, accountable to the LSC Board and to members at the AGM.
- Layer 3 - Sub-Committees: Detailed in this section below.
- Layer 4 - Operational Roles: Coordinators reporting to the Committee.

Executive Committee - Elected Positions

Position	Key Responsibilities
President	Chairs all Committee and AGM meetings; primary spokesperson; leads strategic planning; oversees governance and constitutional compliance; manages stakeholder relationships; casts deciding vote in tied decisions.
Vice President	Deputies for the President; supports across all governance functions; leads specific projects and working groups; assists with stakeholder engagement; contributes to succession planning.
Secretary	Prepares agendas, minutes and all committee papers; manages club correspondence and statutory registers; ensures constitutional compliance; coordinates AGM logistics and notices; archives all governance records.
Treasurer	Manages club finances, bank accounts and payments; prepares monthly financial reports; leads budget preparation; oversees external finance review; reports financial performance at AGM; manages player payments compliance.
Football Lead	Leads all football operations; chairs Football Sub-Committee; oversees coach appointments and KPI framework; monitors football budget; drives senior, junior and female football growth.
Netball Lead	Leads all netball operations; chairs Netball Sub-Committee; oversees netball coach appointments and KPIs; monitors netball budget; drives senior, junior and membership growth.
People and Communications Lead	Oversees canteen, events, welfare and merchandise; leads sponsorship strategy; manages marketing, social media and communications; coordinates volunteers and club culture programs.

Sub-Committees

The following sub-committees will sit under the Football and Netball Committee. Each sub-committee will have a designated lead from the Executive Committee responsible for its work and will report to the full committee at each meeting.

1. Junior Football Sub-Committee

Purpose: To oversee and manage all junior football programs across male and female age groups.

- Manage all junior football age group teams and registrations.
- Implement the Junior Talent Academy model across all junior football age groups.
- Establish and maintain the Under 18 program with direct links to the senior program.
- Develop and deliver a Coaches Development Program for junior football coaches.
- Establish a regular Junior Football communication channel for families.
- Implement a formal welcome and onboarding process for new junior families.
- Coordinate the annual Junior Football Family Day.
- Manage transition of U14 to U16 players as the critical retention cohort.

Membership target: Minimum 220 male underage players and 80 female underage players registered by 1 October 2026.

2. Junior Netball Sub-Committee

Purpose: To oversee and manage all junior netball programs.

- Manage all junior netball age group teams and registrations.
- Implement the Junior Talent Academy model for junior netball.
- Hold a Netball Open Day in August 2026 to register interest for 2027.
- Develop clear junior-to-senior pathway materials for all junior netball players and families.
- Work with the senior netball program to ensure alignment and pathway continuity.
- Coordinate junior netball coach development and support.
- Engage with local schools to drive junior netball participation.

3. Women's Football Sub-Committee

Purpose: To oversee and manage all women's and girls' football programs as a distinct and valued program within the club.

- Manage senior women's football team operations, including player recruitment, registrations and competition participation.
- Develop and implement a Women's Football Recruitment Plan with specific targets for 2027.
- Manage all junior girls' football age group programs.
- Align junior women's football development with the Junior Talent Academy model.
- Assign dedicated female coaching and coordinator resources to junior women's football.
- Establish close links between the women's football program and the Lara school network.
- Engage AFL Barwon regarding women's competition options and registration timelines.
- Set and monitor the minimum target of 60 female players (all ages) registered by 1 October 2026.

Women's football is not an adjunct to the men's program. It has its own recruitment pipeline, competitive pathway and community audience.

4. Senior Netball Sub-Committee

Purpose: To oversee and manage all senior netball programs including A Grade, B Grade and all senior competition grades.

- Manage all senior netball team operations across all senior grades.
- Lead the re-recruitment campaign targeting the 26 senior players who departed in 2026.
- Manage coaching panel appointments and coach performance review.
- Oversee player registrations, player payments and season preparation.
- Work with the Junior Netball Sub-Committee to ensure a clear pathway to senior netball.

5. Senior Football Sub-Committee

Purpose: To oversee and manage all senior men's football programs including Seniors and Reserves.

- Lead the coach recruitment process for the senior coaching panel.
- Manage the player recruitment and list management strategy.
- Manage all senior football team operations including registrations, game day and training.
- Implement and monitor the Go/No-Go criteria for 2027 return.
- Work with the Junior Football Sub-Committee to ensure the U18 to senior pathway is clear.
- Oversee player payments compliance and budget management.

6. Coaching Sub-Committee

Purpose: To provide oversight, support and accountability across all coaching appointments and programs across football and netball.

- Develop and maintain coach appointment processes and position descriptions for all coaching roles.
- Implement coach performance review frameworks including KPIs for all head coaches.
- Coordinate coach development and accreditation across AFL Victoria and Netball Victoria pathways.
- Support and mentor coaching staff, particularly junior coaches.
- Develop and implement a club-wide Coaches Development Program.

7. Player Wellbeing Sub-Committee

Purpose: To promote and protect the physical, mental and social wellbeing of all players across all programs.

- Develop and maintain the club's Player Wellbeing Policy.
- Implement and maintain First Aid policies and procedures in accordance with AFL Victoria and Netball Victoria requirements.
- Implement and maintain AFL Victoria Concussion Management Policy and Netball Victoria Head Injury Guidelines across all programs.
- Coordinate the provision of qualified first aid personnel at all home matches and training sessions.
- Develop and maintain a Mental Health and Wellbeing framework for players.
- Implement and monitor the club's Child Safety Policy.
- Coordinate player welfare check-ins throughout the season.

Reporting to the LSC Board

During the transition period (Years 1 to 3 of the five-year plan), the Football and Netball Committee will report formally to the LSC Board. The following reporting framework applies:

Quarterly Reporting - Required

The F&N Committee will provide a written Quarterly Report to the LSC Board at each regular board meeting. The Quarterly Report will include:

- Financial performance: income vs budget, expenditure vs budget, year-to-date position, cash at bank.
- Membership update: current membership numbers by category vs prior year and vs target.
- Player registrations: current numbers by program and age group vs target.
- Competition status: current season performance summary across all competing programs.
- Sub-committee activity summaries: brief update from each active sub-committee.
- Compliance update: any compliance issues, incidents or governance matters.
- Risk register update: any changes to identified risks.
- Significant decisions made by the Committee since the last report.
- Items requiring LSC Board endorsement or decision.

Annual Reporting - Required

- Full financial statements including profit and loss, balance sheet and notes.
- Independent financial review report.
- Annual report against the Strategic Plan.
- Season performance report across all programs.
- Membership and participation report.
- Governance and compliance statement.
- Progress against the five-year transition plan.
- Proposed budget and business plan for the following year.

Ad Hoc Reporting - As Required

The F&N Committee President will notify the LSC Board Chair immediately of any:

- Significant financial risk or unexpected variance exceeding \$5,000.
- Serious incident, child safety matter, or complaint.
- Significant media or public relations matter.
- Any proposed action that falls outside the approved budget or business plan.
- Any proposed decision that may affect the LSC's constitutional position or obligations.

Mission, Vision and Values

The incoming Football and Netball Committee should review, and where appropriate redraft, the Vision Statement, Mission Statement and Values as one of its first priorities following the establishment of the new committee. These statements must be owned by the committee that will be accountable for them, not inherited from a working group. The FPG drafts are the starting point, not the endpoint.

SECTION 5: CHILD SAFETY

Child Safety

The Lara Football and Netball Club is committed to the safety, participation and empowerment of all children and young people. The club will implement and maintain a Child Safety Policy that complies with the Victorian Child Safe Standards and the requirements of AFL Victoria and Netball Victoria.

Child Safe Standards

The club will comply with Victoria's Child Safe Standards (updated 2022 under the Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005), which require organisations working with children to:

- Establish a culturally safe environment that empowers children, including Aboriginal children, to participate and raise concerns.
- Ensure leaders and governing bodies are committed to child safety.
- Develop and implement a Child Safety Policy.
- Screen and train all personnel (paid and volunteer) who work with children.
- Implement processes to identify and reduce risks of child abuse.
- Respond promptly and appropriately to any concerns or allegations of child abuse.
- Ensure physical and online environments that promote safety and wellbeing.

Key Requirements

- A documented Child Safety Policy endorsed by the Executive Committee and reviewed annually.
- Working with Children Check (WWCC) for all adults in child-related roles.
- Child Safety Code of Conduct adopted and signed by all members in contact with children.
- Nominated Child Safety Officer appointed from within the Committee.
- Incident reporting procedures that comply with mandatory reporting obligations under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic).
- Safe recruitment practices for all coaches, officials and volunteers working with children.
- Annual review of child safety practices with reporting to the Executive Committee.

Online Safety

The club will adopt a Social Media and Digital Communications Policy that covers the use of digital platforms in relation to children and young people, including rules around photographing children, use of club social media accounts, and communication between adults and children through digital channels.

SECTION 6: RETURN TO COMPETITION

Return to Competition

The FPG believes that the return to competition should occur in season 2027. There is overwhelming member support for this direction. 70% of members think Lara should move to another league and return within the next 12 to 24 months.

Target Competition

There is clear evidence that a return to football must be at a competitive level. Lara football has been extremely uncompetitive in the GFNL senior and reserves competitions over the past twenty years at a minimum. The 7% in senior win ratio and 6% reserves win ratio significantly quantifies the competitiveness of its senior football teams, particularly when referenced against the 77% and 78% senior and reserves win ratio required to make the GFNL finals over the past five years. The score and percentage differentials have been demoralising.

A successful return to competition is predicated on a number of factors such as good leadership and governance structures and a vibrant club dynamic. Being competitive is a clear driver in club stability, growth, and sense of belonging.

Given the population growth projections in the Lara area, the FPG believes that the Lara Football Netball Club should strive to compete in the highest level of community football in the region in the longer term. However, focus must be on the immediate and medium-term goals.

The FPG recommends that Lara seek to transfer to the Bellarine Football Netball League (BFNL) for 2027.

- League conversations with the BFNL must commence immediately.
- A named owner for the league conversation must be appointed with a reporting deadline of 1 August 2026.
- If transfer is not accepted then Lara will remain in the GFNL League
- Note: AFL Barwon is undertaking a competition strategy review for potential restructure from 2028. Lara's 2027 entry may be for a single year before the competition changes.

Go/No-Go Decision Framework - Senior Men's Football

The committee must establish a formal Go/No-Go decision point for the 2027 football return by 1 October 2026. This deadline is non-negotiable. Returning to competition without meeting these criteria would repeat the mistakes of the past.

Criteria	Requirement by 1 October 2026
(a) League confirmed	BFNL competition has formally accepted the application.
(b) Player numbers	Minimum 45 registered senior players.
(c) Coaching panel	Senior coach and at least one assistant formally appointed.
(d) Committee	President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer positions filled.

What Happens If Criteria Are Not Met - Senior Football

- The 2028 return plan for senior men's football is confirmed.
- An application for an exemption to play senior netball and junior netball proceed as the 2027 competitive flagship.
- All junior football and women's programs continue without interruption.
- 2027 is used to complete Phase 2 of the governance transition, build the player list, finalise facility improvements, and launch the strategic plan.
- A Return to Lara Footy campaign is activated immediately to build toward 2028.

This is not a failure. It is responsible planning that protects the club from entering competition underprepared.

Three Return Scenarios

Scenario 1 - Full 2027 Return

All four Go/No-Go criteria are met by 1 October 2026. LFNC interim committee is elected. League application is approved. Season 2027 commences with senior and reserves football and A Grade netball.

Scenario 2 - 2028 Return (Football) and Exemption Application for Netball to be submitted to play 2027

One or more criteria are not met by 1 October 2026. 2027 is used to complete incorporation (Phase 2), build the player list, finalise facility improvements and launch the strategic plan. Senior men's football returns in 2028 with a stronger foundation.

Netball to apply for an exemption to play in 2027 without senior football.

Scenario 3 – Senior Men's Football & Netball return 2028

Senior women's football and junior football would continue and where possible junior netball teams will participate in the mid-week program. All other programs would return in 2028.

Women's Football & Junior Football

Regardless of the outcome of the senior men's football decision, the following programs will continue without interruption throughout 2026 and into 2027:

- All junior football programs (male and female).
- All junior netball programs. – in hybrid mode of playing on Friday night competition (Risks associated with keeping numbers)
- Women's and girls' football programs.

These programs are the lifeblood of the club. Their continuity is not conditional on senior men's football returning.

SECTION 7: FIVE-YEAR TRANSITION PLAN

Five-Year Transition Plan: Toward an Independent Lara Football and Netball Club

Full independence from the LSC is a structured, phased process and not an immediate step. During Years 1 to 3, the LFNC Committee operates under LSC oversight and endorsement. At the end of the third year, conversations should be had with the LSC and the committee on the direction forward. If proceeding toward an independent model, legal incorporation occurs in Year 3. Full financial and operational separation is completed by Year 5. This phased model ensures the club can return to competition in 2027 without waiting for incorporation to be completed.

Phase 1 - Establishment and Return (2026 to 2027)

Year 1 (July 2026 to December 2026)

The F&N Committee operates under LSC oversight. This is the foundation phase.

- Nomination and appointment of the football & netball committee.
- Establish all seven Executive Committee positions.
- Establish all sub-committees: Junior Football, Junior Netball, Women's Football, Senior Netball, Senior Football, Coaching, and Player Wellbeing.
- Commence constitutional review with legal advice.
- Commence league conversations.
- Implement Go/No-Go framework with 1 October 2026 decision point.
- Commence coach recruitment process for senior football.
- Launch Return to Lara Footy player recruitment campaign.
- Hold Netball Open Day in August 2026.
- Establish formal quarterly reporting to LSC Board.
- Develop and publish the Club's Child Safety Policy.
- Commence facility improvement works (gymnasium, change rooms, signage).
- Appoint Advisory Panel (up to three members).
- All junior, women's and netball programs continue, with approval from AFLB.

Year 2 (January 2027 to December 2027)

Season 2027 is the club's visible return to the community.

- Return to competition (Scenario 1, 2 or 3 per Section 6 decision).
- All sub-committees fully operational and reporting.
- Develop and launch the first three-year Strategic Plan.
- Construct the first rolling five-year Business Plan.
- Commence formal incorporation preparations: registration, constitution drafting.
- Review and update all governance documents including Player Wellbeing Policy and Child Safety Policy.
- Establish the Fundraising for the Future Committee.
- Begin Stage 3 Masterplan revision with City of Greater Geelong.
- Conduct first annual member survey to measure progress against values and targets.
- Quarterly reporting to LSC Board continues.

Phase 2 - Consolidation and Incorporation (2028 to 2029)

Year 3 (2028)

The club formally incorporates as an independent entity under the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 (Vic).

- Complete incorporation: registration with Consumer Affairs Victoria, adoption of new constitution.
- Establish the club's independent bank accounts and financial management systems.
- Senior men's football returns (if not already returned in 2027).
- Formally elect the first Board of the incorporated association at AGM.
- Commence transition of assets and accumulated funds from LSC in accordance with agreed framework.
- Establish formal Service Agreement with LSC for shared facilities and administrative support.
- Achieve AFL Victoria and Netball Victoria compliance requirements for incorporated clubs.
- Reporting to LSC Board transitions to a formal Memorandum of Understanding framework.

Year 4 (2029)

The club operates as a fully incorporated body with growing independence.

- Second Strategic Plan cycle commences.
- Full financial independence: own revenue, own expenses, own banking.
- Progress Stage 3 Masterplan and facility development funding.
- Review and update all sub-committee structures and position descriptions.
- Develop and launch a Coterie Group strategy including Past Players Group integration.
- Annual report to LSC Board under MOU framework.

Phase 3 - Full Independence (2030)

Year 5 (2030)

The Lara Football and Netball Club is fully established as an independent incorporated association.

- Formal separation from LSC governance structures complete.
- Independent facility use agreement with LSC in place.
- Club self-sustaining across all programs with five-year track record.
- Stage 3 Masterplan construction commenced or completed.
- Annual reporting obligations to LSC under the facility agreement only.
- Club celebrated as a model of community sport governance in the Geelong region.

Five-Year Summary Timeline

Year	Phase and Key Milestone
2026 (H2)	Phase 1: Nomination Process, Committee elected, Sub-committees formed, Go/No-Go decision.
2027	Phase 1: Return to competition. Strategic Plan launched. Incorporation preparations begin.

2028	Phase 2: Formal incorporation under Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012. First independent AGM.
2029	Phase 2: Full financial independence. MOU with LSC in place. Second Strategic Plan.
2030	Phase 3: Full independence. Facility agreement in place. LSC oversight ends.

SECTION 8: FOOTBALL AND NETBALL PROGRAMS

Football and Netball Programs

Women's Football

Women's football at Lara has demonstrated strong participation historically, with a peak of 129 female players across all age groups in 2024. Participation dropped significantly to 74 players in 2026 following the senior football recess announcement. Women's football must be treated as a distinct and valued program, not an adjunct to the men's program.

Recommendations:

- Confirm the status of the women's senior team for 2027 immediately. With 28 senior female players registered in 2026, a women's senior team is viable with proper planning and recruitment.
- Appoint a dedicated Women's Football Director to the LFNC Committee structure.
- Develop a Women's Football Recruitment Plan with specific targets for 2027, including targeted outreach to female players who departed in 2026.
- Set a minimum target of 60 female players (all ages) registered by 1 October 2026 as the Go/No-Go indicator for the 2027 women's program.
- Engage AFL Barwon to understand women's competition options and registration timelines for 2027.
- Consider naming women's junior female football teams to honour notable female players and coaches from Lara's history.
- Investigate the sharp decline in female underage players from 108 in 2024 to 46 in 2026.
- Assign dedicated female coaching and coordinator resources to junior women's football.

Junior Football

Junior football participation has declined from a combined 302 male underage players in 2021 to 213 in 2026. The correlation between the senior football recess and junior participation decline is direct.

Recommendations:

- Explore the re-establishment of an internal Lara Little League as a non-competitive, family-focused program for 8- to 11-year-olds.
- Implement the Junior Talent Academy model (already developed by the club) across all junior football age groups.
- Establish a structured Under 18 program directly linked to the senior program, including shared training sessions, mentoring from senior players, and a clear selection pathway.
- Develop a Coaches Development Program specifically for junior football coaches.
- Hold an annual Junior Football Family Day.
- Identify the U14 to U16 cohort as the critical retention group and assign named mentors.
- Set a junior football retention target: minimum 220 male underage players and 80 female underage players registered by 1 October 2026.
- Conduct exit interviews with all junior families who did not renew in 2026.

Senior Netball

Senior netball is the club's most visible success story and the program that has maintained the strongest connection to the community.

Recommendations:

- Seek approval for an exemption if required that senior and junior netball to play in 2027.
- Issue a public commitment to A Grade return in 2027 immediately following exemption.
- Activate the re-recruitment campaign targeting the 26 senior players who departed in 2026.
- Hold a Netball Open Day in August 2026 to register interest for 2027 across all age groups.
- Implement the Junior Talent Academy model for junior netball.
- If senior men's football does not return in 2027, commit publicly to A Grade netball as the club's senior competitive flagship. This retains sponsors, retains juniors, demonstrates the LFNC can function as a club, and gives football a platform to return from in 2028.

Junior Netball

- Implement the Junior Talent Academy model for junior netball.
- Hold a Netball Open Day in August 2026.
- Align junior development with clear pathway to senior netball.
- Engage local schools to drive junior participation and community awareness.

SECTION 9: FACILITIES AND FINANCE

Facilities

The facilities at Lara Sporting Club range from modern and functionally dynamic to fragmented and not fit for purpose. Stages 1 and 2 of the three-stage Masterplan have been completed, resulting in outstanding facilities for Lara Netball and Junior and Female Football. However, the existing senior football facilities are a series of separate, old, deteriorated and unattractive buildings that do not reflect the club's aspirations.

Compared to all AFL Barwon clubs and other regional Football Netball Clubs, the Lara senior football facilities rate as among the worst. This significantly inhibits player development, coach and player recruiting, and retention.

Immediate Actions

- Replace the goal and behind posts on Oval 1 to reflect modern dimensions.
- Secure a minimum of two extra netball courts.
- Complete renovation works to establish a fitted gymnasium.
- Renovate football rooms (home and away), umpire, canteen, medical and storage facilities.
- Paint throughout, internal and external.
- Undertake landscaping and beautification works and update all signage.
- Construct a verandah in front of the canteen.

Stage 3 Masterplan

- Review and revise Stage 3 of the LSC Facility Masterplan.
- Establish a Facility Development Working Party.
- Design a standalone Football Netball Club and Cricket Club clubhouse oriented to view both ovals and the netball complex, with capacity to accommodate 250 people seated.
- Incorporate a modern kitchen and catering facility.
- Create vehicle access entry on the west side via Waverley Road.
- Secure funding for concept plans, detailed design, approvals and quantity survey costings.

Financial Matters

Financial Position

The Lara Football and Netball sections' combined annual turnover sits within the AFL Barwon Club median range of \$640,000 to \$680,000. Both sections have a higher-than-average level of accumulated funds and are in a sound financial position.

Financial Recommendations

- Appoint LFNC Treasurer and Finance Sub-Committee.
- Construct a rolling five-year Business Plan.
- Establish and manage all financial reporting procedures and policies.
- Review, construct and approve annual budgets and forecasts.
- Identify new and additional revenue streams.

- Conduct two major fundraisers each year that become annual must-attend events.
- Develop an Investment Strategy to quarantine and grow funds over the long term.

Sponsorship and Major Partner Development

Sponsorship represents 23% of the combined Football and Netball Sections' total revenue, already 4% above the AFL Barwon club median of 19%. The renewal rate of 83% of 2025 sponsors into 2026 is a strong indicator of goodwill toward the club in the business community. This is a foundation to build from, not simply maintain.

The FPG recommends that the new LFNC Committee treat sponsorship as a strategic function, not an administrative task. The difference between clubs that sustain and grow their sponsorship revenue and clubs that struggle is not access to bigger businesses; it is the quality of the relationships, the professionalism of the approach and the ability to demonstrate genuine value to partners.

Current Sponsorship Position

- 83% of 2025 sponsors renewed for 2026, representing 83% of total sponsorship revenue received in 2025.
- The 2026 Lara sponsorship level is 5% higher than the AFL Barwon Club median.
- Sponsorship is managed by two coordinators who have developed strong relationships with existing sponsors.
- There is currently over-reliance on a small number of major sponsors for a disproportionate share of total sponsorship revenue, creating financial risk if any one of these relationships is lost.
- There is no formal Sponsorship Strategy, no tiered sponsorship framework, and no documented process for prospecting, onboarding or servicing sponsors.

Developing New Major Sponsor Relationships

The return to competition in 2027 and the announcement of a new club structure, new leadership and a clear long-term plan represents the most significant sponsorship opportunity the club has had in many years. New and prospective sponsors respond to momentum, credibility and a compelling story.

- Develop a formal Sponsorship Prospectus that presents the LFNC's story, its community reach, its membership and participant numbers, its demographic profile (noting Lara's strong family and 30 to 39-year-old demographic), its return to competition plan and the range of partnership opportunities available. This document should be professionally designed and updated annually.
- Create a tiered sponsorship framework with clearly defined levels such as Principal Partner, Major Partner, Club Partner and Community Partner, each with a documented set of benefits, recognition opportunities and investment levels.
- Identify a target list of 10 to 15 major prospective sponsors from the Lara and Geelong business community, with particular focus on: property developers and builders active in the Lara growth corridor; local and regional businesses with a family or community focus; businesses whose employee base includes Lara and Geelong families; and businesses that have previously expressed interest in or connection to the club.
- Establish a Sponsorship Sub-Committee of a minimum of three people dedicated to sponsorship and partnerships, reporting directly to the People and Communications Lead on the Executive Committee.
- Brief the return to competition announcement and the new club structure to existing sponsors before the public announcement, giving them the opportunity to increase their investment or formalise a new partnership agreement as the club launches its new chapter.

- Introduce formal 12-month and multi-year (two to three year) partnership agreements, replacing informal annual arrangements. Multi-year agreements provide revenue certainty for the club and demonstrate commitment and stability to sponsors.

Sponsor Servicing and Retention

Retaining an existing sponsor costs significantly less than acquiring a new one. The FPG recommends that the club invest equal attention in servicing current sponsors as in prospecting for new ones.

- Assign each sponsor a named relationship manager from the Sponsorship Sub-Committee responsible for regular contact, delivery of agreed benefits, and proactive communication about club activities and results.
- Develop and distribute a sponsor engagement calendar across the year, including: game day sponsor activations; sponsor recognition in club communications and social media; at least one sponsor networking event per year; sponsor recognition at the annual presentation and awards event; and mid-year sponsor check-in meetings.
- Provide sponsors with a Sponsorship Impact Report at the end of each season summarising their reach, recognition and the club's performance against agreed deliverables.
- Review all sponsorship marketing collateral to ensure sponsor recognition is consistent, prominent and professionally presented.
- In conjunction with the Communications coordinator, establish a social media content plan that regularly features and tags club sponsors, driving digital reach for their business.

Community and Local Business Engagement

The Lara community is growing rapidly. The demographic profile, with a strong concentration of families aged 30 to 39 in a growth corridor, represents a compelling audience for local and regional businesses.

- Explore sponsorship and partnership opportunities with new businesses establishing in the Lara growth corridor, particularly in retail, construction, healthcare and services sectors.
- Introduce a Community Business Supporter program at an accessible investment level (for example, \$500 to \$1,000 per year) to engage small local businesses who wish to be associated with the club but cannot commit to a larger partnership.
- Investigate whether any local property development or infrastructure projects in the Lara area could support the club's facility development through sponsorship, naming rights or in-kind contribution.
- Quarantine an agreed percentage of annual sponsorship revenue for investment in club personnel training and development programs or facility development, building a tangible link between sponsor investment and community outcomes.

Sponsorship Recommendations Summary

- Appoint a Sponsorship Sub-Committee of a minimum of three people with clearly defined roles and reporting to the People and Communications Lead.
- Develop a professional Sponsorship Prospectus reflecting the new club structure, the return to competition story and the community demographic opportunity.
- Introduce a tiered sponsorship framework with documented benefits at each level.
- Establish a target prospecting list of 10 to 15 major new sponsors from the Lara and Geelong business community.
- Brief existing sponsors on the new club direction before the public announcement and offer renewal or upgrade agreements.

- Move to formal 12-month and multi-year partnership agreements for all sponsors at Major Partner level and above.
- Introduce a Sponsorship Impact Report delivered to all sponsors at the end of each season.
- Develop a sponsor engagement calendar and assign named relationship managers to each sponsoring business.
- Introduce a Community Business Supporter program at an accessible investment level for small local businesses.

Fundraising

Fundraising constitutes approximately 20% of Lara's total revenue. It is a significant proportion of total revenue and as such commands club focus, resource allocation and priority.

A fundraising and social committee should provide direction and deliver the various existing fundraising activities. The Committee should expand its network to share the load by establishing groups of people who undertake conducting one fundraiser each year.

Given the recommendations within this report regarding facility development, there will be opportunity to undertake fundraising activities in support of such development.

Fundraising Recommendations

- Create a 'Fundraising for the Future' Committee to plan and deliver an annual fundraising program and to look to the future with targeted fundraising aligned with the club's strategic plan.
- Conduct two major fundraisers each year that become not to be missed events.
- Develop an Investment Strategy to quarantine and grow funds over the long term.

Coterie Groups

There are two Coterie Groups associated with Lara Football.

The Lara Past Players Group has been in operation for many years. It conducts reunion based activities and supports various activities and football based support and promotion. The Group raises funds for projects, programs, teams or equipment that will support football. It has a very strong and passionate network of past players, coaches and officials and its activities serve to bring people to the club, not just for functions but also for attending match day.

The Past Players Group is not an incorporated body. It functions outside of the LSC Governance structure and manages itself and its funds.

The Non-Playing Captains (NPC) was established in recent years to provide practical support to junior football. It is not an incorporated body.

Good club governance and best practice align Coterie Groups within the club structure but encourage autonomy and creativity in their activities. Being within the club structure provides insurance cover, financial management security, and the ability to utilise the club ABN for GST purposes.

There is potential to introduce other Coterie Groups, particularly those that are inclusive and diverse, and that engage the community and other aspects of the club, including women, families, netball and welfare.

Coterie Group Recommendations

- Appoint a Coterie Group Liaison Officer to connect the LFNC with each Coterie Group and foster the establishment of additional Coterie Groups.

- Integrate the existing Coterie Groups into the new Lara Football Netball Club structure.
- Consider establishing a Netball Past Players, Coaches and Officials Group.
- Consider introducing other Coterie Groups.

SECTION 10: IMPLEMENTATION AND NEXT STEPS

Implementation and Next Steps

Immediate Actions (July 2026)

1. Nominations are called for the new committee and appointed.
2. Commence league conversations immediately, before any internal governance work.
3. Appoint a governance and legal advisor to assist with the constitutional review and incorporation pathway.
4. Issue a public commitment to A Grade netball return in 2027, to be vetted with AFL Barwon.
5. Activate the Return to Lara Footy player recruitment campaign via the Past Players Group and NPC.
6. Commence the senior football coach recruitment process.
7. Hold a Netball Open Day in August 2026.
8. Confirm potential committee member names and commence community leader outreach.

Action Items For the New Football & Netball Executive Committee

9. Presentation of the FPG Report to members.
10. Member endorsement of the Report's recommendations.
11. Election of the Football and Netball Committee (all seven positions).
12. Formation of sub-committees.
13. Endorsement of the five-year transition plan.
14. Noting of the FPG draft Mission, Vision and Values, with the new committee tasked to review and finalise these statements within six weeks of appointment.

The Path Forward

Members overwhelmingly agree the club can recover if it focuses on:

- Strong leadership (92% say very important).
- Belonging and inclusiveness (89 to 92% very important).
- Rebuilding trust through transparency.
- Better alignment between juniors and seniors.
- Clear governance, consistent standards and improved recruitment.

There is strong loyalty to Lara. But members are clear that visible action, not words, is required to restore trust and rebuild the club.

It is now up to the members and the Lara community to take action. United and Proud.

Commissioned by the Lara Sporting Club Board

June 2026

LARA FOOTBALL AND NETBALL CLUB

FUTURE PLANNING GROUP

FINAL REPORT

SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

June 2026

Strong Governance

Strong Club

Strong Community

Commissioned by the Lara Sporting Club Board

GOVERNANCE AND STRUCTURE

1. Establish a Football and Netball Committee (F&N Committee) as the elected governing body of the Lara Football and Netball Club. This committee will operate under the oversight of the Lara Sporting Club Board during the transition period, with the intention of progressing toward independent incorporation over five years.

The proposed structure is a three-layer committee-led model:

- Layer 0 - LSC Board: Overall governing body. Constitutional oversight and accountability during the transition period.
- Layer 1 - Advisory and Support: Advisory Panel (up to three members) and Independent Finance Reviewer.
- Layer 2 - Football and Netball Committee: The elected governing body, accountable to the LSC Board and to members at the AGM.
- Layer 3 - Sub-Committees: Detailed in this section below.
- Layer 4 - Operational Roles: Coordinators reporting to the Committee.

(Attachment 1) provides a detailed framework of the proposed Football and Netball Club Committee and Operations structure.

Note: The LSC Board has endorsed the establishment of the Lara Football Netball Club section, but not the transition to independent incorporation at this time.

2. Establish a formal, documented Board-Section engagement process with scheduled quarterly meetings between representatives of the LSC Board and the LFNC Committee, including agendas, minutes and action registers.

3. Develop a partnership agreement with the LSC that supports the growth and development of the LFNC but is mutually exclusive in terms of governance, leadership, structure, management and operations.

Note: The FPG has drafted a pro forma Partnership Agreement to guide the establishment of the agreement.

4. Develop a formal protocol for communicating and managing the gaming licence access restrictions to all LFNC members, families, coaches and volunteers.
5. Develop position descriptions for all LFNC Committee and sub-committee roles as an immediate priority.
6. Construct a formal induction and handover process for all incoming committee members.

RETURN TO COMPETITION

1. Lara senior and reserves football teams and the A Grade netball team to return to competition in the 2027 season, subject to meeting formal Go/No-Go criteria by 1 October 2026.
2. Affiliate to compete in the BFNL league, subject to AFL Victoria and AFL Barwon oversight and direction.
3. Establish a Football and Netball Committee with elected leadership and full sub-committee structure including Junior Football, Junior Netball, Women's Football, Senior Netball, Senior Football, Coaching, and Player Wellbeing.
4. Develop and implement comprehensive Player and Coach recruitment processes with formal timelines and decision points.
5. Redesign the final stage of the LSC Facility Masterplan to construct a fit-for-purpose clubhouse.
6. Develop rolling Strategic and Business plans.
7. Prioritise junior-to-senior transition pathways across all programs.
8. Embed child safety, concussion protocols and player wellbeing into formal club policy.

LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE

1. Leadership Development

Invest in formal leadership development as a priority, including:

- Engaging a consultant to design and deliver a governance, cultural and leadership training program for all committee members and club leaders within the first six months of the new committee taking office.
- Establishing a formal mentoring arrangement between the LFNC Advisory Panel and new committee members, particularly in the President, Treasurer and Secretary roles.
- Budgeting for committee professional development as a line item in the annual budget, not as a discretionary spend.
- Building a volunteer recognition program that publicly acknowledges contributions at every level, including at the AGM, in club communications and at match days.
- Establishing a volunteer register that documents the skills, availability and interests of current and prospective volunteers to enable better matching of people to roles.

2. Game Day Culture

- The incoming coaching panel must develop, communicate and enforce a Game Day Standards document covering pre-game preparation and warm-up conduct; sideline behaviour expectations for coaches, officials and volunteers; post-game conduct including engagement with opponents and umpires; and standards for training sessions as the foundation for game day performance.
- The LFNC Committee must formally adopt and publish a Spectator and Volunteer Code of Conduct that applies at all home and away games for all age groups, covering language,

behaviour toward umpires and match day officials, social media conduct during and after games, and consequences for breaches.

- Establish a Match Day coordinator role within the People and Communications sub-committee, responsible for home game day presentation, canteen operation, official welcome processes, sponsor visibility and post-match functions.
- Senior players must be formally identified and briefed on their role as culture carriers. A senior player leadership group should be established with clear expectations around setting standards, supporting junior players and representing the club.
- Re-introduce post-match functions for all age groups as a priority. The post-match function is the primary mechanism through which club culture is built and sustained week to week.
- Implement a formal match day debrief process for the coaching panel following each game, focused not only on performance but on culture, standards and behaviour.
- Develop a Match Day Experience guide for volunteers, covering how to welcome families, engage new members, support visitors and create a positive environment for all attendees.

3. Playing Groups

Senior Football

- Adopt and implement the proposed Football Department structure immediately.
- As a matter of priority, commence a Return to Lara Footy program that builds a senior and reserves playing and coaching list in readiness for a return to competition in 2027. Engage with the Lara Past Players Coterie Group, the NPC Coterie Group and all football sectors to assist.
- Establish a Leadership, Recruitment, Retention and Junior to Senior Transition program.
- Establish a Coaches Recruitment and Retention Sub-Committee.
- Construct and implement a Football Department Professional Development Plan covering: leadership training and mentoring; football department structures; player, volunteer and coach welfare; club culture; technology; player and coach development pathway strategies; best practices in medical treatment, strength and conditioning, psychology and nutrition; and all-of-club communications.
- Explore the re-establishment of an internal Lara Little League as a non-competitive, family-focused program for 8- to 11-year-olds. It should complement Auskick, not replace it. Establishment of close links with primary schools in the Lara area is essential.
- Assign resources to ensure Auskick and junior football grow and are linked to the junior and senior football programs.
- Review and construct a coach recruitment profile and appointment process that identifies potential coaching structures and makes appointment recommendations to the Football Department and LFNC Committee.

Women's Football

- Confirm the status of the women's senior team for 2027 immediately. With 28 senior female players registered in 2026, a women's senior team is viable with proper planning and recruitment.
- Appoint a dedicated Women's Football Director to the LFNC Committee structure.
- Develop a Women's Football Recruitment Plan with specific targets for 2027, including targeted outreach to female players who departed in 2026.
- Set a minimum target of 60 female players (all ages) registered by 1 October 2026 as the Go/No-Go indicator for the 2027 women's program.
- Engage with AFL Barwon to understand women's competition options and registration timelines for 2027.

- Consider naming women's junior female football teams to honour notable female players and coaches from Lara's history.
- Investigate the sharp decline in female underage players from 108 in 2024 to 46 in 2026.
- Assign dedicated female coaching and coordinator resources to junior women's football.

Junior Football

- Explore the re-establishment of an internal Lara Little League as a non-competitive, family-focused program for 8- to 11-year-olds.
- Implement the Junior Talent Academy model (already developed by the club) across all junior football age groups.
- Establish a structured Under 18 programs directly linked to the senior program, including shared training sessions, mentoring from senior players, and a clear selection pathway.
- Develop a Coaches Development Program specifically for junior football coaches.
- Hold an annual Junior Football Family Day.
- Identify the U14 to U16 cohort as the critical retention group and assign named mentors.
- Set a junior football retention target: minimum 220 male underage players and 80 female underage players registered by 1 October 2026.
- Conduct exit interviews with all junior families who did not renew in 2026.

Senior Netball

- Seek approval for an exemption if required for senior and junior netball to play in 2027.
- Issue a public commitment to A Grade return in 2027 immediately following exemption.
- Activate the re-recruitment campaign targeting the 26 senior players who departed in 2026.
- Hold a Netball Open Day in August 2026 to register interest for 2027 across all age groups.
- Implement the Junior Talent Academy model for junior netball.
- If senior men's football does not return in 2027, commit publicly to A Grade netball as the club's senior competitive flagship. This retains sponsors, retains juniors, demonstrates the LFNC can function as a club, and gives football a platform to return from in 2028.

Junior Netball

- Implement the Junior Talent Academy model for junior netball.
- Hold a Netball Open Day in August 2026.
- Align junior development with clear pathway to senior netball.
- Engage local schools to drive junior participation and community awareness.

4. Communication

- Appoint a dedicated Communications and Marketing coordinator within the People and Communications sub-committee as an immediate priority.
- Develop and implement a club-wide Communications Plan covering: a regular member newsletter (minimum monthly during the season); a social media content calendar; a club website kept current with news, results, events and committee information; and a communications protocol for significant club announcements.
- Establish a Junior Football and Netball newsletter or digital communication channel specifically for junior families, issued at least fortnightly during the season.
- Implement a formal all-of-club meeting or forum at the start and end of each season, bringing together football, netball, juniors, seniors and volunteers.

- Develop and apply a crisis communication protocol so that the committee responds to significant events with a single, clear and timely message.
- Invest in a club management platform to centralise communications, registrations, event management and volunteer coordination.

FACILITIES

Immediate Actions

- Replace the goal and behind posts on Oval 1 to reflect modern dimensions.
- Secure a minimum of two extra netball courts.
- Complete renovation works to establish a fitted gymnasium.
- Renovate football rooms (home and away), umpire, canteen, medical and storage facilities.
- Paint throughout, internal and external.
- Undertake landscaping and beautification works and update all signage.
- Construct a verandah in front of the canteen.

LSC Stage 3 Facility Masterplan

- Review and revise Stage 3 of the LSC Facility Masterplan.
- Establish a Facility Development Working Party.
- Design a standalone Football Netball Club and Cricket Club clubhouse oriented to view both ovals and the netball complex, with capacity to accommodate 250 people seated.
- Incorporate a modern kitchen and catering facility.
- Create vehicle access entry on the west side via Waverley Road.
- Secure funding for concept plans, detailed design, approvals and quantity survey costings.

FINANCE & SPONSORSHIP

Financial Recommendations

- Appoint a LFNC Treasurer and Finance Sub-Committee.
- Construct a rolling five-year Business Plan.
- Establish and manage all financial reporting procedures and policies.
- Review, construct and approve annual budgets and forecasts.
- Identify new and additional revenue streams.
- Conduct two major fundraisers each year that become annual must-attend events.
- Develop an Investment Strategy to quarantine and grow funds over the long term.

Sponsorship Recommendations

- Appoint a Sponsorship Sub-Committee of a minimum of three people with clearly defined roles, reporting directly to the People and Communications Lead on the Executive Committee.
- Develop a professional Sponsorship Prospectus reflecting the new club structure, the return to competition story and the community demographic opportunity.
- Introduce a tiered sponsorship framework with documented benefits at each level.
- Establish a target prospecting list of 10 to 15 major new sponsors from the Lara and Geelong business community.

- Brief the return to competition announcement and the new club structure to existing sponsors before the public announcement, giving them the opportunity to increase their investment or formalise a new partnership agreement as the club launches its new chapter.
- Introduce formal 12-month and multi-year (two to three year) partnership agreements, replacing informal annual arrangements. Multi-year agreements provide revenue certainty for the club and demonstrate commitment and stability to sponsors.
- Introduce a Sponsorship Impact Report delivered to all sponsors at the end of each season.
- Develop a sponsor engagement calendar and assign named relationship managers to each sponsoring business.
- Introduce a Community Business Supporter program at an accessible investment level for small local businesses.

FUNDRAISING

- Create a 'Fundraising for the Future' Committee to plan and deliver an annual fundraising program and to look to the future with targeted fundraising aligned with the club's strategic plan.
- Conduct two major fundraisers each year that become not-to-be-missed events.
- Develop an Investment Strategy to quarantine and grow funds over the long term.

COTERIE GROUPS

- Appoint a Coterie Group Liaison Officer to connect the LFNC with each Coterie Group and foster the establishment of additional Coterie Groups.
- Integrate the existing Coterie Groups into the new Lara Football Netball Club structure.
- Consider establishing a Netball Past Players, Coaches and Officials Group.
- Consider introducing other Coterie Groups.

LARA FOOTBALL & NETBALL CLUB

Committee-Led Governance Structure

Updated June 2026 — including Sub-Committees and Transition to Independence

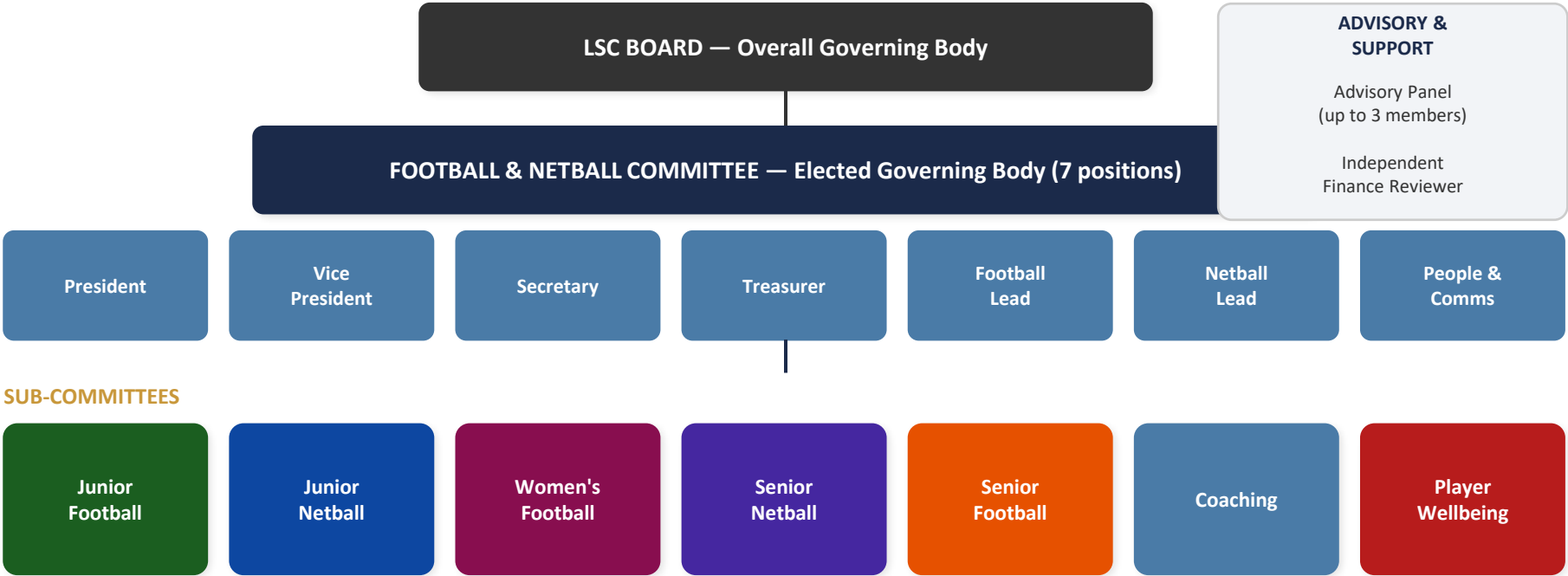
**Strong
Governance**

**Strong
Club**

**Strong
Community**

Structure — Overview

Lara FNC Committee-Led Governance Model



Football & Netball Committee

Elected Roles & Responsibilities

PURPOSE: Full responsibility for strategic direction, financial oversight, constitutional compliance and operational management. Reports to membership at AGM and is accountable to the LSC Board.

President

- Chairs all Committee and AGM meetings
- Primary spokesperson for the club
- Leads strategic planning and direction
- Oversees governance and constitutional compliance
- Casts deciding vote in tied decisions

Vice President

- Deputies for the President when unavailable
- Supports across all governance functions
- Leads specific projects and working groups
- Assists with stakeholder engagement
- Contributes to Committee succession planning

Secretary

- Prepares agendas, minutes and all Committee papers
- Manages correspondence and statutory registers
- Ensures constitutional compliance
- Coordinates AGM logistics and notices
- Archives all governance records

Treasurer

- Manages club finances, bank accounts and payments
- Prepares monthly financial reports
- Leads budget preparation and monitoring
- Oversees external finance review
- Manages player payments compliance

Football Lead

- Leads all football operations
- Chairs Football sub-committees
- Oversees coach appointments and KPI framework
- Monitors football budget
- Drives senior, junior and female football growth

Netball Lead

- Leads all netball operations
- Chairs Netball sub-committees
- Oversees netball coach appointments and KPIs
- Monitors netball budget
- Drives senior, junior and membership growth

People & Comms Lead

- Oversees canteen, events, welfare and merchandise
- Leads sponsorship strategy and partner management
- Manages marketing, social media and communications
- Coordinates volunteers and club culture programs

Sub-Committees (1 of 2)

Junior Football, Junior Netball, Women's Football and Senior Netball

Junior Football

To oversee and manage all junior football programs, male and female.

- Manage all junior football teams and registrations.
- Implement the Junior Talent Academy across all age groups.
- Run the Under 18 program with direct links to seniors.
- Deliver a Coaches Development Program for junior coaches.
- Maintain a Junior Football communication channel for families.
- Provide a formal welcome process for new junior families.
- Coordinate the annual Junior Football Family Day.
- Target: 220 male + 80 female underage players by 1 Oct 2026.

Junior Netball

To oversee and manage all junior netball programs.

- Manage all junior netball teams and registrations.
- Implement the Junior Talent Academy for junior netball.
- Hold a Netball Open Day in August 2026 for 2027 interest.
- Develop junior-to-senior pathway materials for families.
- Align with the senior program for pathway continuity.
- Coordinate junior netball coach development and support.
- Engage local schools to drive junior participation.

Women's Football

To oversee all women's and girls' football as a distinct, valued program.

- Manage senior women's team operations and recruitment.
- Deliver a Women's Football Recruitment Plan for 2027.
- Manage all junior girls' football age group programs.
- Align junior development with the Talent Academy model.
- Assign dedicated female coaching and coordinator resources.
- Engage AFL Barwon on women's competition options.
- Target: 60 female players (all ages) by 1 Oct 2026.

Senior Netball

To oversee all senior netball, A-E Grade

- Manage senior netball operations across all grades.
- Lead re-recruitment of the 26 players who left in 2026.
- Manage coaching panel appointments and performance review.
- Oversee registrations, payments and season preparation.
- Align with Junior Netball on the senior pathway.

Each sub-committee is chaired by a designated Executive Committee Lead and reports to the full Committee at each meeting.

OFFICIAL

Sub-Committees (2 of 2)

Senior Football, Coaching and Player Wellbeing

Senior Football

To oversee all senior men's football, including Seniors and Reserves.

- Lead coach recruitment for the senior coaching panel.
- Manage player recruitment and list management strategy.
- Manage team operations: registrations, game day, training.
- Implement and monitor the Go/No-Go criteria for 2027.
- Ensure the U18 to senior pathway is clear and active.
- Oversee player payments compliance and budget management.

Coaching

To oversee accountability across all coaching appointments and programs.

- Develop coach appointment processes and role descriptions.
- Implement performance review frameworks and coach KPIs.
- Coordinate accreditation across AFL Vic and Netball Vic.
- Support and mentor coaching staff, especially juniors.
- Deliver a club-wide Coaches Development Program.

Player Wellbeing

To protect the physical, mental and social wellbeing of all players.

- Develop and maintain the Player Wellbeing Policy.
- Implement First Aid policy per AFL Vic and Netball Vic.
- Apply concussion and head injury management guidelines.
- Coordinate first aid personnel at matches and training.
- Develop a Mental Health and Wellbeing framework.
- Implement and monitor the Child Safety Policy.
- Coordinate player welfare check-ins through the season.

Each sub-committee is chaired by a designated Executive Committee Lead and reports to the full Committee at each meeting.

OFFICIAL

Sub-Committee Reporting & Accountability

How each sub-committee connects to the Executive Committee



Reporting to the LSC Board

The F&N Committee's formal reporting obligations during the transition period

QUARTERLY REPORT

Every LSC Board Meeting

- Financial performance vs budget
- Membership numbers by category
- Player registrations vs target
- Season performance summary
- Sub-committee activity updates
- Compliance and governance matters
- Risk register update
- Items requiring LSC endorsement

ANNUAL REPORT

At AGM

- Full financial statements
- Independent financial review report
- Annual Strategic Plan progress
- Season performance across all programs
- Membership and participation report
- Governance and compliance statement
- Progress on five-year transition plan
- Proposed budget for coming year

AD HOC REPORT

Immediately as required

- Financial risk over \$5,000
- Serious incidents or complaints
- Child safety matters
- Significant media issues
- Actions outside approved budget
- Constitutional matters