



## **Male Participation in Netball Competitions Policy 2023 –2026**

In October 2021, a decision was made by Outer East FN to change the gender classification of the 17&U Blue competition from a female only competition to a mixed competition to allow male participation. The change meant that Outer East FN could offer the opportunity for males to participate in all three age groups of junior netball competitions, 13&U, 15&U and 17&U.

This aligns with both Outer East FN's Gender Equity Policy and Netball Victoria's Strategic Plan.

One of the four pillars of the Outer East Gender Equity and Inclusion Action Plan is "Opportunity"  
*Equal opportunity for all participants to play our sports and to progress in both games at all levels.*

One of the four pillars of Netball Victoria's Strategic Plan is "Grow"

*Increase participation and involvement in netball*

*Create more opportunities for males to play netball*

*Increase our financial capacity to invest more in netball*

*Increase capability and capacity of our affiliates*

As part of the Outer East Gender Equity Policy and keeping in line with Netball Victoria's Strategic Plan, a change in the classification would create the opportunity to increase male participation and involvement in netball. This change was supported by Netball Victoria.

Thus, the specific Outer East FN bylaws (10.0 & 61.3) around gender in netball were updated to reflect the changes and now read as follows:

**(Extract from Outer East Football Netball Competitions Bylaws)**

**10.0 GENDER Background.**

The AFL and Netball Australia are committed to inclusion and providing all people with an opportunity to participate in Community Football and Netball. It is the AFL and Netball Australia's view that, in Community Football and Netball, considerations of social inclusion have greater priority than concerns that may exist with respect to competitive advantage in relation to the participation of gender diverse players. That is not to say that competitive fairness is not important in Community Sport but the balance between social inclusion and competitive fairness is different in Community Sport than it is in Elite Sport.

10.1 Refer to the AFL's and Netball Australia's Gender Diversity Policy's for further information on the below (schedule 15). a) Trans women and non-binary people are eligible to compete in girls and/or women's Community Football or Netball competitions; and b) Trans men and non-binary people are eligible to compete in boys and/or men's Community Football or Netball competitions, provided that: i) Such persons comply with all applicable Rules of the competition including the Anti-Doping Codes (dealt with in the Policy's in the section, "Anti-Doping and Testosterone"); and ii) Where a referral is made to it, the AFL GDP Committee, acting reasonably, is satisfied that unacceptable safety risks do not arise from the person's proposed or continued participation in the competition (dealt with in the Policy in the section, "Safety Considerations").

10.2 In accordance with the directive from AFL Victoria to its members and affiliates, females who reach 14 years of age as of the 1st of January in the year of play are excluded from playing in any competition that is not a 'female competition'.

10.3 In accordance with the directive from Netball Victoria to its members and affiliates, males who reach 14 years of age as at 1st of January in the year of play are excluded from playing in any competition that is not a 'male or mixed competition'.

10.4 Failure to comply with by-law 10.0 may result in a fine according to the fine schedule, a forfeiture of match or such other penalty as determined by the Outer East Football Netball Board.

**61.3 GENDER CLASSIFICATIONS OF COMPETITIONS – As per the table below  
(Blue is the higher division):**

**AGE GROUP CLASSIFICATION**

**13&U (Blue)** Mixed (females and males – no restrictions on the number of males that can participate)  
(Males aged 13 years or under as of the 31st of December of the competition year may participate)

**13&U (White)** Female Only (Males < 13 years of age as at the first day of the competition or season may participate)

**15&U (Blue)** Mixed (females and males: restrictions apply - Minimum males = 0, Maximum Males 2)  
(Males aged 15 years or under as of the 31st of December of the competition year may participate).  
Both males can be On Court together but are required to be in separate areas. Court area positions are –  
(GS, GA) – (WA, C, WD) – (GD, GK).

**15&U (White)** Female Only (Males < 13 years of age as at the first day of the competition or season may participate).

**17&U (Blue)** Mixed (females and males: restrictions apply - Minimum males = 0, Maximum Males 2)  
(Males aged 17 years or under as of the 31st of December of the competition year may participate).  
Only one male player to be, on court, at any one time.

**17&U (White), D Grade, C Grade, B Grade & A Grade** Female only

A snapshot analysis of gender participation for the Outer East FN competitions in 2022 showed:

**All junior competitions – 496 registered players**

484 registered female players (97.6%) 12

registered male players (2.4%)

**13&U Competitions – 127 registered players**

124 registered female players (97.6%) 3

registered male players (2.4%)

Games played by those individual males:

Player A - 3 Games

Player B – 2 Games

Player C - did not play

**15&U Competitions – 185 registered players**

183 registered female players (98.9%) 2

registered male players (1.1%)

Games Played by those individual males:

Player A – 14 games

Player B – 7 games

**17&U Blue Premier Division – 123 registered players**

118 registered female players (95.9%) 5

registered male players (4.1%)

Games played by those individual males:

Player A – 14 games

Player B – 13 games

Player C – 9 games

Player D – 8 games

Player E – 1 game

**17&U Blue Division Two – 61 registered players**

59 registered female players (96.7%)

2 registered male players (3.3%)

Games played by those individual males:

Player A – 14 games

Player B – 13 games

When female only competitions were introduced in to football (AFL Yarra Ranges) in 2016, on the back of a huge rise in popularity of the sport thru the television broadcasts of AFLW, the demand was high enough for clubs to be able to field female only teams from U15 thru to Seniors from the get-go.

Male participation in netball is unlikely to ever rival that type of growth due to lack of exposure, thus the need to be able to offer mixed competitions in 15&U and 17&U as a starting point to facilitate growth.

The major challenge faced by our competitions moving forward is to continue to provide opportunities for male participation in junior competitions whilst at the same time, respecting that our female participants should be provided the opportunity to choose to play in either a female only or mixed competition.

Currently there is a clear pathway for our female participants to move in to an Open competition when they top age out of a 17&U competition.

At present, there is no such pathway in place for our male participants once they top out of junior competitions.

Football faced a similar predicament before the explosion of AFLW, when girls could only play alongside with boys up to the age of 14, then a very large percentage were pretty much lost to the game due to lack of opportunity.

Outer East FN is committed to working with Netball Victoria and the Victorian Men's and Mixed Netball Association to help alleviate this situation and create a pathway, so male participants are not lost to the game of netball altogether.

An aspirational gender roadmap for Outer East's netball competitions over the next four seasons looks like this:

**2023 Season** – All Gender Classifications to remain the same as the 2022 season.

Outer East FN to develop a relationship with VMMNA and work towards creating a pathway for our male participants to participate in 17&U and Open Age M-League competition.

**2024 Season** - **17&U Blue** to revert back to a Female only competition in Premier Division and Division One. Due to geographical composition of clubs in Division Two, a mixed competition offering to be canvassed with competing clubs.

**17&U White** to either remain a Female only competition or become a mixed competition. (Dependent on mixed team entries) or allow males < 15 at the first day of competition to play.

**17&U Mixed** the introduction of a mixed competition (dependent on number of team entries)

**A, B, C & D Grade competitions to remain female only competitions**

**2025 Season** - **13&U and 15&U** competitions to remain the same classifications

**17&U Mixed** Female and Male participations

**17&U White & Blue, A, B, C & D Grade** Female Only

Aim to enter a stand-alone male Outer East FN representative 17&U male team in to the M-League competition

**2026 Season** - **13&U and 15&U** competitions to remain the same classifications

**17&U Mixed** Female and Male participations

**17&U White & Blue, A, B, C & D Grade** Female Only

Aim to enter a 17&U male Outer East representative team at the Netball Victoria Association Championships.

**Documentation to support this policy:**

**Netball Victoria's Male Participation Policy**

<https://vic.netball.com.au/male-participation>

**NV Reference Guide – Labelling of Competition**

[PowerPoint Presentation \(netball.com.au\)](#)

**Outer East Football Netball Gender Equity Policy**

<https://www.outereastfn.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Outer-East-FN-Gender-Equity-Policy-1.pdf>

**Outer East Football Netball**

**Leading the change – Gender Equity & Inclusion Action Plan – 2022 to 2026**

[https://issuu.com/outer\\_east\\_football\\_netball/docs/outer\\_east\\_football\\_netball\\_gender\\_b13aacd0edece8](https://issuu.com/outer_east_football_netball/docs/outer_east_football_netball_gender_b13aacd0edece8)

**14yo Max Major's Netball Story**

[Future of men's netball is looking bright - Netball VIC](#)