

# Western Spirit Football Club (WSFC)

## Age Policy and Divisional Grading

### Policy Statement

WSFC support children to play in their correct age group unless there are exceptional circumstances why this should not occur.

### Introduction

It is the policy of Football Queensland and Football Brisbane Inc that players play in their own age group unless there are exceptional circumstances. This may be, for example, where there are insufficient players to constitute a team in small clubs or the child has the maturity, physical attributes and skill level to play in an older age group.

The policy documents can be accessed through Football Queensland and Football Brisbane Inc websites. Where a player plays at a different age group, a consent form must be completed by a parent or guardian. The parental form will then be forwarded to Football Brisbane who will inform our club of the outcome. Players requesting to play two (2) years or more above their age group must be approved by Football Queensland.

### Small Sided Football

Small Sided Football (SSF) was introduced by the Football Federation of Australia (FFA) two (2) years ago as part of the National Football Development Plan and is progressively being introduced to older age groups. SSF are based on extensive international research on how best to develop children.

Variations of SSF are played in many countries including Brazil, England, Germany, Italy and Spain. Overwhelmingly, the findings have shown SSF are a more effective method of improving their technical ability as footballers. The emphasis is on more touches through fewer players on the field on a smaller field. The introduction of young children to a full sized field can hinder both development, enjoyment and potentially enhance risk.

If a parent or guardian wants their child to play up an age group in SSF (eg an U9 to play in a U10 SSF) then this should in the first instance be discussed with the Junior Chair Person for consideration and whether an assessment by the DOC should occur. If consent is given, the parent or guardian will need to sign the Football Brisbane parental consent form.

### Divisional Grading

Grading for the 2010/2011 season will commence at U11 (ie children born in 1999). Having regard to Football Brisbane and Football Queensland player age policies, only players in their correct age group are to attend divisional grading unless they have adhered to the policy as detailed below. This approach will also reduce the number of children of the correct age who would have otherwise played in a higher division, being disadvantaged by being displaced by younger children.

### Independent Assessment

WSFC supports the direction of the FFA and SSF. Allowing children to attend grading who are not in the correct age group and have not been independently assessed as to their physical capacity, social sense and skill level is contrary to these principles. In addition, WSFC has an obligation to mitigate risk of harm to children having regard to the Football Brisbane Child Protection Risk Management Strategy and our responsibilities as a club under the *Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000*.

It has therefore been determined that children are to attend grading in their correct age groups. Children who are not in their correct age group must attend an assessment as determined by the Director of Coaching (DOC). Requests to play in a higher age will be forwarded to the DOC. Assessments will be conducted at WSFC Camira on a date and time determined by the DOC.

### Exclusion

Having regard to age limitations and to reduce unnecessary assessments, children born with one (1) month of the cut off period can attend divisional grading.

### Grading Outcomes

It should also be noted that whilst a player may be given consent to play in an older age group, the division they play in will not be known until the grading process has been finalised. It should also be noted that Football Brisbane Inc will not approve large numbers of children to play divisional football who are not in their correct age group.