

Media Release

The Hon Martin Pakula MP

Minister for Industry Support and Recovery

Minister for Trade

Minister for Business Precincts

Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events

Minister for Racing



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BACKING VICTORIA'S HISTORIC VFL CLUBS TO THRIVE IN NEW ERA

Time-honoured clubs including Williamstown, Coburg and Port Melbourne will be supported to forge a new future in a tri-state VFL competition, with details of near \$1 million funding from the Andrews Labor Government revealed today.

Standalone VFL clubs – also including Frankston, Northern Bullants and Werribee – will be eligible for travel and operations grants of up to \$130,000 in 2021 as the VFL expands to take in six teams from New South Wales and Queensland.

AFL-aligned VFL clubs Sandringham (St Kilda), Box Hill Hawks (Hawthorn) and Casey Demons (Melbourne) will be eligible for grants of up to \$65,000.

The \$975,000 investment in the future of Australian football in Victoria was part of the *Victorian Budget 2020/21* and provides grants to defray the costs of interstate travel and providing a COVIDSafe environment for players, officials and supporters.

The finances of VFL clubs were significantly impacted by the cancellation of the 2020 season due to the effects of the pandemic and the 2021 direct budget boost will be important as the clubs look to make their mark in the new 22-team competition, which kicks off on April 17.

The *Strengthening Victoria's AFL Development Pathways Funding Program* will only be open to Victorian clubs not operated by an AFL team.

The new VFL competition has been designed to standardise the pathway to the AFL for players, coaches and administrators along the east coast. This structure will ensure Victoria's talent pool will continue to grow, providing athletes with more opportunities to play at the highest level.

The competing clubs are Aspley (Qld), Coburg, Frankston, Northern Bullants, Port Melbourne, Southport (Qld), Werribee, Williamstown, Brisbane Lions (Qld), Carlton, Collingwood, Essendon, Footscray, Geelong Cats, Gold Coast Suns (Qld), GWS Giants (NSW), North Melbourne, Richmond, Sydney Swans (NSW), Sandringham, Box Hill Hawks and Casey Demons.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events Martin Pakula

"Our VFL clubs were battered financially last year and that's why it's important that we support them as they confront the significant costs of playing in a multi-state competition and providing a COVIDSafe environment."

"This new competition will help more players to reach the AFL and boost the standard of football for the many passionate fans who love to watch their teams play in the VFL."

Quote attributable to AFL Head of Talent Pathways and State Leagues Tristan Salter

"VFL clubs have been pillars in Victorian football and their local communities for many years and this assistance gives our clubs the best opportunity to flourish again after a challenging 2020."

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