



FERNTREE GULLY EAGLES JUNIOR FOOTBALL CLUB

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS MARCH 2010

PURPOSE

To provide an outline and description of programs/activities that the *Ferntree Gully Eagles Junior Football Club* (the Junior Football Club) has been involved in that has had a positive impact on the community.

BACKGROUND

It is the belief of the Junior Football Club that it has developed partnerships within key stakeholders (and the community more broadly) to ensure that other groups benefit from the programs/activities undertaken.

These partnerships have contributed to the Junior Football Club's ongoing attempt to strengthen and achieve its Mission Statement of "Providing a safe social and sporting environment to families and the local community"; improved and strengthened its positive reputation; and contributed to the ever increasing positive morale and achievements around the Junior Football Club. We believe that the playing of Australian Rules Football is the reason we come together as a club, however we also acknowledge the importance of creating and building a family friendly environment. A greater sense of 'belonging' has been nurtured within a welcoming and accepting environment. The Junior Football Club has a strong base upon which to grow and sustain any change, including a very strong group of people willing to help, innovate, and volunteer as required.

PARTNERSHIPS

This section will demonstrate practical examples, however it is important to note that they are not mutually exclusive under the category in which they appear – rather there are significant overlaps between them. The strategies and examples outlined collectively contribute to the increased offering of opportunities for families and individuals at all ages and levels of competition to participate in sport. They open doors to and increase patronage generally by new and emerging communities, people with disabilities, and women; build upon the 'family friendly and family focussed' approach; and comply with increasing legislative and practical requirements.

1. Partnerships within the community:

- **Sudanese community** – In an attempt to assist with the integration of new arrivals to Australia, the Junior Football Club met with the Sudanese Community Leaders to ascertain their interest in their children being involved in local Australian Rules football. Plans included the provision of funding to assist with registration costs and equipment needs such as boots and clothing; transportation to training and games; and extra tuition to learn the rules of the game. Whilst the Sudanese Community Leaders were appreciative of the offer, they expressed their interest in being involved with soccer instead of Australian Rules football. To this end, and with the assistance of a local Member of Parliament, the Junior Football Club set out to arrange a link with a local Soccer Club. A team of young Sudanese players was formed and they were introduced to the Summer Soccer Competition played every Wednesday night. The Junior Football Club was invited to attend to watch and every opportunity was provided to this group to become involved in Soccer and local sport.
- **Sri Lankan Community** – The local Sri Lankan Community has made contact with our club seeking our interest in helping them arrange a ‘round robin’ Soccer tournament to be played out of the Junior Football Club ground. The Junior Football Club agreed with the arrangement, and although the tournament did not eventuate, the Sri Lankan Community are aware that they will be welcome to approach the club once again in the future.
- **Anti-Cancer Council fundraising** – The Junior Football Club has each year raised funds for the anti-cancer foundation. This has taken the form of collections by each team as well as on game-day with all clubs playing at our ‘Home Ground’ contributing. In 2009, the Junior Football Club, in addition to the collection, added the proceeds from the Sunday Night Player Awards dinner. This was a wonderful result by the Junior Football Club and well worth the energy and effort.
- **Disability community** – The Junior Football Club has actively assisted some players who have disabilities (intellectual disabilities and mental health issues mainly) to play football. The Committee then actively sought to support the Coach in their training of the player concerned and sought assistance from organisations and groups with the expertise to help understand the condition. Other people with physical disabilities have been able to assist in supporting the teams via other roles such as drinks persons, team mascots, and canteen support.
- **Women in football** – The Junior Football Club actively participates in the Ladies Of The East (L.O.T.E.); has appointed a female Coach; welcomes girls to play in teams in the non-competitive years; involves female relatives of players to be Runners, Trainers, Drinks Carriers, Boundary Umpires, and Team Managers.
- **Local Community Festivals** – The Junior Football Club participated in the Knox Festival in February 2010. Representatives of the Junior and Senior football clubs together applied for a marquee section providing children with an opportunity to participate in free activities and learn more about the history of our Club. Our affiliated Superules Teams was also represented; and information was able to be provided to people who asked about Auskick. It is envisaged that the Auskick and Netball Clubs will also be involved in such events in the future.

- **Links to local schools** – The Club’s Strategic Plan includes strengthening links with local schools. In 2010, a link with a local secondary school has resulted in the Junior Football Club welcoming and supporting players of Aboriginal background.
- **Links beyond the local area** – In 2010, some members of the Junior Football Club have spoken about developing in-kind support to communities less fortunate than our own overseas – one such group may include donations of sporting goods and materials to Fiji. Whilst the thinking on this activity is still emerging, the intent and goodwill to follow-through exists.

2. Relationships with other sports within the community:

- **Senior Football Club** – A formal link between the Junior Football and Senior Football Clubs was established in 2005 allowing for a smoother transition and pathway for all players. This also allows for the multi-use of facilities; decrease duplication; and improve the ground/facilities utilisation rate.
- **Cricket Clubs** – The establishment of regular liaison with the Cricket Club has also allowed for greater consolidation of the sharing of, and improvement to, resources. One example of this approach is the three way purchase of a synthetic pitch between local Government, the Cricket Club and the Junior Football Club. All that use the oval throughout the year can now enjoy the freedom without fear of injury with the previously exposed concrete cricket pitch.
- **Auskick** – Every year for the past seven (7) years, two Auskick Clinics in the Ferntree Gully area (Kent Park Eagles Auskick and St. John the Baptist Auskick) have come together for a day to play grid games during the half-time break of the Senior Football Club. On this day, members of the Senior Football Club, Junior Football Club, and both Auskick clinics attend making it a fun filled day for all members, families and children alike. The Junior Football Club has a role titled ‘Auskick Liaison’ specifically there to facilitate and co-ordinate the links between the respective clubs. The Junior Football Club has also arranged sausage sizzles and players during Auskick activities. Representatives of the Junior Football Club have also assisted with Auskick break-up functions at the end of the year. In 2010, it is planned that a ‘round-robin’ of multiple Auskick clinics (up to 10 or eleven clinics) be held on a Saturday at the Ferntree Gully Reserve on a day that the seniors host a home game – a partnership between Auskick Regional Co-ordinator, the Senior Football Club and the Junior Football Club.
- **Hosting Eastern Football League (EFL) Junior and Senior Football Finals** – The Junior Football Club has hosted EFL Junior finals for the past two (2) years, and in 2009 hosted the EFL Junior Grand Finals. In 2009, the Senior Football Club also hosted EFL Senior Division 4 finals for the very first time. Links by both Clubs were made with the EFL, Victoria Police, Country Fire Authority (CFA), and local businesses that made the finals the success that they were. The Junior and Senior Football Clubs joined together to help each other during this very busy period, pooling their collective resources and experiences.
- **SuperRules and Masters** – The Junior Football Club together with the Senior Football Club arranged for the transfer of the Australian Rules Football Superules Team from one location to our grounds in Ferntree Gully. This allowed the team

to play out of one ground whilst the Junior Football Teams played out of the Senior Ground. Many families and children were involved at the Superules games and a friendly family environment was created on game day.

- **Netball Club** – In 2009, the Junior Football Club together with the Senior Football Club has commenced to negotiate a formal ‘Agreement’ of association with a local Netball Club. It is intended that this association will increase the base of support for all the Clubs which will include boys, girls, adult males, adult females, families and the wider community. It will also allow for greater integration and sharing of resources within the local government boundaries.

3. Relationships with local government:

- **Facility upgrades** – At the Annual General Meeting of the Junior Football Club in September 2008, a motion was accepted whereby it was agreed that focussed attention and funding was required on the development of one facility at Ferntree Gully Reserve instead of two (the other being at the Junior Ground, Pickett Reserve). This approach has improved relationships amongst the stakeholders in particular local government; reduced the potential cost to local government; foreshadowed greater cost sharing opportunities; and subsequently reduced costs in management, repairs and maintenance.
- **Strategic Plan** – The Junior Club together with the Senior Football Club have established regular dialogue with local government, councillors and other stakeholders with a view to co-ordinating and developing co-operative relationships to improve the facilities at Ferntree Gully Reserve. This joint approach will result in very significant changes and improvements that will benefit the whole community who use the reserve including the holding of community festivals at the reserve. Improvements include security lighting, upgrade to facilities for the disabled, and greater facilities for women involved in sport (either playing or officiating).
- **Policies and procedures** – The Junior Football Club complies with all necessary policies and procedures which are clearly written and communicated on the club website, weekly newsletters, and club registration/orientation days. The policies are also adhered by the Club Executive and General Committee.

4. Attracting Sponsorship:

- **Portfolio roles** – The Junior Football Club has a role specifically dedicated to attracting, managing, supporting and communicating with sponsors. A ‘sponsor’s package’ has also been developed which outlines the type of sponsorships available and cost involved. A list is developed each year as to the projects the Junior Football Club wishes to undertake and the sponsors are allocated to a particular project that has been funded by them. Sponsors then understand what their sponsorship has been used; members can see where the money has been spent; and a greater level of transparency is achieved. All sponsors are listed in the Club rooms; on our website; and in the weekly electronic newsletters. We also aim to hold a sponsor’s evening so that sponsors can meet with each other, develop their own networks, and for the Junior Football Club to express its thanks to them for their ongoing support.

5. Fundraising activities:

- **Club activities and events** – Many activities are arranged that include – Registration Day; Orientation Day; Sunday Night Player Awards Nights; Coaches Auction; Trivia Nights; Annual Dinner Dance; Under 16's farewell function; and Presentation Day. Some of these activities raise funds for the Club, other events the Club arranges free of charge to members (and in some instances free of charge to the general community) which focuses on general club morale.

6. Grants and Funding:

- **Portfolio roles** – The Junior Football Club has developed portfolio roles specifically targeted at the application of funds and grants at all levels. All applications are co-ordinated via one person and the Club Executive and General Committee. Success of applications sits currently at 20% of all applications we submit.

7. Promoting the Club within the community:

- **Presentation Day activities** – Each year for the past five (5) years, the Junior Football Club has arranged a free day of rides, amusements and fireworks to celebrate the end of season Presentation Day. The day is advertised to the local community via letterbox drop and everyone is invited to participate in the celebrations – whether or not they are members of the club. The invitation is also extended to, and advertised in, local primary and secondary school newsletters/bulletins. The day is sponsored by local business community and promoted as such.
- **Communication strategy** – The promoting and marketing strategy is multi-layered which includes a website (www.ferntreegullyeagles.com.au); weekly electronic newsletters; news updates on the 'Home' page of the website; participation in the yearly 'Coach of the Year Awards' to recognise and demonstrate our appreciation to our Coaches; development of a new letterhead that outlines awards received; development of new generic club business cards; development of a clearly articulated 'Sponsors Package'; submissions to local Primary and secondary schools newsletters; and participating in media releases as requested by local government and the EFL, or as arranged by the Club.

8. Creating a healthy environment within the football club:

- **Emotional wellbeing** – Members and family members come together to celebrate events; however we have had the unfortunate circumstance of two fathers/parents (totally unrelated) dying within the space of two weeks of each other. This created a difficult emotional period within the club and fundraising events were held to assist the grieving spouses/partners in their care of the children. The Junior Football Club also undertook to assist these parents with waiving of fees and assistance with the purchase of required clothing and footwear as agreed.
- **Food and beverages** – The Junior Club complies with all food and beverage handling policies including Responsible Serving of Alcohol (RSA); smoke-free

- policies; healthy eating with the introduction of a caterer on Sunday night Award Nights (ie: not just hot dogs – rather pastas, beef and vegetables, rice, stir fries).
- **Physical wellbeing** - The Junior Club has co-ordinated education programs that have included the Senior Football Club specifically targeted to player welfare and development. An example of this was the training provided to all Coaches and Team Trainers by a local Physiotherapist on player wellbeing, injury prevention, and injury management.
 - **Portfolio roles** – In 2009, the Junior Football Club established a ‘Player Welfare and Development’ role which has been filled. The activities planned for 2010 includes education sessions on Alcohol use and abuse; Bouncing Racism Out Of Sport; and identifying and managing Mental Health issues that may arise. Some of the education activities will be directed at older Junior Players which will include invitations to the Senior Club and our affiliated other clubs such as the Netball Club.

9. Attracting and supporting umpires:

- **Encouragement** – The Junior Football Club encourages players and parents to join the ranks of umpires as requested and advertised by the Eastern Football League. So much so that we have had two parents and four players experience umpiring over the last two seasons. We have also approached some umpires and asked if they would like to play football – whilst also maintaining their umpiring responsibilities.
- **Code Of Conduct** – The Junior Football Club has a clear code of conduct for all players, officials, family members and spectators – which also include respectful discussions with umpires. Specific sessions are arranged as required with specific teams throughout the year to emphasise the code of conduct as identified.

CONCLUSION

Local Government together with the Eastern Football League have expressed their satisfaction with the direction taken by the Junior Football Club. The Junior Football Club believes that not only has it been able to create strong and healthy local links, but also extended beyond the local community to assist with broader community causes both within the area and beyond. The Junior Football Club believes that the activities have strongly contributed to the positive image and promotion of the Club. The Junior Football Club also has a strong commitment to a process of Continual Quality Improvement (CQI) and build upon the gains already achieved. This CQI will take place as part of the Club’s Strategic Plan Review process on an annual basis.

This document was unanimously endorsed as a true and accurate record at the 1 March 2010 *Ferntree Gully Eagles Junior Football Club* General Committee Meeting.

Ferntree Gully Eagles Junior Football Club
Executive Committee
March 2010