



FEMALE FOOTBALL FUTURE DIRECTION REVIEW

JULY, 2010

**Review conducted for AFL Victoria
By David Code**

INDEX	PAGE
1. Female Football Future Direction Review	
a) Background	3
b) Terms of Reference	3
c) Consultation Process	4
2. Executive Summary and Key Recommendations	5
3. Explanation of Key Recommendations	8
4. Female Football in Victoria	
a) The VWFL	16
b) Youth Girls Competition	19
c) Other Female Participation	20
5. Implementation of Key Recommendations	23
6. Appendices:	
i) AFL Victoria Female Football Structure 2010 & 2011	26
ii) AFL Victoria Female Football Structure 2012	27
iii) VWFL Club and Youth Girls Team Links – Premier Division	28
iv) VWFL Club and Youth Girls Team Links - South East Conference	29
v) VWFL Club and Youth Girls Team Links - North West Conference	30
vi) VWFL Club and Youth Girls Team Links - Youth Girls Teams without a VWFL Club Link	31

FEMALE FOOTBALL FUTURE DIRECTION REVIEW

a) Background

In Victoria, girls and women and participate in football at a range of age and competition levels. Girls can participate in Auskick, and in mixed primary school and junior competitions to the age of 14. As adolescents, girls can then participate in secondary school competitions and AFL Victoria's Youth Girls (13 – 18 years old) competitions. The Victorian Women's Football League (VWFL) then provides competition for women.

The VWFL has been in existence since 1981, and in 2010, is celebrating 30 years of managing senior women's football competitions in Victoria. The VWFL has grown steadily over the years. In 2010 the League comprises of 21 clubs, fielding 29 open age teams in four competitions – Premier and Premier Reserves Divisions, and the North West, and South East Conferences.

In late November 2009, AFL, AFL Victoria and VWFL representatives met to discuss a range of issues impacting on the future of female football, the VWFL, and its affiliated clubs. An outcome of the meeting was that all parties agreed that a review of female football in Victoria was required with a key focus being the VWFL. The VWFL pledged its support to the review with all parties agreeing to work collaboratively to achieve positive outcomes for female football in Victoria.

b) Terms of Reference

The Review terms of reference were as follows:

1. Appraise and conduct an overall review of Female Football in Victoria
2. Develop recommendations to address the key issues for the future development of female football from Auskick to open age competitions in Victoria, including talent.
3. Investigate and review the issues impacting on the future of the VWFL and its affiliated clubs.
4. Investigate and provide options for the development and management of AFLV's Youth Girls Competitions.
5. Communicate with relevant stakeholders in Metropolitan and Country Regions.
6. Identify barriers that will potentially restrict the growth of females playing football and provide recommendations to overcome these barriers

c) Consultation Process

In conducting the Review, consultations were conducted with the following who are thanked for their input:

- VWFL Executive
- Six VWFL club consultation meetings (19 of 22 clubs attended)
- AFL Manager – Female Football Development
- Member of the VWFL Strategic Advisory Group
- Attendees at a Youth Girls Football forum
- General Manager Dandenong and District Junior Football League
- General Manager Northern Football League
- General Manager Southern Football League
- Chief Executive Officer Eastern Football League
- AFL Victoria Northern Region Development Manager
- AFL Victoria. Female Football Development Manager
- Former VWFL Operations Manager
- AFL Victoria Auskick Manager
- AFL Victoria Umpiring Development Manger
- Chief Executive Officer, and Game Development Manager, Netball Australia
- Game Development Manager Cricket Victoria
- Victorian Country Football League Operations Manager
- AFL Victoria Geelong Region Development Manager
- AFL Victoria Chief Executive Officer and Operations Manager

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The AFL, and its State affiliates, identify significant benefits in providing opportunities for girls and women to engage with, and participate in, Australian football.

AFL Victoria has made significant progress in recent years in increasing female playing participation at all levels with census data indicating approximately 16,000 female participants in 2004 (the first year of full female participation data collection) increasing to approximately 25,500 in 2009, representing a 60% increase in 5 years.

The review focussed on the following key areas of female football in Victoria

1. The overall strategic management of female football in Victoria
2. The competition structure of the VWFL
3. The management of AFL Victoria's Girls Youth competition and its relationship to other female football activities
4. Delivery of AFL Victoria's female football development programs

Many positives were highlighted during the review process including the pioneering work of the VWFL, the success of the Youth Girls competition in providing access to the game for adolescent girls, the talent and success of Victorian female representative teams, and, the growth in female participation in Auskick, school and mixed junior football competitions.

The review process identified that with the increased participation in female football, the limited resources available to the VWFL and its clubs, and the potential for a national female competition, that it is an opportune time to consider changes to female football structures and management in order to build on the successes to date, and, to position the sport in Victoria to take advantage of future opportunities in female football.

It is important that AFL Victoria develops a strategic plan to guide the development of female football given its growing significance in the football market. It is also considered essential that AFL Victoria allocate more resources to female football in recognition of its participation growth and development opportunities.

While football clubs have traditionally been viewed as masculine territory, the participation of women and girls is increasing, particularly in non-traditional roles such as umpiring and coaching. It will be important that football environments at all levels are safe, inclusive and female friendly. As the achievements of the Fair Game, Respect Matters program presently being piloted in the Northern and Essendon Football Leagues are delivered, it is critical that the learnings are transferred to other leagues across Victoria

A guiding principle that has strongly influenced the review recommendations is the belief that female football will develop more successfully if integrated into existing community football structures, rather than operating in stand alone structures. Integration with existing structures will provide greater profile for female football through improving connections and exposure with community football, and will provide enhanced management capacity for female football through better long term access to the resources and facilities of community leagues.

Furthermore, governments prefer to deal with one State controlling body for each sport – not separate male and female bodies. Cricket, soccer, and bowls are examples of sports which have, or are endeavouring to integrated the men’s and women’s structures.

The integration of female football will result in the VWFL ceasing to operate which should not be viewed as a criticism of women’s football or of the efforts of the VWFL, but rather as an opportunity to provide benefits for women’s football through closer links with existing community football and AFL Victoria structures. It is important that the achievements of the VWFL are acknowledged and celebrated by the football community prior to the closing of the League .

The Youth Girls competition has been a great success since its inception and the benefits of this competition must now be transferred to women’s football through a concerted effort to improve the linkages between VWFL clubs and Youth Girls teams.

Key Recommendations

1. AFL Victoria’s female football vision and strategy

That AFL Victoria uses the content of this Female Football Review as the basis for the preparation of a collaboratively developed vision and strategy plan to guide the long term development of female football in Victoria.

2. Structure of women’s football competitions

2.1 That AFL Victoria collaborates with the VWFL to integrate the VWFL Conference competitions into existing community football structures for the 2012 season.

2.2 That AFL Victoria collaborates with the VWFL with the aim of AFL Victoria having responsibility for the conduct of the VWFL Premier and Reserves Divisions from 2012 onwards.

3. Youth Girls competitions

3.1 That AFL Victoria continues to integrate the Youth Girls competitions into existing community football league structures.

3.2 That AFL Victoria collaborates with the VWFL and Youth Girls teams to ensure that all VWFL clubs have a direct and effective alignment with at least one Youth Girls team, and that all Youth Girls teams have a link with a VWFL club.

4. Female Football Committee

That AFL Victoria establishes a Female Football Committee to assist with the strategic planning of female football in Victoria.

5. AFL Victoria female football development

That AFL Victoria allocates additional resources to female football development through the appointment of an additional Female Football Development Officer and the expansion of region development operations to include female football development.

3. EXPLANATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Key Recommendation 1

AFL Victoria's female football vision and strategy

That AFL Victoria uses the content of this Female Football Review as the basis for the preparation of a collaboratively developed vision and strategy plan to guide the long term development of female football in Victoria.

Explanation:

- a) Female football in Victoria continues to grow with participation numbers increasing from 16,000 players in 2004 to 25,560 in 2009 as a result of the great efforts of all stakeholders in developing female football in Victoria.
- b) AFL Victoria engages in varying degrees with key female football stakeholders such as the VWFL, Youth Girls team personnel, community football groups, school sport Associations, and relevant Auskick operators.
- c) An opportunity exists for AFL Victoria, with the increasing interest in female football by the football industry, to work collaboratively with all stakeholders to develop a vision and strategy for the ongoing development of female football.
- d) This review, and its recommendations, essentially provide a plan for structural change in female football in 2011 and 2012 and should form the basis of the collaboration, and strategy development, for the period beyond 2012.
- e) Furthermore , it is strategically important for the long term future of the game to expand playing opportunities for women and girls at regional, state and national levels. 2008 participation data indicated that female soccer participation far outweighed female participation in Australian football. Many of today's female players are the mums of the future and it is only natural these mums will select the sports they are familiar with for their children to play. Based on the current figures the next generation of Mums is far more likely to be steering their children towards soccer.
- f) It is further recommended that the AFL Victoria Board gives consideration to the recruitment of a female Board member with appropriate skills and experience to provide a female perspective to strategy development.

Key Recommendation 2

Women's football competitions

- 2.1 That AFL Victoria collaborates with the VWFL to integrate the VWFL Conference competitions into existing community football structures for the 2012 season.**

Explanation:

- a) The VWFL is a relatively small league of 21 clubs and 29 teams and does not have the capacity to significantly increase its resource base to provide enhanced services to its under resourced clubs.**
- b) The integration of the VWFL Conference competitions into better resourced community leagues will facilitate enhanced service delivery to the women's clubs and provide an improved profile for female football. It will be essential that male and female teams are treated equally in all aspects of a League's operations and female priorities are not mitigated or neglected in favour of other league issues.**
- c) Integration will also enable women's club administrators to have greater access to league club development programs and provide efficiencies for women's football in relation to facility access, fixturing, umpiring, conduct of tribunals, etc.**
- d) Consultation with community leagues has indicated 'in principle' interest by such leagues in managing women's competitions, if such opportunity was to arise. Based on the current geographic spread of club locations it is recommended that the South East Conference competition be integrated into the Southern or Eastern Football Leagues, and the North West Conference be integrated into the Northern or Western Region Football Leagues.**
- e) Consideration would need to be given to issues of promotion and relegation to and from the Premier competition, the admittance of new teams into the Conference competitions, and even the formation of new women's competitions by community leagues (eg how many teams would be required to form a new competition and what geographic basis would be implemented for new teams to join such competitions conducted by community leagues).**
- f) Whilst the issue of the unevenness of the existing Conference competitions is significant, and the return to graded VWFL Conferences was considered to reduce the unevenness, it is preferable to integrate the Conference**

competitions into community football structures in their current form with the expectation that the competitions will grow and become more even.

2.2 That AFL Victoria collaborates with the VWFL with the aim of AFL Victoria having responsibility for the conduct of the VWFL Premier and Reserves Divisions from 2012 onwards.

Explanation:

- a) The current VWFL Premier Division provides an excellent standard of women's football for its participants and such competition should continue to serve the more talented players.
- b) If the VWFL Conference competitions are integrated into community football leagues for the reasons outlined in the previous recommendation it is not feasible for the VWFL to exist solely to conduct the Premier competition. It is therefore recommended that the Premier Division, including the associated Reserves competition, be conducted by the Football Operations Department of AFL Victoria.
- c) The conduct of the current VWFL Premier Division by AFL Victoria will provide an enhanced status for the competition and be viewed as the 'Women's State League' competition and link effectively with the planned National Women's competition.
- d) The competition will have direct access to all AFL Victoria's competition management resources with the integration of the men's and women's structures. In recent years other sports, eg soccer, cricket, bowls, have moved to implement similar models.
- e) It is envisaged that promotion and relegation between the community based, and AFL Victoria conducted women's competitions will continue to take place, as currently in the VWFL. It is important to recognise that the current composition of the Premier Division may change in future years with the anticipated growth in women's teams in both metropolitan and regional areas. The establishment by the AFL of a National Women's competition in every likelihood would also impact on the structure of the Victorian State/Premier women's competition.
- f) The option of integrating the VWFL clubs into the VFL clubs and forming a women's State league in parallel to the VFL competition, similar to the Western Australian structure, was considered. This model is not

recommended given the relative strength of most of the VWFL Premier Division clubs and uncertainty regarding the desirability of VFL clubs having the added responsibility of female football. Informal links between VFL and VWFL clubs should be encouraged however.

- g) With AFL Victoria managing the women's Premier competition it does present the possibility of a State Youth Girls competition, conducted via a similar regional structure to the TAC Cup, as Youth Girls participation develops over the next 5 – 10 years.

Key Recommendation 3

Youth Girls Competitions

- 3.1 That AFL Victoria continues to integrate the Youth Girls competitions into existing community football league structures.**

Explanation:

- a) Since the inception of the Youth Girls competition AFL Victoria's Female Football Development Manager has managed all aspects of the competition, with the exception that in 2010 the South East competition is being conducted by the Dandenong and District Junior Football League. The AFL Victoria Female Development Officer continues to manage the other five Youth Girls competitions.
- b) The integration of the Youth Girls competitions into community leagues is recommended to continue in order to provide an enhanced profile for female football and to assist the transition for girls from mixed junior football to the Youth Girls competitions. The integration of Youth Girls competitions creates a number of management efficiencies with the girls competition becoming a part of existing league management processes.
- c) Importantly, the integration of the Youth Girls competitions into community leagues will also remove the responsibility for the conduct of the competitions from the AFL Victoria Female Football Development Manager. This will provide an opportunity for the Development Manager to devote more time to the implementation of other development activities.

NOTE: Appendices i) and ii) outline the current structure of female football competition which is to remain unchanged for 2011, and the recommended female football structure in 2012.

- 3.2 That AFL Victoria collaborates with the VWFL and Youth Girls teams to ensure that all VWFL clubs have a direct and effective alignment with at least one Youth Girls team and that all Youth Girls teams have a link with a VWFL club.**

Explanation

- a) The Youth Girls competition has been very successful in growing female participation in football in Victoria with participation in the Youth Girls competition growing from 122 players in 2004 to 686 in 2009 and team numbers in that time growing from four to 39.
- b) One of the important roles of the Youth Girls competition is to provide motivation, and ease of access for graduating Youth Girls competition players into women's teams.
- c) Many of the 39 Youth Girls teams have close linkages with VWFL clubs but some VWFL clubs do not have a link with a Youth Girls team, and in other instances, Youth Girls teams don't have a link with a VWFL club. It is important that all VWFL clubs have a link with a Youth team and where possible all Youth teams have a link with a VWFL club to enhance the movement of players from the Youth competitions to VWFL clubs.
- d) Neither the VWFL, and in many instances its member clubs and Youth Girls clubs, have the resources to develop effective partnerships between VWFL clubs and Youth teams.
- e) The recommendation is for AFL Victoria management to work with the relevant stakeholders to establish preferred linkages between VWFL clubs and Youth Girls teams, to support the formation of such partnerships, establish criteria for VWFL club and Youth Girls linkages, and provide strategies to assist the parties make the linkages effective in increasing the transition of players from the Youth teams to women's clubs.

NOTE: Appendices iii), iv), v), and vi) provide information regarding existing and potential VWFL club and Youth Girls teams links.

Key Recommendation 4

Female Football Committee

That AFL Victoria establishes a Female Football Committee to assist with the strategic planning of female football in Victoria.

Explanation:

- a) If the VWFL ceases to exist a Female Football Committee should be established to provide advice to AFL Victoria on a range of female football matters. The Female Football Committee should consist of appropriately experienced and skilled people with a passion for female sport, and particularly football.
- b) It is proposed that the role of the Female Football Committee will be to:
 - provide female football policy and program guidance,
 - assist in review and planning of female football development strategies,
 - assist AFL Victoria enhance its network in relation to female football, and,
 - provide advice and support to assist the successful integration of the VWFL competitions into existing football structures as outlined in earlier recommendations.

Key Recommendation 5

AFL Victoria Female Football Development

That AFL Victoria allocates additional resources to female football development through the appointment of an additional Female Football Development Officer and the expansion of region development operations to include female football development.

Explanation:

- a) AFL Victoria currently employs a Female Football Development Manager who has a very broad role description with responsibilities across all segments of

female football. The Development Manager has increasing demands from a range of female development programs, but particularly in the management and development of the growing Youth Girls, and school competitions, and talent development activities.

- b) A key issue identified in the development of female football is the development of club volunteers and the provision of support to women's clubs and teams. Many women's teams do not have sufficient volunteer officials to manage all aspects of club or team operations. There are a variety of women's club and team structures – some are stand alone women's clubs, others are a team within either senior or junior male club structures, and others have informal links with other clubs. Additional resources should be applied to the development of women's clubs and teams, whether they operate as part of men's clubs or as stand alone female clubs, to assist their ability to function well, and attract and retain players. Club development has not been adequately performed in the past due to the lack of resources by the VWFL and because it has not been a priority task for the Female Football Development Manager given the extent of other female development activities.
- c) The planned integration of Youth Girls competitions into Community leagues will provide a greater opportunity for the Female Football Development Manager to devote more time to other development programs. Whilst this potential reallocation of duties will broaden the provision of development activities, the growth of interest, and participation in female football, and the current under resourced nature of women's and girls clubs, it is timely for AFL Victoria to employ an additional Female Football Development officer.

The key roles of the additional Female Football Development Officer would be to:

- assist the establishment of new senior women's teams and female football club development
- support the conduct of school development programs and competitions, and develop and implement strategies to assist the transition of the large number of girls playing school football into club football
- assist the establishment of Youth Girls teams and competitions in targeted areas
- implement existing, and develop new strategies to assist the transition of girls from Auskick to junior club, and Youth competition to senior women's teams
- develop effective women's and Youth Girls club connections as outlined in the appendices of this report

- d) Another very important aspect of female development in Victoria is the integration of female development activities into the function of AFL Victoria's region development operations. The current AFL Victoria regional development structure does not have the resources to allow staff to effectively participate in female football development initiatives. In country regions it is recommended that there be an expansion of the operations of region development to include female development. In the metropolitan area it is recommended the region development structure introduced in the northern region be replicated in other metropolitan regions to provide the opportunity for greater focus on female development by region development staff.

4. FEMALE FOOTBALL IN VICTORIA

a) The Victorian Women's Football League

League composition

The VWFL is celebrating its 30th year in 2010, having commenced in 1980, and provides open age female competition. In its initial year the VWFL fielded four teams and has steadily grown in membership to now consist of three Divisions which in 2010 are:

Premier Division – 8 teams

Premier Reserves Division – 8 teams (all Premier Division clubs field a reserves team)

North West Conference – 7 teams (no reserves teams)

South East Conference – 6 teams (no reserves teams)

In 2010, the VWFL comprises 21 clubs fielding 29 teams as follows:

Premier/Reserves	North West Conference	South East Conference
Darebin	Sunbury	South Mornington
East Burwood	Lalor Park	Parkdale
Diamond Creek	LaTrobe Uni.	Hallam
St. Albans	Nth. Ballarat	St. Johns Old Collegians
Scoresby	Bell Post Hill	Keysborough
Melbourne Uni.	Melton Centrals	Gembrook
St.Kilda City	Braybrook	

Governance and Management

The VWFL is governed by a seven member Executive elected by the league members (clubs) with each Executive member elected for a two year term. The Executive is widely respected by the member clubs for the contribution each Executive member makes to the management of the league, in a voluntary capacity, and often whilst fulfilling commitments with member clubs.

In 2009, for the first time, the league, with the financial assistance of AFL Victoria, employed a part time administrator and in 2010 moved from the part time administrator to employing a full time manager.

As the league has evolved the Executive has really been a management group as there was no employed management support. Now, with a full time league manager, the Executive is aiming to become more strategic in its approach and delegate many of the operational tasks to the manager.

It is also important to note that many league members indicated that a perception exists within the league of conflict of interest in some decision making by the Executive as many of the Executive have active roles with member clubs. The Executive denies that any of its decisions are affected by club loyalties, but none the less, the perception exists. This issue highlights the need for an independent Board/Executive.

Competition structure

The structure of the VWFL competitions received significant comment from club stakeholders during the consultation process. Key issues raised were the unevenness of the competitions and travel for the country clubs. Uneven competition is a huge disincentive in sport participation particularly in developing sports and sections of sports that don't recruit and retain participants easily.

All three Divisions of the VWFL are very uneven and have been for sometime. At the approximate mid point of the 2010 VWFL season the unevenness of the VWFL competitions is demonstrated by the following:

At the time of writing, in the South East conference the top two teams have a percentage greater than 1000 and the bottom three teams a percentage of less than 30. In the North West Conference the top two teams have a percentage of greater than 500 and the bottom team a percentage of less than two. In the Premier Division the top team has a percentage of greater than 600 and the bottom team less than 35.

Whilst there is a degree of inevitably in sporting competitions being uneven, uneven competitions are unhealthy for competition and player participation. Action, such as support for the more lowly clubs or changes to aspects of the player transfer regulations, is required to make the Premier competition more competitive so that more clubs feel they have a chance of winning the premiership.

Significant comment was also made concerning the unevenness of the geographically based North West and South East Conferences. The VWFL previously conducted graded divisions. The change to geographic Conferences was made to reduce travel for competing clubs. Many

respondents suggested the return to graded divisions to provide more even competition and better preparation for clubs seeking promotion to Premier Division.

Finance

The VWFL has been very well financially managed and at the end of the 2008 – 2009 financial period had a net cash position of approximately \$140k. The league has no fixed assets and the league manager is located at AFL Victoria's headquarters having previously been located at the Western Region Football League offices. Prudent financial management and a generous benefactor in recent years have been important in the accumulation of the reserve funds. A challenge for the league is to decide how best to use these reserves for the benefit of the member clubs.

Umpiring

All VWFL matches are umpired by a panel of umpires who are registered with the VWFL but whose primary umpiring registration is with another community League's umpires' Association. The umpires generally umpire in their community league on a Saturday, then in the VWFL on a Sunday. The VWFL has 35 registered umpires and aim to appoint 2 field umpires to each game and goal umpires to Premier Division matches.

The AFL Victoria umpiring development staff have worked with the VWFL Umpiring Co-ordinator and Youth Girls teams to identify and develop potential female umpires with the aim of these umpires umpiring in the Youth Girls competitions and then progressing to VWFL match umpiring.

At times, conflicts do occur, eg at finals time, regarding the availability of umpires for VWFL matches due the umpires' commitments with their community league. The VWFL indicated this was a frustration and expressed the desire to establish its own umpires' Association. If the VWFL was to continue to operate in the medium to long term further efforts should be made to continue to recruit female umpires to the competition and to improve the umpiring. If umpiring numbers in the competition grow consideration could then be given to establishing an umpires' Association.

AFL club support

AFL club support for female football in Victoria has grown with the Melbourne FC sponsoring the league, Hawthorn sponsoring the Berwick FC, North Melbourne sponsoring Melbourne University and conducting an

academy program for 9 – 14 yo girls, and Essendon supporting the conduct of the AFL Victoria Academy program.

b) AFL Victoria's Youth Girls Competitions

The Youth Girls Competition has been an outstanding success in providing access to the game for adolescent girls. The Youth Girls competition commenced in 2004 with six teams and 120 participants and now has six competitions with 39 teams and approximately 700 participants.

2010 Youth Girls Competitions

Eastern	Geelong	Northern
Kew Rovers	Drysdale	Darebin
East Malvern	Barwon Heads	Lalor Stars
Chirnside Park	Leopold	Jacana
East Burwood	Clonard College	Diamond Creek U15s
Seville	South Barwon	Diamond Creek U18s
St. Simons	Sacred Heart	Wallan
		Keon Park
		St. Damiens

Western	DDJFL (South East)	Bendigo
Melton Bloods	Cranbourne	Eaglehawk
Mercy College	Hampton Park	Marong
Old Westbourne	Narre South	North Bendigo
St. Albans	Narre Warren	Huntly
Melbourne University	Noble Park	
Altona	Berwick	
Wyndham Vale	Dandenong Saints	
Sunbury		

Youth Girls competition issues include:

- The management of the competitions by local leagues rather than AFL Victoria to provide integration benefits for female football and to and allow a refocussing of the duties of AFL Victoria's Female Football Development Manager
- Enhancing the awareness of female participants in mixed junior football and secondary school football regarding the Youth Girls competitions, and the development and implementation of strategies to improve the transition of players from mixed junior competitions and school football to the Youth Girls competitions

- Developing links between all Youth Girls teams and VWFL clubs
- Targeting the future growth of Girls Youth teams both in areas that currently have demand for youth girls football, but also in areas where participation is low, and where there may be a women's club but no 'feeder' Youth Girls team.
- Establishment of additional Youth competitions, particularly in regional centres such as Ballarat, Shepparton, Wodonga, Gippsland.

c) Other Female Participation

The collection of data for female participation has developed over the years with participation in all program segments first recorded in 2007. Female participation in Auskick, mixed junior competitions, and school football in 2007 – 2009 is as follows:

	2007	2008	2009
Auskick	2,627	3,227	3,862
Primary School Girls comps.	1,500	2,050	2,350
Primary School Mixed comps.	2,993	2,805	3,120
Secondary School Girls comps.	13,400	12,700	13,850

Girl's involvement in Auskick

The number of girls participating in Victorian Auskick programs is growing steadily and in the three years in which female participants have been able to be accurately quantified, participation has grown from 2,627 in 2007 to 3,862 in 2010. The national average for female participation in Auskick is approximately 15% which is approximately double that of Victoria. There are differences in Auskick structures across states, eg mid week school based programs compared to Victoria's predominantly weekend community style Auskick programs that are considered to contribute to the levels of girl participation.

AFL Victoria has introduced a number of initiatives to increase the number of girls playing Auskick. They include;

- a girl's Auskick recruitment poster
- Youth Girl competition and Academy members attending Auskick centres
- a girls super clinic during school holidays
- Level 1 female coaching subsidy

- correspondence to female participants in Auskick outlining pathway opportunities for girls and encouraging re-registration in Auskick or registration in junior competitions

Talent development

A variety of opportunities exist for talent female footballers in Victoria. In summary the talent pathway is:

- North Melbourne FC Female Academy (ages 9 – 14)
- Victorian Secondary Schools Girls Team (U16)
- AFL Victoria Youth Girls Metro. and Country Championships
- AFL Victoria Youth Girls Academy (U18)
- Victorian Under 18 Youth Girls Team
- Victorian Country and Metro. Representative Teams
- VWFL Academy
- Senior Victorian Representative team

The talent programs are evolving as female football develops in Victoria and Nationally and participation numbers and the profile of the sport grow.

The VWFL and AFL Victoria allocate significant resources to the talent programs which are important in attracting and retaining participants to the sport as well as improving the standard of female football.

Opportunities exist for the development of the talent programs in the future with the possibility of a National women's competition, the emergence of a state league competition with the Premier competition being conducted by AFL Victoria, an increase in Youth Girls competition representative matches and maybe, some years away, a TAC Cup style youth girls competition. The development of the Female Football strategic plan per Recommendation 1 should also consider an increased role for AFL Victoria central and region talent development personnel in the female talent programs.

Fair Game Respect Matters Program

As participation of women's and girls in football grows it will be important that learnings from the Fair Game Respect Matters program presently being piloted in the Northern Football League and Essendon District Football League are eventually transferred to other leagues. Regardless of whether female participants are involved in a women's only club, or at a men's football club, it is critical that they feel safe and

included, and are encouraged to take on roles, traditionally performed by men, in coaching and umpiring.

A major issue raised in the Fair Game Respect Matters program research focussed on the poor facilities available to women, particularly the lack of appropriate showers and change rooms, noting such facilities were designed at a time when women didn't play football. Another area of concern was related to alcohol consumption in club rooms. Whilst acknowledging the importance on bar sales income for many senior clubs research from the program has indicated that heavy drinking can often create a sense of unease amongst women and children.

Despite recent growth in participation of women in football, this market segment is relatively untapped. As this emerging market grows it will be important for women to be valued for their participation whether on-field, or off-field, and not be treated inappropriately by sections of the football community.

5. IMPLEMENTATION OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Key Recommendation 1

That AFL Victoria uses the content of this Female Football Review as the basis for the preparation of a collaboratively developed vision and strategy plan to guide the long term development of female football in Victoria.

- AFL Victoria Board agrees to the recommendation
- AFL Victoria management allocates resources to establish and coordinate the process of preparing the strategy plan including stakeholder collaboration.
- A working party established to review the consultation feedback from the stakeholder collaboration and to develop the vision and strategy for female football in Victoria.
- Process to be completed by December, 2010.

Key Recommendations 2.1 and 2.2

2.1 That AFL Victoria collaborates with the VWFL to integrate the VWFL Conference competitions into existing community football structures for the 2012 season.

- AFL Victoria Board agrees to the recommendation.
- AFL Victoria management collaboratively seeks the support of the VWFL for the integration of its Conference competitions into community leagues.
- AFL Victoria establishes a steering committee including VWFL representatives to assist the transitional process and arrangements.
- AFL Victoria determines into which community leagues the VWFL Conference competitions will integrate.

and

2.2 That AFL Victoria collaborates with the VWFL with the aim of AFL Victoria having responsibility for the conduct of the VWFL Premier and Reserves Divisions from 2012 onwards.

- AFL Victoria Board agrees to the recommendation.
- AFL Victoria management collaboratively seeks the support of the VWFL for the integration of the Premier Division competitions into AFL Victoria operations, and the 'winding up' of the VWFL at the completion of the 2011 season.

- AFL Victoria establishes a steering committee including VWFL representatives to assist the transitional process and arrangements and preparation of a plan for the integration of the VWFL Premier and Reserves competition into AFL Victoria's operations and the ongoing management and development of the competitions.
- In regard to both Recommendations 3.1 and 3.2, for the remainder of 2010 and during 2011, AFL Victoria management to:
 - assist the VWFL with the process of 'winding up' the organisation.
 - consult extensively with the community leagues into which the Conference competitions will integrate to ensure the leagues fully support the integration process and are committed to supporting the management and development of the women's competition within their league.
 - facilitate AFL Victoria entering into memorandums of agreement with the relevant leagues to assist the successful integration of the Conference competitions.
 - during 2011 support the VWFL in celebrating its achievements in developing and managing women's competitions over the past 30 years

Key Recommendation 3

3.1 That AFL Victoria continues to integrate the Youth Girls competitions into existing community football league structures.

- AFL Victoria Board agrees to the recommendation
- AFL Victoria management determines preferred leagues for the integration of the existing Youth Girls competitions, consults with such leagues, and establishes a plan for the phase in of the integration process for the 2011 and 2012 seasons
- AFL Victoria enters into memorandums of agreement with the relevant leagues to assist the successful integration of the Youth Girls competitions

3.2 That AFL Victoria collaborates with the VWFL and Youth Girls teams to ensure that all VWFL clubs have a direct and effective alignment with at least one Youth Girls team and that all Youth Girls teams have a link with a VWFL club.

- AFL Victoria Board agrees to the recommendation

- AFL Victoria management consults with the VWFL and relevant Youth Girls teams regarding the proposed linkages to determine the feasibility of the linkages
- AFL Victoria management, in consultation with the VWFL and Youth Girls teams, prepares recommended processes and initiatives to enhance the effectiveness of VWFL/Youth Girls teams linkages
- AFL Victoria management plays an ongoing role in facilitating agreed linkages and in assisting all parties to make the linkages effective

Key Recommendation 4

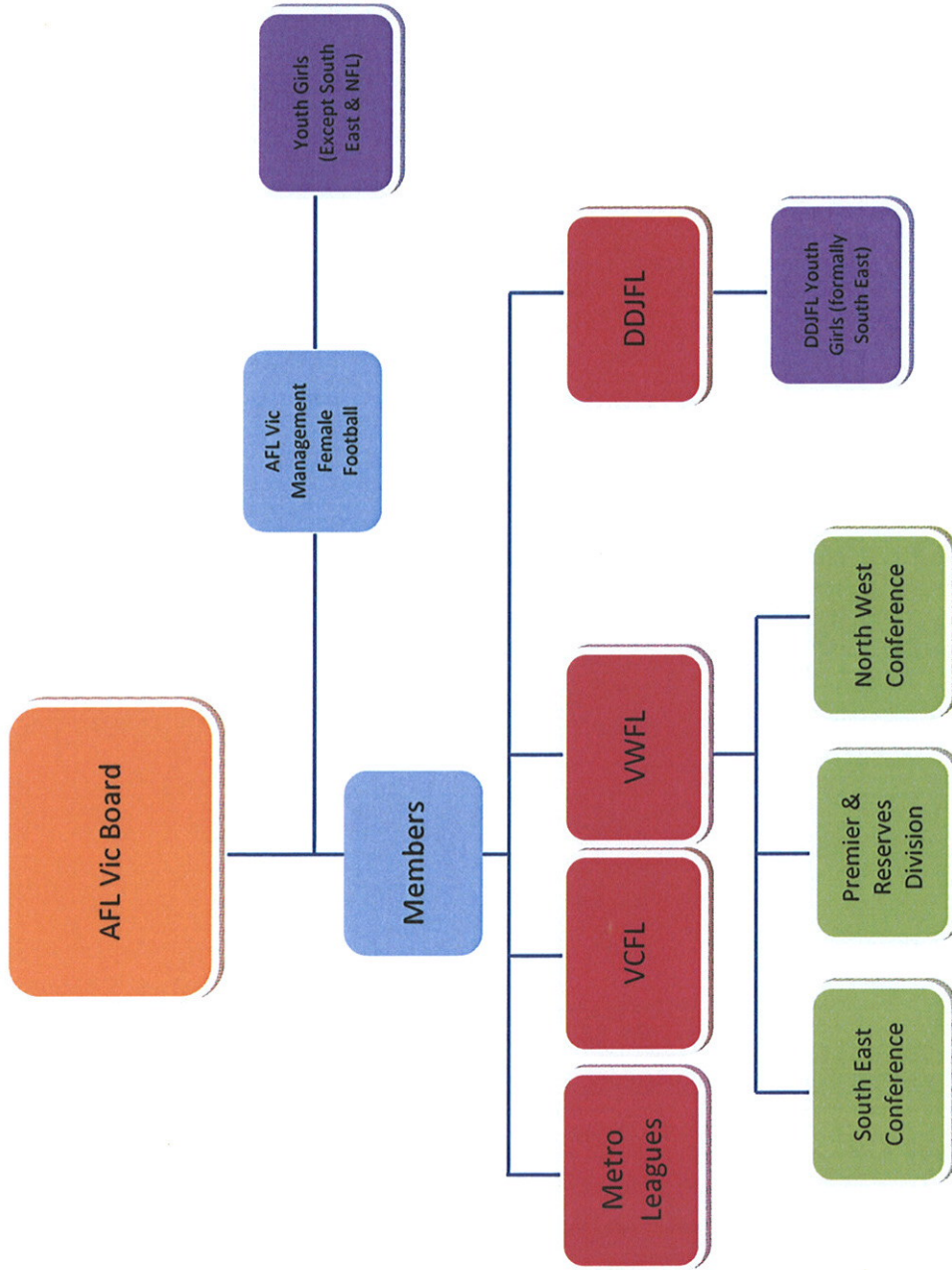
That AFL Victoria establishes a Female Football Committee to assist the development and management of female football in Victoria.

- AFL Victoria Board agrees to the recommendation
- AFL Victoria Management develops the planned role of the Female Football Committee, its responsibilities, and relationships with the AFL Victoria Board, female football groups, etc, and identifies possible Female Football Committee members in readiness for establishment and appointment of the Committee by AFL Victoria in late 2011

Key Recommendation 5:

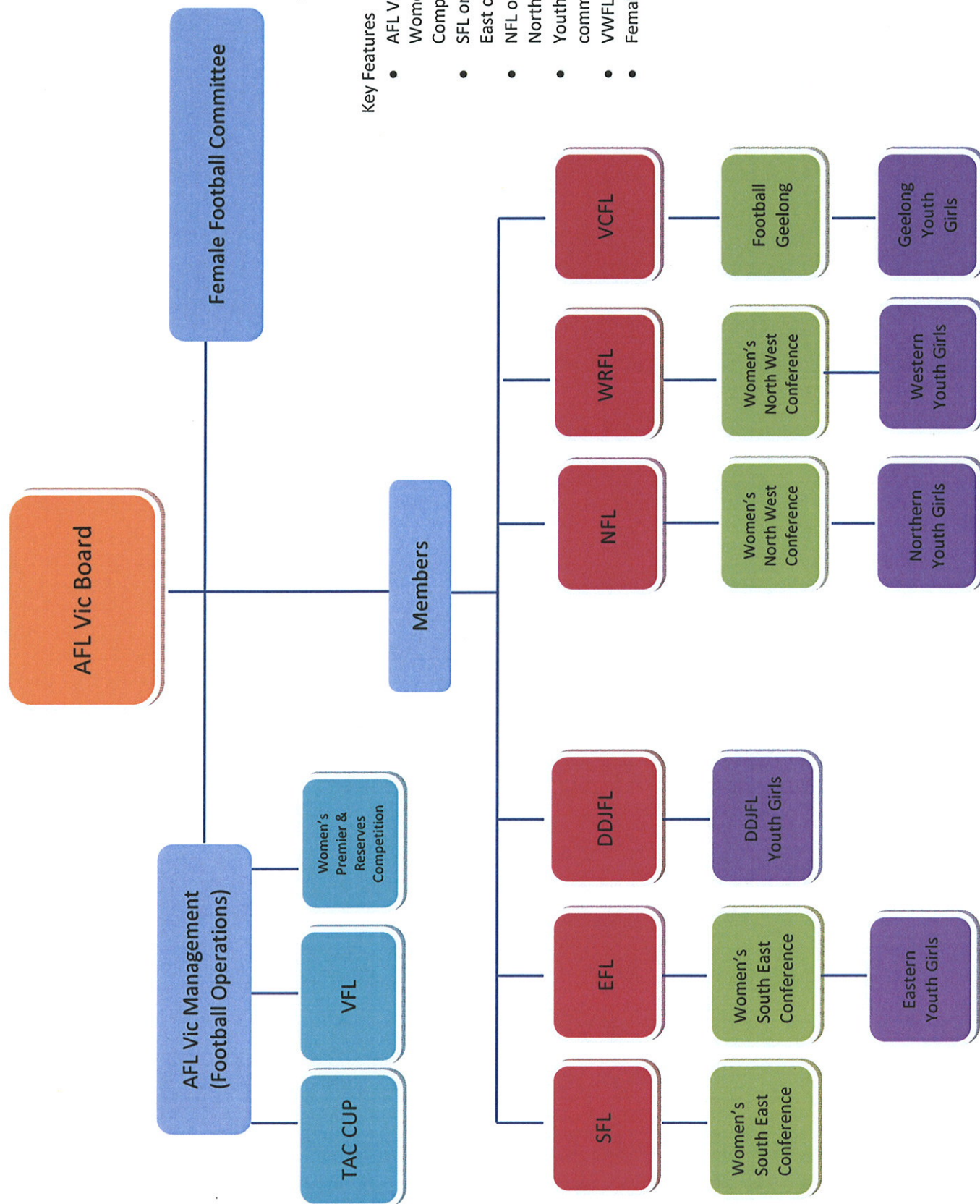
That AFL Victoria allocates additional resources to female football development through the appointment of an additional Female Football Development Officer and the expansion of the operations of region development operations to include female football development.

- AFL Victoria Board agrees to the recommendation
- AFL Victoria management creates a role description as outlined earlier in the report for the additional Female Football Development officer reporting to the female Development Manager.
- AFL Victoria management works with AFL Game Development staff to develop a funding submission to the AFL Commission outlining a business case in support of additional resources being allocated to AFL Victoria, both for the additional Female Football Development Officer and increased capacity in region development structures, for the development of female football.



Key Features:

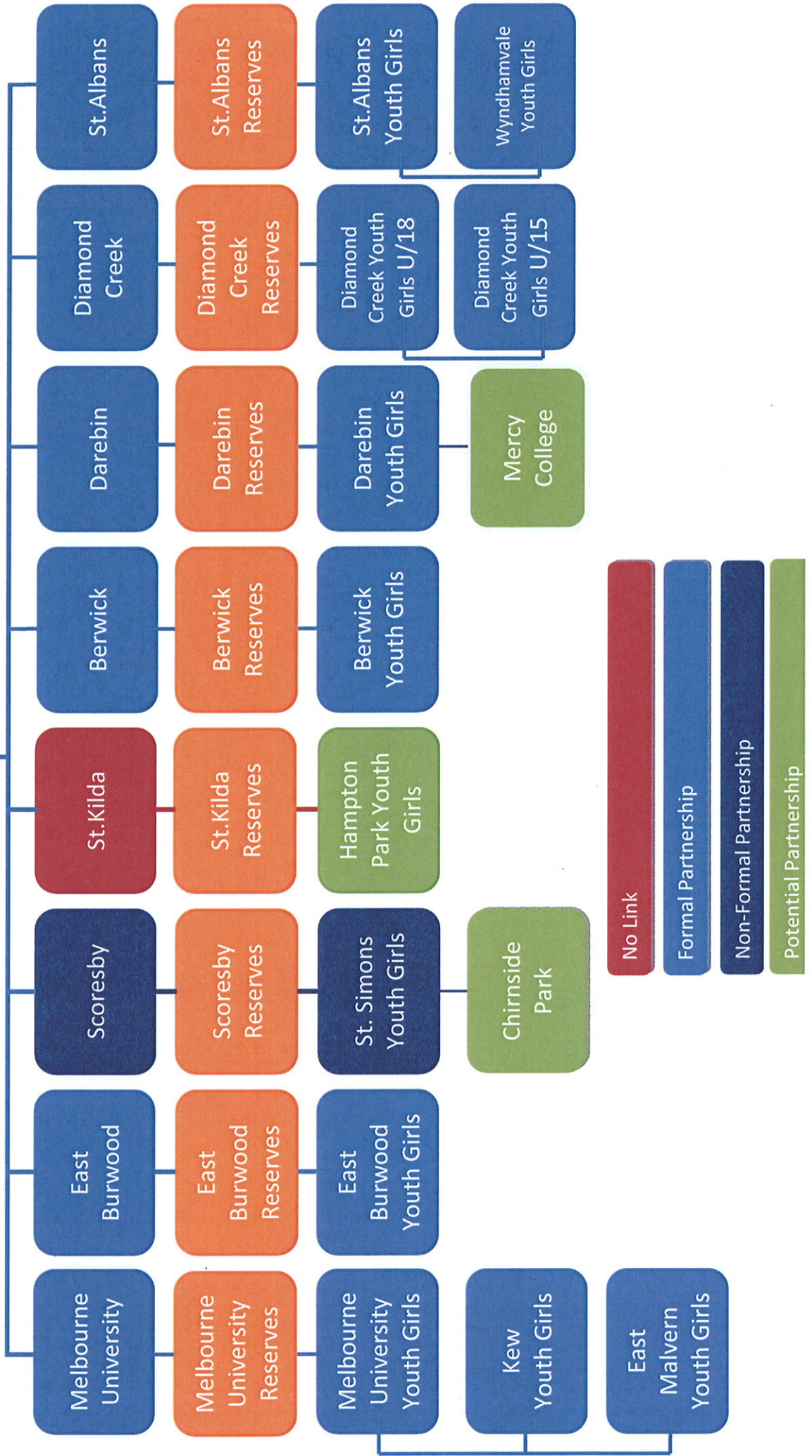
1. AFL Vic manages Youth Girls Competitions except for South East competitions - now conducted by the DDJFL
2. VWFL is a member of AFL Vic and conducts four competitions



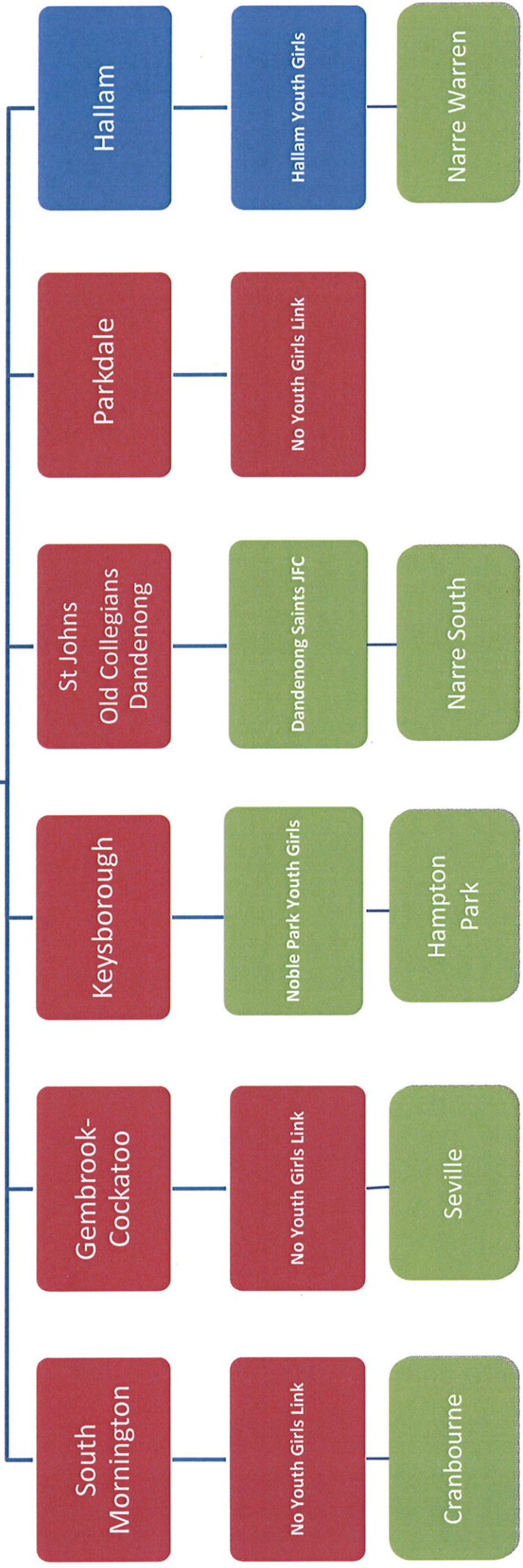
Key Features

- AFL Vic Football Operations conduct Women's Premier & Reserves Competition
- SFL or EFL conducts current VWFL South East conference
- NFL or WRFL conducts current VWFL North West conference
- Youth Girls Competitions conducted by community leagues as indicated
- VWFL ceases to exist
- Female Football Committee established

VWFL Premier Division Club & Youth Girls Links

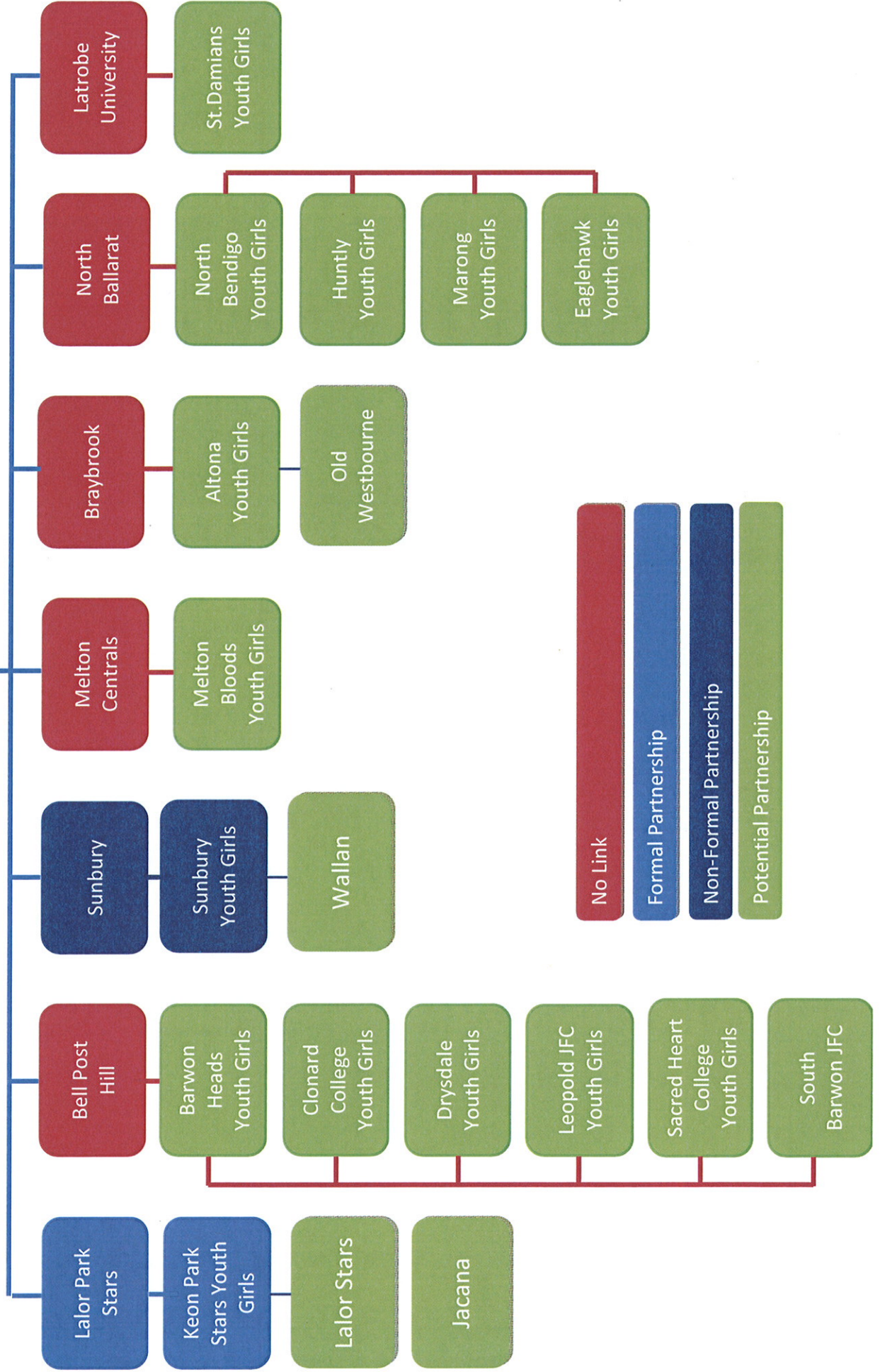


VWFL South East Conference Club & Youth Girls Links



- No Link
- Formal Partnership
- Non-Formal Partnership
- Potential Partnership

VWFL North West Conference Club & Youth Girls Links



Youth Girls Teams without a VWFL Club Partnership

