



## **Players Playing Outside their Age Group**

### **Policy**

It is the policy of the Newtown Junior Football Club that all players play in their age group for the following reasons:

- This is the best way to protect the health and safety of players
- To enable players to best develop according to their age and physical capacity
- It is non-discriminatory as it applies to all players
- It provides clarity and certainty for players and parents
- It is consistent with the preferred position of the Greater Sydney Juniors.

The Club's philosophy is to build strong skill levels in all age groups and therefore all players should play in their own age group in the first instance.

Players may play up, after playing in their own age group, as a development opportunity or where required by the Club (e.g. to enable the Club to enter a team in a specific age group, that is a combined age team).

### **Minimum Age**

No player will be registered or play with the Club where they are not at least five (5) years of age before midnight on 31 December in the year covering the season in which they wish to play.

### **"Playing Up"**

The Club recognizes that some players may wish to play and train at an older team level for friendship, peer group, skill or other reasons.

Where possible, all reasons that a player may wish to play in an older team should be addressed by the coach, player, player's family (parent/carer) and the Club. This may include training, socialisation or other initiatives, with the goal to return a player to their correct age group as soon as possible.

It is the Club's position that all players should be training and playing in their correct age group by Under 9, that is the Under 9 age group should be for Under 9's only. In line with AFL policy there can be more opportunity for players to play outside their age group on the basis of skill level during Auskick, however this will be the decision of the Auskick Coordinator and the relevant coaches.

The Club and the AFL places a strong emphasis on ensuring participation, particularly in Auskick and Junior football (there is a heightened emphasis on competition in Youth football - U/13s and up).

Therefore under no circumstances should a player playing in their correct age group be displaced by a player “playing up” from a younger age group.

### **Exemptions**

Exceptions to this policy may occur with the permission of the Auskick Coordinator or Football Manager (dependant on the age group of the player) and with agreement by the relevant coaches, where it would be of benefit to the player, other players and the Club.

Under no circumstances will an exemption be granted where there would be risk to the safety of the player. Exemptions will not be granted where it is judged that the benefit to the player, other players or the Club would be outweighed by the negative effects of player playing out of their age group. Where a player is exempted and plays outside their age group this will not become a precedent for other players or for that player for subsequent seasons. Each case must be assessed on its own merits.

Exemptions applied for on the basis of the player being “too good” or “frustrated by the rules” of a particular age group will not be considered as the basis for a player playing in an older age group.

The Club aims to provide developmental opportunities in older age groups for younger players, although due to player numbers this may not always be possible. In the case of strong players whose development would be aided by playing in an older age group, this may be done through that players playing up in the older age group, provided the player trains with, and plays first with their correct age group. It is the Club’s philosophy is to build successful teams in all age groups with stronger players encouraged to contribute to the development of skills both on and off the field.

It is also noted that in most circumstances no player will be permitted by the AFL to play in younger age groups after Auskick. Therefore no Newtown player is to take the field in any football team of a younger age group without appropriate permission being granted by the AFL and the Club. Requests to play in younger age groups after Auskick must, in the first instance, be referred to the relevant Football Manager (i.e. Junior or Youth). At all times members of the Club must comply with competition rules.

Exemptions will generally be given for a season but may be reviewed during the season if required, on the basis of matters considered in this policy.

### **Process**

Parents may make application in person to the Auskick Coordinator or the relevant Football Manager for consideration of a request for a player to be exempted from this policy. The Auskick Coordinator or the Football Manager, along with the relevant coaches will assess such requests on their merit and notify the parent of the decision. It will be the final decision of the Auskick Coordinator or the relevant Football Manger who has responsibility for age group in which the player is seeking to play in.

The Committee may review the decision of the Auskick Coordinator or the relevant Football Manger.