



Loddon Mallee

REGIONAL FOOTBALL (SOCCER) DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Summary and advocacy document



CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Study Area	5
Vision and Principles	6
Strategic Framework	9
Regional Objectives	10
Resourcing & implementation	14



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Loddon Mallee Regional Football (Soccer) Development Plan is a partnership project between the State Government, via Regional Development Victoria, Football Federation Victoria (FFV), and the 10 Local Government Authorities (LGA's) that make up the Loddon Mallee Region.

Loddon Mallee is considered one of the most prominent regions for soccer across the State, with 21 clubs, three major leagues, almost 4,000 registered players and a regional level venue in Bendigo which hosts a range of community to elite level tournaments, programs and events.

The key regional cities of Bendigo and Mildura, along with the Shires of Campaspe and Macedon Ranges, have the bulk of soccer facilities and the majority of registered players in Loddon Mallee.

While soccer is strong in these areas, there are many parts of the region such as Buloke, Loddon, Gannawarra and Yarriambiack that currently have no soccer clubs or facilities.

There has been an eight per cent decline in the number of registered soccer players in Loddon Mallee since 2009. The reason behind this decline is that soccer is not considered one of the dominant sports in the region and is not engrained in the region's sporting landscape. Traditional sports such as AFL, netball and cricket dominate the region and in many parts are the lifeblood of some of the smaller townships and outlying rural areas.

The decline in population in some parts of the region in recent years and limited isolated growth areas identified in Loddon Mallee has also impacted participation.

The demographics of the Region is predominantly Anglo-Saxon, and with very few migrant communities who consider soccer as their chosen sport it has been difficult for soccer to continue to build participation and get a strong foothold in the sporting market across the region.

FFV is responsible for the planning, delivery and development of the sport and have staff in key areas of the region to deliver competition management and elite pathway programs, club and player development, facility planning and event delivery.

A key issue for soccer clubs is the standard and provision of existing facilities. Through on-line surveys conducted clubs identified that the condition and performance of change rooms, sports field lighting and spectator amenities and infrastructure were well below the requirements for the sport and are significantly impacting participation.

The upgrade of existing change rooms, provision of additional amenities to support junior and women's soccer, and the need to provide appropriate floodlighting to training standards are the priority infrastructure requirements required to activate and sustain the sport in Loddon Mallee.

The expected future population growth in Macedon Ranges and Bendigo will also trigger the need for additional soccer facilities in the future.

This plan proposes a set of regional principles and strategic priorities designed to guide the future direction of soccer in Loddon Mallee. The strategies and recommendations provided aim to maximise participation, improve facilities, increase club support, provide clear competition and player development pathways and build the profile of the sport in Loddon Mallee.



ONE regional level venue

THREE major leagues

TWENTY ONE clubs

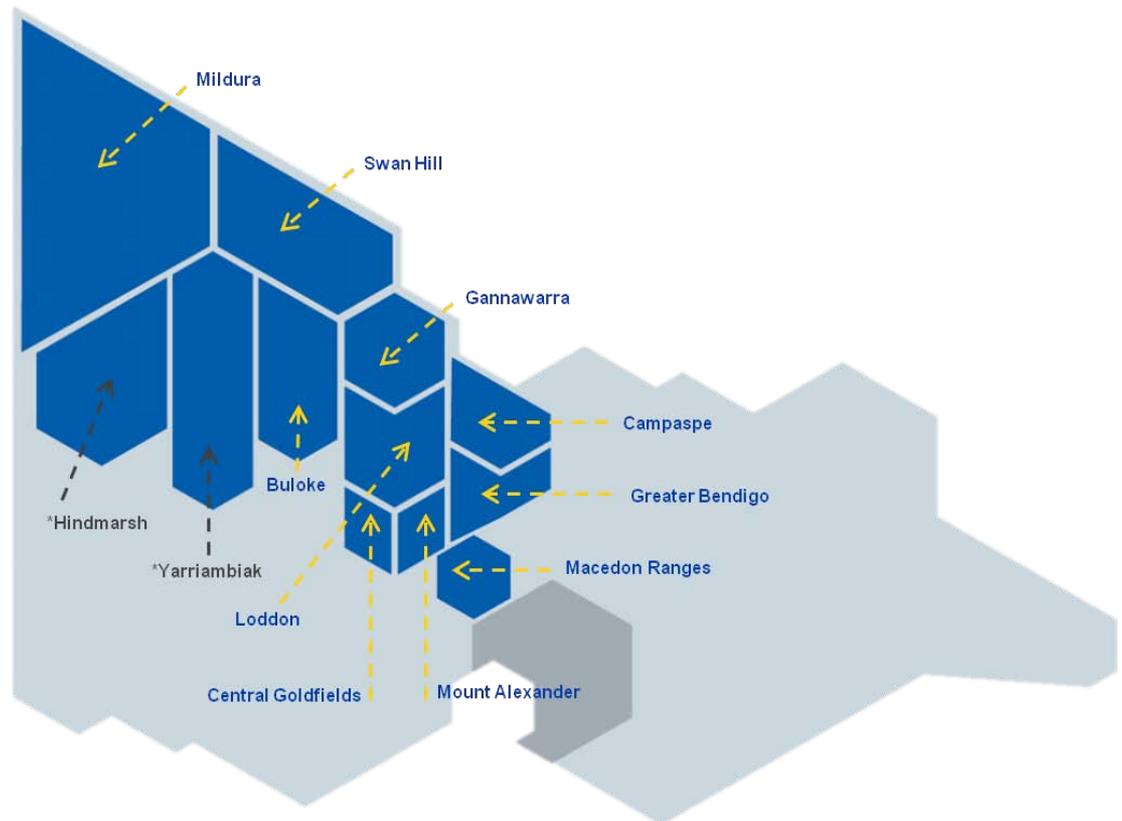
Almost **FOUR THOUSAND**
registered players

THE STUDY AREA

The Loddon Mallee Region covers a total area of approximately 70,000 square kilometres with a population of over 321,000 residents. The most heavily populated areas include Mildura, Bendigo and Swan Hill which contribute almost 75% of the entire population across the Region.

The Loddon Mallee Region is located in the north west of Victoria and is bordered by the Hume Region to the east and the Grampians Region to the south as defined by the Victorian Government. The area incorporates a total of ten LGA's including the cities of Mildura, Swan Hill, Greater Bendigo and the Shires of Loddon, Macedon Ranges, Mount Alexander, Campaspe, Buloke, Gannawarra and Central Goldfields.

The Shires of Hindmarsh and Yarriambiack are located outside the Loddon Mallee Region (in the Grampians Region) but are included in the soccer development plan as they form part of the FFV's Loddon Mallee Zone.



VISION, PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIES

The following section establishes the vision and key development principles for soccer in the Loddon Mallee Region and provides five key strategic directions identified as having a significant influence on the preparation of the Loddon Mallee Regional Soccer Development Plan.



Vision for Soccer -
'Loddon Mallee's
most accessible
sport'

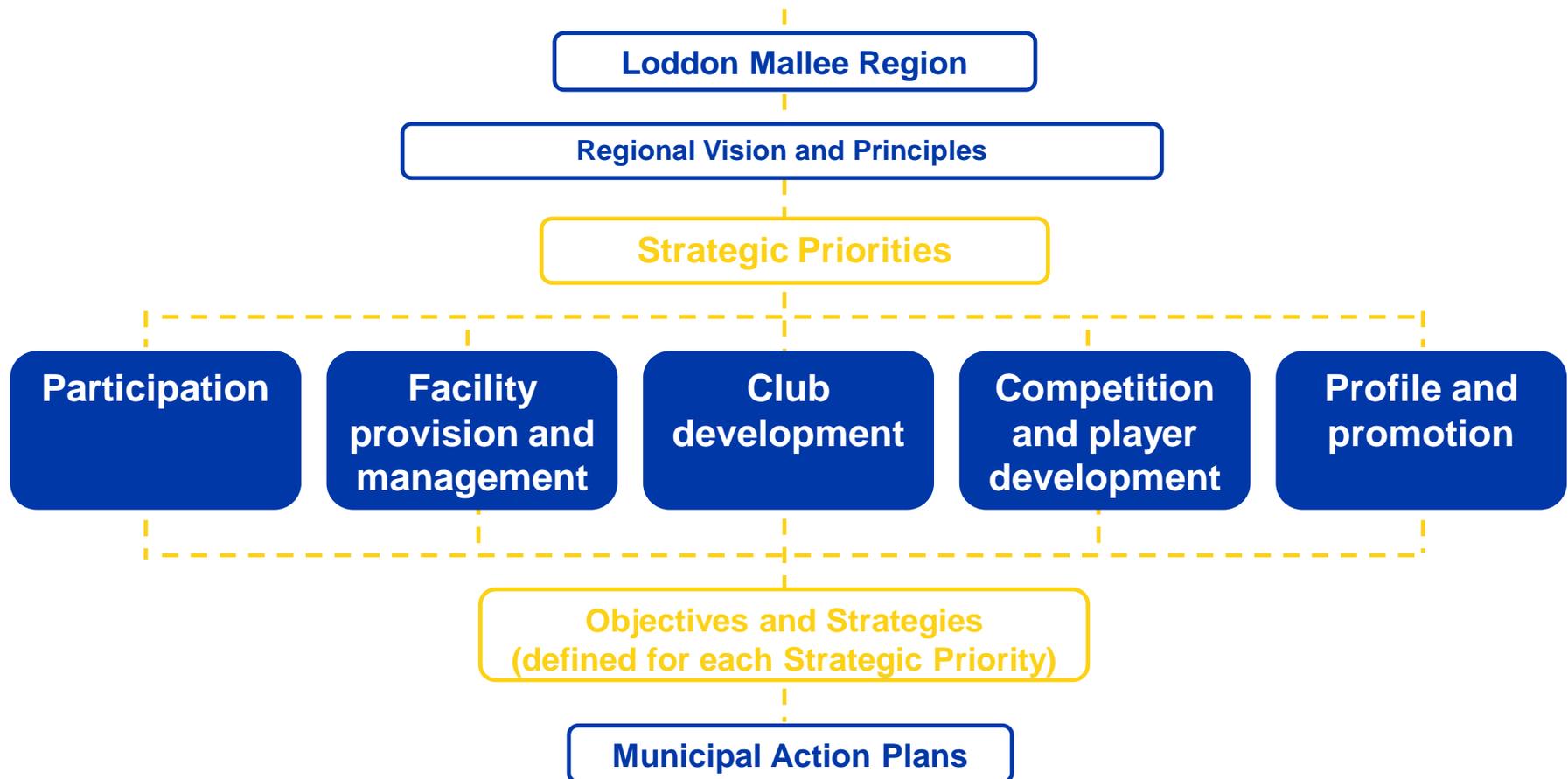
REGIONAL PRINCIPLES

1. Increase the profile and reach of soccer across the Region and establish soccer in key growth areas.
2. Improve access to soccer facilities, services and programs for Loddon Mallee residents.
3. Support the development of local soccer providers and clubs to build capacity and ensure their long term sustainability.
4. Deliver targeted soccer programs that meet the needs of diverse communities and respective LGA's.
5. Ensure alignment of sport, government and community stakeholder needs and objectives and encourage partnership approaches to develop soccer.
6. Maximise participation and diversify the range of programs and activities to get more people to play soccer.
7. Invest in facilities and infrastructure that increase opportunities to participate in all forms of competitive and recreational soccer.
8. Deliver health, economic and social benefits through the provision of soccer programs, events and activities across the Region.
9. Engage and build strong relationships with schools to promote soccer's brand and deliver positive messages around the benefits of participation.



STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The Loddon Mallee Regional Soccer Development Plan identified five key strategic priorities that will have the most significant influence on the future planning, development and implementation of soccer across the region. Key objectives and summary recommendations for each strategic priority is provided in the following pages .





OBJECTIVE ONE: PARTICIPATION

Key Objectives

- Understanding participation trends for soccer across the region and ensuring the right mix of programs, competitions and venues are delivered to address key barriers and limitations to participation.
- To address the decline of registered players across the region and continue to maximise the range of soccer programs to introduce new people to the sport and promote growth in the diversity of soccer participants.
- By 2023 all LGA's in the Region will have some formalised opportunity to participate in soccer at both a competitive and recreational level.

Priority recommendation

- Local clubs and associations to support FFV and LGA's in increasing contact and communication with schools across the region and ensure FFV's Zone Development Officers are well resourced to deliver ongoing soccer programs.





OBJECTIVE TWO: FACILITY DEVELOPMENT

Key Objectives

- Understanding local and regional facility requirements and expectations, develop a consistent approach to facility provision and identify shared use and cost effective facility development options.
- Develop a regional approach to facility development through the adoption of the proposed soccer facility hierarchy model and support projects that prioritise the enhancement and development of infrastructure and assets that increase the range and use of soccer facilities.
- There are many facilities that exist and are available for soccer use across the Region. Facility development aims to focus on getting the most out of what facilities are available.

Priority recommendations

- State and local government stakeholders to prioritise the development of club level competition facilities to provide opportunities for clubs to be more sustainable.
- Undertake improvements to pitch lighting and change room provision in line with FFV development guidelines to encourage more junior and female participation.



OBJECTIVE THREE: CLUB SUPPORT

Key Objectives

- Identifying the specific needs of clubs regarding management, governance, capacity building and volunteer retention and ensure clubs remain viable and sustainable and continue to provide for the sport across the region.
- Create an environment where Leagues, Associations and Clubs feel supported, engaged and acknowledged through the provision of club development initiatives designed to build club capacity and strengthen the viability and sustainability of the sport in the Loddon Mallee Region.
- By 2023 there will be more soccer clubs operating in the Loddon Mallee Region, all supported by appropriate levels of planning and governance to grow the sport within their local community.

Priority recommendations

- FFV to develop stronger relationships and more strategic partnerships with local soccer providers to ensure a consistent approach to the delivery of soccer at all levels.
- FFV, local councils and RSA's to partner in the delivery of club development programs that build club capacity, increase the skills of volunteers and develop business plans.





OBJECTIVE FOUR: COMPETITION AND PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

Key Objectives

- Identifying effective competition and player development structures and pathways to address participation decline, enhance economic development opportunities and address club, competition and talented program viability issues.
- Provide an aligned regional competition structure with clear pathways for players, coaches and officials in Loddon Mallee from social and entry level programs to elite level competitions.
- By 2023, an increased number of locally trained and accredited coaches and referees will operate throughout the Loddon Mallee Region.

Priority recommendations

- Document a competition structure that clearly outlines the competition and recreation pathways for soccer in the region and identify where associations and activities fit.
- Target strategies that support the growth and development of social and recreational soccer and explore opportunities to introduce soccer in Robinvale and Kerang.



OBJECTIVE FIVE: PROFILE AND PROMOTION

Key Objectives

- Ensuring that soccer continues to build its profile and contributes to the local economy through events and other activities and is recognised as a safe, active and healthy sporting option.
- Increase the profile and strengthen soccer's brand in Loddon Mallee.
- By 2023, all schools in Loddon Mallee to have some form of soccer program offered or be involved in school soccer tournaments and events.

Priority recommendations

- FFV to deliver more school clinics across the region and ZDO's to up skill sports education teachers and assist in the delivery of soccer programs and activities on a more regular basis.
- SRV to support the development of sub-regional working groups to provide regular opportunities for FFV (ZDO's), Council's and local soccer providers to partner in the ongoing development and implementation of the regional development plan.



Resourcing and implementation

The successful implementation of the Loddon Mallee Regional Soccer Development Plan is subject to an ongoing commitment from key sport, government and community stakeholders, and a partnership approach to the delivery of proposed actions and recommendations that support the growth and development of soccer.

Local Government Authorities (LGA's) in the region can demonstrate their commitment and support for the plan through the formal adoption of the key regional development principles, strategic priorities and municipal action plans, designed to build participation, improve facilities and increase the profile of the sport.

Adoption of the Soccer Development Plan, or components of the plan, into Council's policy and strategic planning process will demonstrate a level of commitment and ownership and ensure soccer is being considered along with other sports as contributing to the health and wellbeing of communities.

LGA's will be required to further investigate and define the scope of proposed recommendations included in their individual action plans to determine future cost implications, potential external funding opportunities and funding contributions for consideration in future capital funding or new initiative programs.

Sport and Recreation Victoria will play a key role in the life of the Plan through its ongoing promotion and recognition via the Loddon Mallee Regional Network Meetings.

Regional Network Meetings are chaired by SRV and involve representatives from participating LGA's across the region. There is a commitment from this group to ensuring the peak sporting body for soccer in the state (FFV) are invited to at least one meeting per year to discuss current and future program initiatives, key strategic directions and future opportunities for the development of soccer in Loddon Mallee.

Recognising the size and geographical challenges associated with the region, it is recommended that sub-regional soccer development groups are considered to support the implementation of this Plan. These groups would involve stakeholders responsible for the future planning and development of soccer in key sub-regional areas and include representation from FFV's Zone Development Officers, Council's and local soccer providers.

It is proposed that these sub-regional groups would meet quarterly to provide advice and direction to the Regional Network Meetings, identify future resource requirements that support the proposed future recommendations for soccer, and commence the delivery of key initiatives and actions. The Plan and its achievements should be reviewed annually by the Regional Network and reporting on progress against recommendations and actions made available to key stakeholders including SRV and FFV.

The introduction of soccer into areas of the region where it is not currently provided, and the desire to improve soccer's brand and profile across the region will require stakeholders to work collaboratively and demonstrate a high level of commitment to ensuring soccer is more broadly recognised and embedded into the sporting landscape of the Loddon Mallee Region.