AUSKICK TO CLUB

INNOVATING THROUGH A WEDNESDAY NIGHT COMPETITION

OVERVIEW

In 2016, the Riddell District Football Netball League (RDFNL) had undertaken a review of its junior age group structure. This process provided an opportunity to reimagine how to best support Under 9 (U9) participants transitioning from Auskick into formal club competition.

Traditionally, U9 players would move directly into Sunday morning games — often the first fixture of the day — which sometimes created challenges for young players and their families.

The question arose: Could there be a more engaging, family-friendly way to introduce players to club football after Auskick?

THE INNOVATION: WEDNESDAY NIGHT U9 COMPETITION

RDFNL introduced a midweek U9 competition played on Wednesday evenings across centralised cluster locations.

This new structure helps create certainty in fixtures, locations, and timing, reduce travel and free up weekends for families and deliver a community experience, encouraging whole-family attendance — parents, grandparents, and siblings alike.nthusiasm.

Initially supported by AFL Vic, the clubs have now embraced ownership of the initiative and have now integrated the matches alongside regular training sessions.

This change underwent a two-year trial period which resulted in immediate growth in participation numbers with over 18 teams registered across 3 clusters. Year two followed with continued growth to 27 teams — demonstrating strong uptake and enthusiasm.



CHALLENGES

- Maintain engagement and excitement for children moving from Auskick to structured club competition.
- Improve the experience for families — avoiding early cold mornings and long travel times.
- Provide consistency, accessibility, and a community feel to junior football.

SUSTAINED SUCCESS

Post the initial trial period, some teams returned to traditional Saturday formats however the Wednesday Night U9 Melton Cluster continues to thrive, now featuring 7 participating clubs.

The midweek format has fostered fun, inclusivity, and community connection, helping young players build a love for the game in a positive environment. This innovative scheduling approach outlines the strong community benefits and positive outcomes for those in areas where there are available greenspaces to accommodate this way of thinking.

DID YOU KNOW?

- There are a number of midweek fixtures held across Australia each week, across numerous leagues and competitions, with Friday nights being the most popular option outside weekends.
- Over 6,000 matches were scheduled on a Friday across Australia in 2025, followed by Monday, then Wednesday/ Thursday and only a handful on Tuesdays.
- While a lighting level of 100 lux satisfies the minimum level requirements for club competition, Australian Standard AS 2560.2 recommends the provision of at least 150 lux, where practical, to meet contemporary spectator viewing expectations.

