

UNITED STATES AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL  
LEAGUE

# RETURN TO FOOTY SAFELY

FEBRUARY 2021





# Table of Contents

---

Safety Task Force Recommendations .....	2
Return To Footy Safely Framework .....	3
How and When to Move Between Phases .....	5
Return to Footy Road Map 2021 .....	6



# SAFETY TASKFORCE SUMMARY TO EXECUTIVE BOARD FEBRUARY 2021

Following the most recent meeting of the USAFL SAFETY TASKFORCE, the following guidelines/recommendations are being proposed to the USAFL Executive board for consideration and ultimate release to all member clubs.

- At this point in time, the taskforce recommends that all clubs stay at Phase 0 until their local city/county release allowances to progress to a further phase for sporting activities/group gatherings (See Attached Return to Footy Safety Documents and guidelines).
- In addition, the taskforce is discouraging any teams from participating in indoor training due to high proximity/enclosed space and therefore high risk of transmitting COVID-19.
- At this point in time, the taskforce is not endorsing any inter club/travel games or training whatsoever (this will be revisited in April when the taskforce will examine current trends/infection rates/positivity rates etc.).
- The taskforce does not recommend the board release any gating criteria (e.g., Hospitalization rates, rolling 7-day averages, positivity rates, testing % etc.) with thresholds related to each return to footy phase. The taskforce feels this is too complex and burdensome for safety officers to be able to follow and it would require daily updating and examination by the taskforce.
- HERD Immunity – one of the key factors the taskforce will be monitoring (though not the only indicator) to be able to safely recommend interstate games, +/- ultimately nationals is that of herd immunity. This will be when we have a sufficient percentage of the population vaccinated to the tipping point where the risk for those non-vaccinated people of contracting COVID-19 will be at an acceptable risk level/unlikely (to be determined in coming months).
- Regional Tournaments – The taskforce agrees with the boards' stance that we do not engage in regional tournaments in 2021, though we will look at potential for more local, multi team tournaments if feasible.
- The Taskforce agrees with the boards' deadline of August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021 to make a final decision on the hosting of Nationals.
- The Taskforce is including the following documents and guidelines for the boards' review/approval and circulation to clubs (majority of these were circulated last year, just providing again so the board has complete packet of current documents the taskforce is working from and recommending to clubs):
  1. Return to Footy Safely Framework (2 pages)
  2. How and when to move between phases
  3. Return to footy Safely Road Map – this also contains detailed guidance for Metro footy, inter club games, pre-screening questionnaire, post-game/tournament assessment form to send back to regional VP...)

Best Regards,

USAFL SAFETY TASKFORCE.

“For the good of the game”



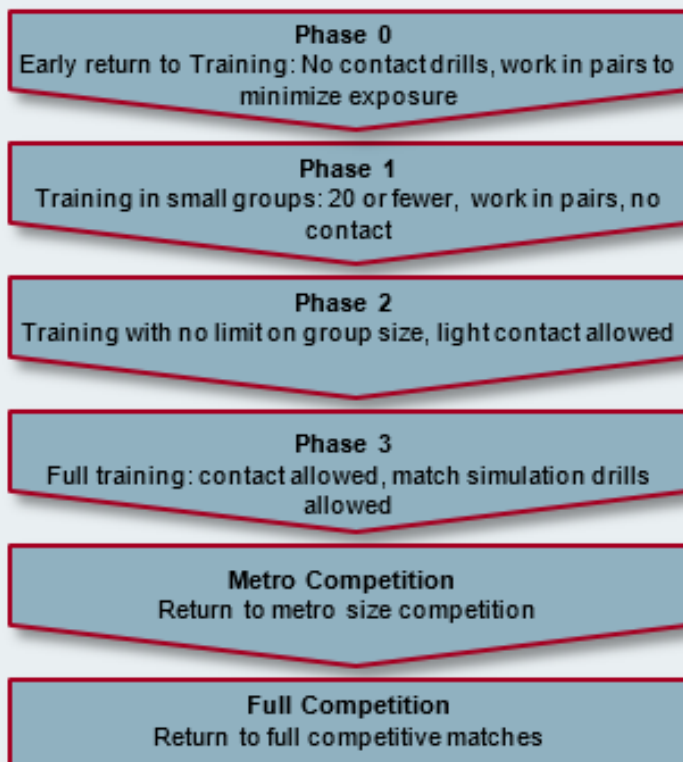
## RETURN TO FOOTY SAFELY

The aim of these guidelines are to provide USAFL member clubs and players guidance for returning to football activities safely following the COVID-19 restrictions. The information provided is a guide only – clubs must adhere to local requirements and ordinances when considering any return to football activities.

States will progressively return to *normal activity* over different timeframes with different requirements within their jurisdiction. As such, this framework applies specifically to individual USAFL clubs. As your local jurisdiction approves community sports to proceed, the following return to footy *phases* should be applied:

### USAFL Return to Footy Safely Phases

*The local jurisdiction must approve community sports activities before club's can progress to Phase 0*



Throughout the *Return to Footy Safely* process, clubs must follow recommended hygiene practices;

- ◆ No sharing water
- ◆ Clean equipment regularly
- ◆ Wash hands or use hand sanitizer regularly
- ◆ Don't participate if you feel ill or possibly exposed

The disease caused by COVID-19 virus is deadly. Each individual must protect themselves, their families and their communities by staying informed on the latest guidance on health and safety from the [Center for Disease Control](#) and the [World Health Organization](#)

For more details please refer to the USAFL Return to Footy Safely Guidelines provided to each member club. These guidelines will be subject to change as circumstances surrounding COVID-19 evolve. Please consult your Regional VP for the latest guidance. In addition, you should always consult your [Local Health Authority](#) for current standards and guidelines.



## Individual Responsibility

The safety of our players, coaches, umpires, and the families and communities from which they come are of the utmost importance. Each individual is responsible for not only their own safety but those of their club and their community both on and off the field.

- Individuals must fully acknowledge the risks involved in participating in events and must sign and comply with the USAFL COVID-19 waiver
- Individuals should be aware of the symptoms, cause, method of spread, and possible outcomes of becoming infected or potentially infecting others
- Anyone who feels unwell, may be becoming ill, or has been exposed to anyone that is potentially ill should not attend any training or games and should self-isolate until a 14-day quarantine period has elapsed or until testing returns a negative result after the person has recovered
- Individuals should maintain social distancing as prescribed by local health authorities
- Avoid handshakes or other hand to hand contact
- Avoid touching their own mouth, nose, or eyes
- Use a [CDC recommended mask](#) when in public places outside of training
- Wash hands frequently with soap and hot water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers
- Individuals should complete a self-assessment for [symptoms](#) before each training or competitive event

## Club Safety Officer

Each USAFL Club must designate a Safety Officer who is responsible for administering the Return to Footy Safety guidelines and that all local requirements are being met by the club. Clubs must communicate the person designated to this role to their Regional VP by April 1.

The Club Safety Officer must report any instances of COVID-19 infection confirmed within their club to the USAFL via their Regional VP as soon as it becomes known. They must also ensure that anyone confirmed as infected immediately ceases all football activity until appropriate testing has confirmed they are negative to COVID-19 before returning.

The Club Safety Officer will also be required to provide evidence of approval from their local jurisdiction to play competitive football against another team within that jurisdiction, by way of an approved field rental agreement or copy of the relevant jurisdiction's ordinance. Matches that do not meet these requirements will not be allowed usage of the League Management Service, players participating will not accrue Nationals Eligibility points, and the League will not acknowledge the match as being sanctioned.

Safety Officers will be expected to attend periodic Regional calls to ensure they receive the latest information regarding Return to Footy Safety guidelines or policy updates from the USAFL. However, it must be noted that it is also the responsibility of everyone involved in football to follow all health protocols and guidelines to ensure football can return safely.

## Safe Return to Competitive Footy

The pathway back to footy in 2021 requires the utmost commitment to every participant's safety. The USAFL Return to Footy Road Map aims to guide clubs in safely returning to competitive footy providing guidance and structure when ready and preparing for club metro footy and competitive games between clubs.

A Club's ability to return to competitive footy will depend on local infection trends and easing of city/county restrictions, which will vary widely across the country. The Return to Footy Safety (RTFS) Guidelines are the primary source of safety guidance for all footy activities so this road map applies within the RTFS framework. The USAFL Safety Task Force will provide ongoing input to this process including recommendations for changes/updates.

- **INDOOR TRAINING**, full contact, or Inter-club games **are not** supported at this time. The USAFL will continuously monitor information from health organization and update the guidance as warranted.



## How and When to Move Between Phases

Each club will have situations specific to their region and members. Club leadership must monitor local conditions and guidelines issued by their [Local Health Authority](#) in order to judge when it is safe to move between phases.

Considerations for moving between phases should align with City, Regional, or State guidelines as well as the CDC Phase thresholds.

To move between Phases:

- Always refer to your local city and county ordinances and guidelines
- Local Guidelines haven't changed or been reverted back to a stricter phase/set of guidelines
- Remain in each phase for AT LEAST TWO WEEKS
- Club to have had no new cases, if there has been a positive case from a player who was at a training, all players who attended that training should self quarantine away from training for two weeks.

If a positive or presumptive positive case occurs within a club that club leadership should halt training until such time as a full evaluation of exposure within the club has been established.

**NOTE: The USAFL Board with input from the USAFL Safety Task Force will continually monitor conditions across the country and may provide OVERARCHING GUIDANCE and/or limitations about progression beyond specific return to footy safely phases applicable to some or all clubs through the year. This guidance will prevail in all circumstances.**

## Reverting to Earlier Phases

Regardless of which phase you are in; you should be prepared to step back and revert to an earlier phase or cease training temporarily if any of the following occur. Always follow local public health official guidelines. Club leadership should closely consider the following when deciding which phase is most appropriate given the greater risk that may be present:

- Cluster of infections occur
- Inability to maintain COVID-19 prevention and response protocols
- Inability to track and/or isolate players or staff
- External factor exposes a COVID-19 risk to your club
- Changes to local public health official guidelines regarding group gatherings

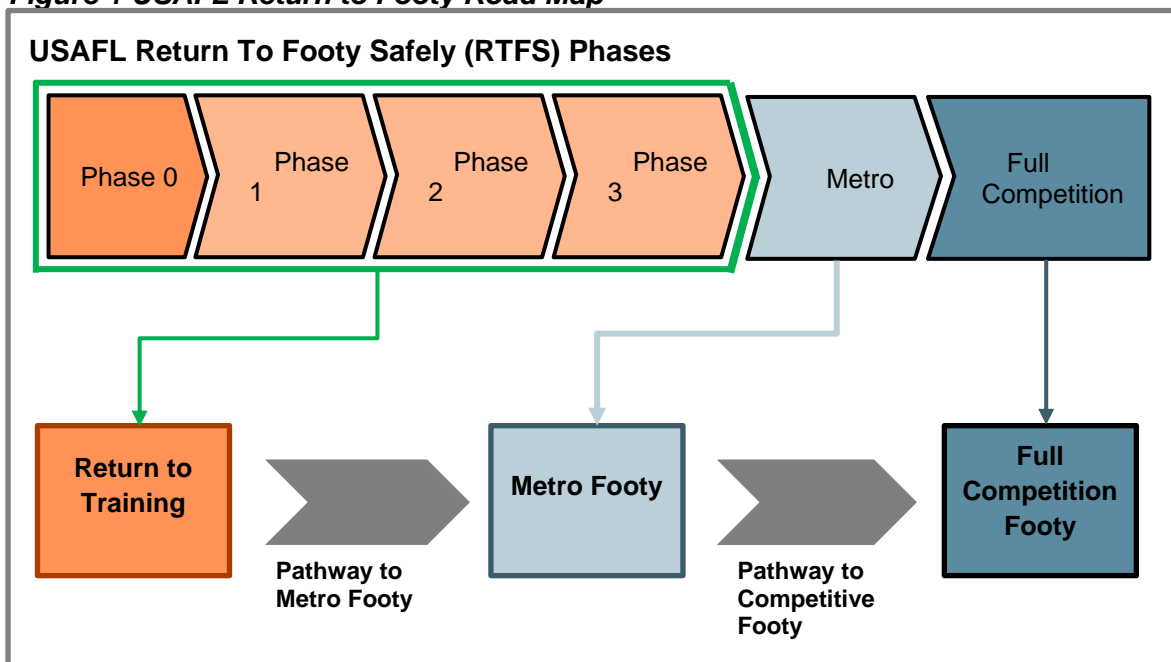


## USAFL RETURN TO FOOTY ROAD MAP - 2021

The pathway back to footy in 2021, as it was in 2020, requires the utmost commitment to every participant’s safety. The USAFL Return to Footy Road Map aims to guide clubs in safely returning to competitive footy detailing clear requirements clubs must meet to participate in club metro footy and competitive games between clubs.

A Club’s ability to return to competitive footy will depend on local infection trends and easing of city/county restrictions, which will vary widely across the country. The Return to Footy Safely (RTFS) Guidelines are the primary source of safety guidance for all footy activities so Clubs must apply this road map within the RTFS framework. The Return to Footy road map describes the requirements clubs must meet to proceed with footy activities beyond returning to training, as depicted below:

**Figure 1 USAFL Return to Footy Road Map**

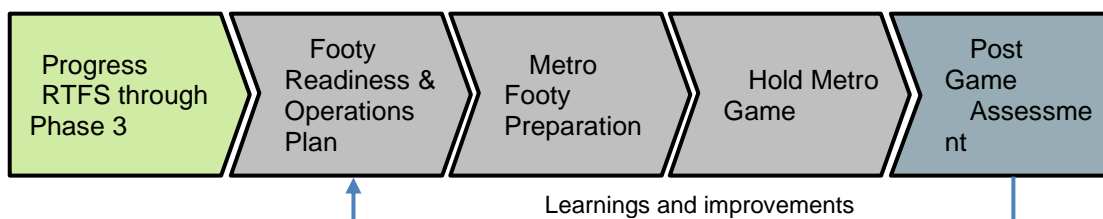


Before considering commencing competitive footy, a club **must successfully progress through Phase 3** of the Return to Footy Safely process.

Clubs must then meet the **Metro Footy Pathway** requirements before playing Metro games including specified reporting requirements. Once a club has demonstrated safe operational capability and club commitment in playing metro games, clubs can then progress through the **Full Competition Footy Pathway**. Clubs must follow the USAFL Return to Footy Safely Guidelines at all times when playing any form of competitive footy.

### Metro Footy Pathway

The following depicts the Metro Footy Pathway clubs must follow when planning and executing club metro footy.





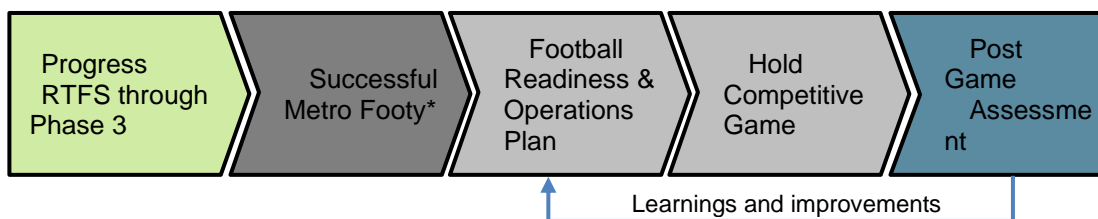
For Clubs to progress local metro footy, the following requirements will need to be met:

- Successfully progress to RTFS Phase 3
- Clubs planning to progress to metro footy must inform their Regional VP and provide the completed **metro footy Readiness & Operations Planning Checklist**
- Ensure all participants complete the **USAFL participant screening survey** at least 24 hours before play
- Complete and submit a **Post-Game Assessment Form** after each game

Between each metro game or planning to commence Full Competition Footy, Clubs must conduct a review of the operational capability of their club and determine if any learnings or improvements can be applied to enhance participant safety. A **Post Game Assessment form** must be completed and sent to the RVP within 48 hours of completion of a game.

### **Competitive Footy Pathway**

Competitive footy relates to competitive games between 2 or more clubs. The following depicts the Competitive Footy Pathway clubs must follow when planning to participate in a competitive game, including both hosting and travelling teams.



For Clubs to progress to Full Competition footy, the following requirements will need to be met:

- Ensure both teams have successfully progressed to RTFS Phase 3
- Demonstrate successful metro competition has been held within each participating club (\*small clubs may apply to be exempt if unable to field a metro competition).
- All Clubs must complete the **competitive footy Readiness & Operations Planning Checklist** – separate forms for hosting and traveling teams.
- Ensure all participants complete the **USAFL participant pre-screening survey** at least 24 hours before play
- Complete and submit a **Post-Game Assessment Form** after each game

On the completion of a Full Competition game, Clubs must conduct a review of the operational capability of their club and determine if any learnings or improvements can be applied to enhance participant safety. A **Post Game Assessment form** must be completed BY ALL PARTICIPATING TEAMS and sent to the host Region RVP within 48 hours of completion of a game.

**NOTE: If the local city/county infection trends increase or restrictions start reversing, all competitive footy must cease IMMEDIATELY. Refer to RTFS Guidelines to determine subsequent steps for your club.**





# Footy Readiness and Operations Checklist

DATE of Game: \_\_\_\_\_ START TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

FORMAT Of Game (Duration/quarters/halves): \_\_\_\_\_

VENUE OF GAME: \_\_\_\_\_

PARTICIPATING TEAMS/CLUB MEMBER GROUP/POD:  
\_\_\_\_\_ vs. \_\_\_\_\_

## PREPAREDNESS:

- Has EVERY Player signed a COVID-19 Waiver (if any have not previously signed online, MUST sign Hard Copy on site before taking the field - Safety Officer Duty).
- Club and players must have progressed through Phase 3
- Anyone who has tested positive/been exposed to COVID-19 in past 14 days/travelled out of state must have been isolated from rest of team members for a minimum of 14 days +/- returned a negative test, also been symptom free for at least 72 hours (including being afebrile without use of fever reducing medications).
- Every Player must Answer a COVID-19 Screening Questionnaire on site, or at a minimum on day via Team App. (Safety Officer/USAFL Team App.)

## Recommendations/Checklist (ALSO – Refer back to earlier phases and recommendations for training/contact drills):

- **Have all non-playing officials wearing appropriate face/mask coverings – this includes coaches when addressing team.**
- **Have Appropriate amount of PPE and sanitizing items available:**
  1. Hand Sanitizer – ideally players should bring their own in their kit bag
  2. Lysol/Disinfectant wipes – ALL equipment should be thoroughly wiped down before use and at all stoppages wherever possible
  3. Plastic/Latex Gloves for non-players to wear whenever possible - any individual prepping equipment should wear gloves, and then after removal, disinfect their hands appropriately.
  4. Individual Water Bottles for all players (players should be encouraged to bring all necessary/individual water/energy drinks/food and snacks in their own equipment bag to minimize/discouraging any sharing of items, whatsoever)
  5. Players MUST Abide by Local Regulations with regards to wearing of face coverings for contact sports (also see USAFL recommendations for temporary removal of mask when away from play/opposition etc.) This includes their home city/county and where the game is being played.
  6. It is recommended that umpires minimize close in contact with players/groups, address teams from an increased distance, wherever possible wear a mask whenever away from immediate play (this includes goal and boundary umpires). WHISTLE - place small, canvas/cloth bag over end/opening of whistle to minimize projection of airborne particles or utilize a whistle with a decreased aperture at end/horizontal opening to reduce droplet transmission. One other alternative is to use a small, handheld, noise making device.

**TEAM REPRESENTATIVE: To the best of our knowledge and capabilities, we have complied with all the above requirements: NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## PRE-GAME SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE:

- Have you or anyone in your household had any of the following symptoms in the last 72 hours: sore throat, cough, chills, body aches for unknown reasons, shortness of breath for unknown reasons, loss of smell, loss of taste, fever at or greater than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit? YES/NO, if Yes, Explain \_\_\_\_\_
- Have you or anyone in your household been tested for COVID-19? YES/NO, if Yes Explain \_\_\_\_\_
- Have you or anyone in your household tested positive for COVID-19? Yes/No – If Yes – Explain (have you/they subsequently had a negative test and been symptom free and afebrile for at least 72 hours without use a fever reducing medications)? \_\_\_\_\_
- Have you or anyone in your household traveled out of state in the past 14 days? \_\_\_\_\_
- Have you or anyone in your household traveled out of the country in the last 14 days? \_\_\_\_\_
- Have you or anyone in your household cared for an individual who is in quarantine or is a presumptive positive or has tested positive for COVID-19? YES/NO, if Yes Explain \_\_\_\_\_
- Do you have any reason to believe you or anyone in your household has been exposed to or acquired COVID-19? YES/NO
- To the best of your knowledge have you been in close proximity to any individual who tested positive for COVID-19? \_\_\_\_\_



**POST GAME ASSESSMENT:**

**What worked well/promoted player safety:**

---

---

---

**Were there any serious Injuries/Events where players/Attendees experienced sustained, close contact, resulting in an increased risk of transmission of COVID-19?**

---

---

---

**What complaints did participants have with regards to logistics of readiness checklist/wearing of masks/isolating all personal items/kit bags/keeping social distancing whenever possible:**

---

---

**Any recommendations back to your RVP/USAFL with regards to changes/additional requirements for next game to further enhance player safety whilst optimizing the players' experience:**

---

---



### **USAFL Safety Taskforce recommendations for inter club play:**

- At this point in time, the safety taskforce is NOT recommending/endorsing any interclub games. The next phase will be where the teams are able to drive to and from the game on the same day.
- This will prevent any flying in/out of city, staying in hotels/group situations and committee also discourages any post game socialization/functions (potentially OK with full mask wearing and taking all necessary precautions, though not encouraged).
- Recommend carpooling with people you are familiar with/previously had routine contact with (e.g., already within your training pod/roommate etc.) – if unable to achieve this, recommend wearing of masks within car/van.
- Players should be prepared to take all their own drink/fluid and nutrition requirements separately in their own travel bag ahead of time (in order to avoid one team rep to buy these in bulk on site and hand out to players, increasing risk for cross infection...).

### **USAFL Support to Metro and Competitive Footy in 2021**

*Due to current circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic and associated personal safety risk, final determinations on the 2021 USAFL Nationals and Regionals tournaments will be determined over the coming months through close consultation between the USAFL Safety Taskforce, the National Board and all member clubs, players, officials, and support staff. Regardless, the USAFL Board wants to support member clubs by bringing focus to local metro and inter-club footy when/if it is safe to do so as a goal for the remainder of the 2021 season. In addition, currently – the Safety Taskforce is recommending that teams DO NOT ENGAGE IN ANY INDOOR TRAINING, in any capacity, due to the increased risk of transmission of COVID-19.*

#### **Metro Footy Support:**

Support will be provided to clubs who demonstrate they are ready and capable of progressing to club metro footy by meeting certain safety and operational criteria. These are specified in the USAFL Return to Footy Safely Guidelines and Road Map documents.

The USAFL will support clubs through the following to help clubs successfully plan and promote local metro footy when safe to do so:

- Provide a Road Map to Metro Footy and work with clubs to apply this framework within the Return to Footy Safely (RTFS) Guidelines
- Provide additional specific safety support through the USAFL Safety Task Force
- Provide Insurance certification for field rentals
- Help provide umpiring support where needed and available
- Promote metro footy competitions via the USAFL Social Media platforms
- Provide LMS support for uploading games and team rosters for participation tracking

Clubs wishing to progress metro footy and access USAFL support need to **notify their Regional VP** and meet the specific metro footy pathway requirements. RVPs will work closely with clubs to assist with planning and guidance as required.



### **Full Competition Footy Support:**

Whilst the current COVID-19 circumstances would prevent inter-club games at the moment, it is possible that conditions improve sufficiently to consider full competition footy at which point the USAFL would support as long as safety and operational criteria can be met.

Clubs looking to progress to inter-club full competition footy must demonstrate operation capability through a local metro completion before then meeting the requirements for Full Competition footy pathway as specified in the RTFS Guidelines and Road Map (note this applies to all competing clubs, exceptions apply to small clubs unable to hold metro footy).

The USAFL will support clubs through the following to help clubs successfully plan and promote inter-club full competition footy when safe to do so:

- Provide a Road Map to Full Competitive Footy and work with clubs to apply this framework within the Return to Footy Safely (RTFS) Guidelines
- Provide additional specific safety support through the USAFL Safety Task Force
- Provide Insurance certification for field rentals
- Help provide umpiring support where needed and available
- Promote approved inter-club games via the USAFL Social Media platforms
- Provide LMS support for uploading games and team rosters for participation tracking

Clubs wishing to progress inter-club full competitive footy and access USAFL support need to **notify their Regional VP** and meet the specific Full Completion footy pathway requirements. RVPs will work closely with clubs to assist with planning and guidance as required.