

MEIDA STATEMENT - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Regional Sport Victoria's says it will be a long road ahead for community sport if we do not bind together

Regional Sport Victoria (RSV), the peak body advocating & supporting a network of 6,500 rural and remote sporting clubs across Victoria, will continue its sector wide consultations regarding the state of community sport in regional Victoria as a result of the Covid19 pandemic.

RSV, along with its nine-member Regional Sport Assemblies (RSAs), are working with Regional Victorian communities to support them towards a resumption of sport and physical activity amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. In depth conversations by RSA staff with approximately 400 key community sport leaders across regional & rural Victoria have highlighted a number of preliminary findings regarding the impact and effect of COVID-19 on regional sporting groups. Most significantly, community sport leaders are concerned about the physical, social and mental wellbeing impacts on their members and communities resulting from COVID-19 and the ongoing role they may have to play as volunteers.

Acting Chair of Regional Sport Victoria Dan Poynton said:

“Early indications from the data set, outlines that the impact of COVID-19 is going to significantly affect regional sporting clubs in Victoria, especially considering the compounding impacts of bushfire and long term drought in many communities.

“It’s vital that the sport and active recreation sector work collaboratively to support our regional communities. There is going to be a need for an integrated approach to supporting our regional clubs and the RSAs are leading the charge in kick starting these conversations.

“This week, we’ll be sharing our preliminary data and insights with State Sporting Associations, State Government and Local Governments across the state. Ultimately, we want to see a combination of a coordinated, systematic approach, balanced with placed-based solutions to support a return to community sport in a safe and viable framework.

“It’s vital that the sector understand not only the specific challenges regional clubs are facing, but more importantly, the differing levers at our disposal, to ensure clubs are supported during and post the COVID-19 pandemic.

A full return to community sport is inevitable, now is an opportunity to look for a fresh start and think about how we can deliver community sport and recreation opportunities in a more inclusive and financially sustainable manner. The significant reliance on canteen, bar and gate money from spectators to fund base operating costs for some sports is a concern.

“Congratulations to the Victorian State Government on the timely announcement of their *Sport and Recreation (SRV) Community Sport Sector Short-term Survival Package* grants, which will play a huge role in the return-to-play and assisting local clubs in bouncing back.

“The Victorian Government have made a commitment of a significant amount of money for community sport, and if club’s, leagues and associations haven’t applied for this funding, we strongly encourage you to contact your local RSA who can support you to submit you application.

“As a Network, we will continue to have discussions with regional sporting bodies and advocate to Government through the Community Sport Ministerial Round Table with Minister Ros Spence on the specific needs of rural and regional community sport.

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General Media inquiries: Cassandra Hadson, General Manager Regional Sport Victoria: 0418 755 233

Regional Contacts:

- Mallee Sports Assembly (Mildura & surrounds) Carmel Mackay: 0428 213 509
- Wimmera Regional Sports Assembly (Horsham & surrounds) David Berry: 0487 824 599
- South West Sports Assembly (Warrnambool & surrounds) Michael Neoh: 0419 537 098
- Sports Focus (Bendigo & surrounds): Stuart Craig: 0419 586 268
- Sports Central (Ballarat & surrounds) Andrew Milligan: 0419 590 674
- Leisure Networks (Gelong & surrounds): Brooke Connolly: 5222 3911
- Valley Sports (Shepparton & surrounds) David Quinn: 0400 099 869
- Sport North East (Wangaratta & surrounds): Kerry Strauch: 0448 597 220
- Gippsport (Gippsland & surrounds) Dan Poynton: 0402 350 92

A final report is expected to be released in July 2020