



Baseball Victoria
TRANSITION WORKING GROUP
SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES
& RECOMMENDATION TO THE BOARD
DRAFT

1. CONTEXT

What the Transition Working Group was asked to do

The Modernisation of Baseball (MoB) Transition Working Group (TWG) was established to advise and make recommendations to the Baseball Victoria (BV) CEO and Board on the Modernisation of Summer Baseball Plan. This encompasses transitional changes, timelines for implementation and associated key strategic priorities to overcome potential competition barriers, which may include:

- Review and modification of the competition structure;
- Increased game timeslots on Sunday for junior play;
- Addressing Saturday play for the senior competition;
- Review of playing conditions to support the modernisation of the competition;
- Establish timelines for changes to be implemented; and
- Implementation of key criteria to develop club sustainability and capacity.

The following details the recommendations from the TWG to BV for the Victorian Summer Baseball League MoB to meet the strategic objectives of the organisation. The desired outcomes are summarised as:

- Create the capacity for growth in all areas of Baseball in Victoria and, and allow opportunities for new deliveries of the game;
- Increase the competitiveness of each of the competitions, with opportunity for clubs to play at the highest level possible and make it clearer for grading of teams;
- Drive and support a change in the operations of clubs to increase the volunteer base;

IMPORTANT: When reading through the document, there will be new terminology, concepts, and approaches. It is recommended to read through the entire document once through, as some of your questions may be answered as you continue to read.

The TWG asks that you provide any operational considerations specific to your organisation or club to be emailed to ceo@baseballvictoria.com.au and adrian@adrianbaillargeon.com by 26 April, 2024. Operational considerations includes specific items your organisation or club that are impacted by the Modernisation of Baseball. Eg At this stage, your club does not have any access to facilities on a Friday night.

We also ask that for your club or organisation to provide any clarification questions to be provided to to ceo@baseballvictoria.com.au and adrian@adrianbaillargeon.com by 26 April, 2024. An example of this type of question - How will finals work for Premier League 1 vs Regional Leagues?

2. DEFINITIONS TO HELP GOING THROUGH THIS DOCUMENT

What we've found is that there is terminology used in our baseball community that can be interpreted differently. In an attempt to ensure the recommendations and terminology shared in this paper are best explained, the following definitions are provided. The definitions are provided in the context of what is being proposed.

Senior Competition(s) - refers to open competitions that include men and women (eg all senior leagues excluding women only leagues).

Women's Competition(s) - refers to competitions exclusively for female players.

Premier Leagues - a club's most competitive teams who meet the criteria to participate in Premier League. For 2024/2025, it is recommended two Premier Leagues exist.

Premier League 1 = The equivalent of the 23/24 season's Premier League 1s and Premier League Reserves.

Premier League 2 = The equivalent of the 23/24 season's State League and State League Reserves. Ideal for clubs wanting to earn the right to play Premier League 1 or compete at the 2nd highest level of competition.

State League 1- 4 - the next highest level of statewide competitions. State League 1 will be the highest level of competition in State League, State League 2 the next highest, and so on.

This league will be ideal for teams who wish to play competitive ball (for example, this league caters for clubs who have players who are finished with Premier League and want to continue play at a high level, players who are up and coming, clubs who want to progress to Premier League or clubs whose teams are not competitive enough for Premier League and want to play at the highest level they can compete at.).

These four state leagues will be statewide competitions. In theory for 23/24 season Premier League teams, the state leagues are those clubs next best teams (eg the 23/24 season's Premier League 3s and 4s).

Clubs will nominate which teams they want to enter into which State Leagues (1 through 4).

This is NOT the same as the 23/24 season's State League. That being said, it could include current State League, Metro Major or Minor, or Metro Regional Leagues but. It's up to the clubs to nominate where they wish to play.

Regional Leagues - equivalent (but not exclusive) to the 23/24 season's Metro Regional Leagues. This could be ideal for teams that prefer to play in localised areas, teams who play for the recreational benefits over the competitive benefits, for teams with a large number of juniors who may not yet be up to playing State or Premier League, or for teams who have a large contingent of older players wishing to play in a league outside of Master.

Senior League U17 State League or Senior League U17 Regional - the name of the oldest age group for junior aged players. This was previously a mix of U18 state/metro and U16 state/metro

Senior League U14 State League or Senior League U14 Regional - the name of second oldest age group for junior aged players; previously known as U14 State and U 14 Metro.

Little League U12 State League - replacing the name of previous U12 State League.

U12 Regional Leagues - replacing the name of the previous U12 Metro League.

NOTE: The introduction of the "Regional League" is a naming convention - it aligns with the same naming conventions for senior and women's competitions.

Volunteers - when referencing the term volunteers, this could refer to, but not limited to:

- Executive roles (president, secretary, treasurer, registrar, Senior Coordinator, Junior Coordinator)
- Junior Committee members
- Women Committee members
- General committee members for club

- Friday Night Coordinator
- Friday night canteen servers (allocated to individuals, families or to teams)
- Canteen Manager, purchasing manager, menu development manager, canteen server
- Head Coaches, Assistant Coaches, Team Managers, Game day field preparation managers
- Volunteer Coordinator
- Scorers, umpires
- Equipment purchaser
- Communications manager (social media, internal comms, website administrator)
- Social coordinator
- Council liason
- Baseball Operations (eg coordinate coaches, development opportunities, guest coaches, other coach or player development opportunities)

2. END GAME THAT THE MODERNISATION OF BASEBALL WANTS TO WORK TOWARDS

1. Additional capacity for growth - starting with a focus on juniors (U12 and U14) to drive growth throughout all aspects of the game. The intent is to:

- Remove the pressure off the limited # of playing fields;
- Enable all clubs to put a shared (equal?) focus on juniors and seniors (open and women competitions);
- Encourage all clubs with junior programs to field teams across all junior leagues, aiming for a baseline of a minimum of 4xU12 teams/club;
- Create opportunities for new deliveries of the game.
- Enabling the involvement and recruitment of additional volunteers. Junior parents will need to step up, providing all clubs a mandate to create junior committees (not just junior coordinators), reducing the reliance off senior and exec committee members.
- Providing options for juniors to play seniors with the potential of younger juniors to play multiple junior games on a weekend in different junior competitions.

2. Clarity, simplicity and more opportunities for clubs with a clear hierarchy of skill level and pathway, by simplifying the structure of the competition across all age groups, by

- Creating consistent naming conventions for all competitions (Juniors, Women's, Seniors and Masters)
 - Premier League
 - State League
 - Regional League
- Increasing opportunities for more senior clubs to play at higher levels while maintaining strong options for regional, recreational teams and players
- Attempting to create more consistent levels of competition across each division/age group to maximise the enjoyment of each player by playing against similar skill levels by:
 - Changing the criteria of the Premier League in Men's and Women's competitions.

3. To work towards improving facilities to offer different opportunities and experiences by having 50% of clubs (20 fields) with game playing standard lights by 29/30 and more fields with better playing surfaces to reduce the number of cancelled games (eg more artificial turf options) to:

- Create possibilities of additional times slots for training and games;
- Remove the reliance on weekends for games;
- Open up possibilities for other experiences of the game (e.g. tournaments, drop-in social games)
- Expands opportunities for winter baseball

4. Ensuring our junior age brackets are compliant with Baseball Australia's requirements.

- Junior age brackets to align to Baseball Australia's Little League Age Matrix.

3. COMPETITION STRUCTURE

The following competition structure evolution is recommended to be implemented for 24/25. This is what the overall picture would look like.

Women's Competition

Premier League: 6-10 teams

State League: 10 teams

Regional League: 10 teams/division

Junior Competition*

U17 Senior League State

U17 Senior League Regional - East/West.

U14 Senior League State: State wide vs regional is pending # of team entries. Ideally, a state-wide league is adopted.

U14 Regional League: Regions dependant on # of team entries.

Little League U12 State: State wide vs regional is pending team entries.

Little League U12 Regional League: East/West/North/South - pending team and location entries

U12 Rookie Ball - inter or intra club competition based on regional.

Senior Competition

Premier League 1 (+Reserves): 16 teams

Premier League 2 (+Reserves): 16 teams

State League 1: 8-16 teams (10 is ideal for an 18 game competition)

State League 2: 8-16 teams(10 is ideal for an 18 game competition)

State League 3: 8-16 teams (10 is ideal for an 18 game competition)

State League 4: 8-16 teams (10 is ideal for an 18 game competition)

Regional Leagues: 8-16 teams/division (10 is ideal for an 18 game competition)

Masters

Regional 38+ Leagues

Regional 45+ Leagues

*Baseball Australia has advised Baseball Victoria must adhere to their junior age matrix, hence the the proposed changes.

	Finals
Womens	Finals: No change. Premier League: 1v4; 2v3; best of 3 semi-finals and finals. State League and Regional League: 1 v4; 2v3; 1 game finals.
Juniors	Finals: No change to approach. Finals for U17/14/12; no finals for Rookie Ball.
Seniors	All finals - 1v4; 2v3. PL 1 and PL 2 Majors (assuming leagues split mid year) - 3 game series. PL 1 and PL 2 Minors & PL 1 Reserves and PL 2 Reserves - 1 game finals. State Leagues - 1 game finals. Regional Leagues -1 game finals.
Masters	Finals: No change.

Key Changes to the Competition Structure

- Alignment of competition hierarchy and naming conventions across all competitions.
- Seniors Premier League (1 & 2) requirements reduced to 2 teams only (Firsts and Reserves); the intent of this change is to allow for additional clubs to qualify for premier league and to allow for more club teams to play in competitions aligned to the appropriate level.
 - o Premier League 1 and Premier League 2 1's play 9 inning games; the 2's for each play 9 innings or 2 hour games (as per current rules);
 - o Re-entry rules remain the same as last season.
- Teams that do not play in Premier League 1 or Premier League 2, can choose which league they compete in (State League 1-4, Regional Leagues);
- Teams that select State or Regional League can be single team entries;
- To increase the chances of a minimum six team league, the Women's Premier League allows for single-team entries.
- Juniors:
 - o BV have been advised they are required to comply with Baseball Australia's Little League age matrix. From the upcoming season (24/25), junior age groups will be aligned with BA's Little League age matrix.

4. INCREASED GAMES TIMESLOTS FOR JUNIOR PLAY / DAYS OF PLAY

The following is recommended for time slots over the next three years, transitioning eventually

	2024/25 Season	2025/26 Season	2026/27 Season
Open Comps - Seniors - Womens - Masters	Monday 6:15pm M38+ and M45+ Tuesday 6:15pm Premier League 1 and Premier League 2 Midweek Games Wednesday 6:15pm Premier Womens League Midweek Games Saturday 11:15am/1:40pm/4:00pm PL1 and PL1 Reserves PL2 and PL2 Reserves Womens Premier Womens State Womens Metro 4pm time slot allocated to PL 1 and Women's Premier league. Sunday 1:00pm / 3:30pm SL1 – SL4+ Regional League	Monday 6:15pm M38+ and M45+ Tuesday 6:15pm PL1 and PL2 Midweeks <i>Regional League (Option to be explored)</i> Wednesday 6:15pm Premier Womens Midweek Saturday 9:00am Optional Timeslot 11:15/1:40pm/4:00pm PL1 and PL1 Reserves PL2 and PL2 Reserves Womens Premier Womens State Womens Metro Sunday 1:40pm/4:00pm SL1 – SL4 Regional League	Monday 6:15pm M38+ and M45+ Tuesday 7:00pm PL1 and PL2 Midweeks <i>Regional League (Option to be explored)</i> Wednesday 7:00pm Premier Womens Midweek Saturday 9:00am Optional Timeslot 11:15am/1:40pm/4:00pm PL1 and PL1 Reserves PL2 and PL2 Reserves Womens Premier Womens State Womens Metro Sunday 1:40pm/4:00pm SL1 – SL4 Regional League
Juniors	Friday 6:00pm U12 Regional U12 Rookie Sunday 9:00am U12 State U14 State and Regional U17 State and Regional	Friday 6:00pm U12 Regional U12 Rookie Saturday 9:00am Optional Timeslot Sunday 9:00am U12 State U17 State and Regional 11:15am U14 State and Regional	Friday 6:00pm U12 Regional U12 Rookie Saturday 9:00am Optional Timeslot Sunday 9:00am U12 State U17 State and Regional 11:15am U14 State and Regional U14 Girls League (in future)

Key Changes to increased time slots and operational impacts for junior day of play/days of play

- Women's Competitions are unchanged;
- Within three years, the intent is to increase the number of time slots on Sundays from 3 to 4; and have more junior time slots throughout the week, including Sundays.
- Friday Night becomes the day of play for entry level/youngest age group of competition delivery; this provides the opportunity to recruit new families to volunteer and start to increase their engagement in the club. This includes Tball, Rookie Ball and U12 Regional Leagues (previously known as U12 Metro Leagues)
- Consistency of approach and delivery (rules) of entry level U12 competitions across the State will be applied, with modified rules to improve the experience.
 - It is recommended that BV Performance Pathway team provide recommendations on what Rookie, U12 Regional and U12 State formats could look like. Below is an **example** of what a consistent, modern approach to entry level (u12) baseball could look like:
 - Rookie ball for players aged 6-10; pitching machines used, each inning starts with runners on base and teams bat through through the line up.
 - U12 Regional; for players league aged 8-11; player pitch, 1-1 count and coach pitch after ball 4 reached.
 - U12 State; for players league aged 9-11; 1-1 count, regular U12 rules.
- Sunday Juniors moves from four age groups (U18/16/14/12) to three age groups in 24/25 (U17/U14/ U12)
- By making Sundays more of a Junior day of play, this allows clubs to drive and support a change in the operations of clubs to increase the volunteer base and reduce the need for 'the same or few people' or to run both Juniors and Seniors.
 - Will require junior and senior committees for those clubs who don't have them already; the aim is to reduce the need for executive committee members to run seniors and juniors;
 - Junior parents will need to step up; gives all clubs a reason to create junior committees (not just junior coordinators) and for volunteers to need to step up, "Everyone needs to help, we need a junior committee, help setting up the field, umpiring, etc." ...takes reliance off senior club and exec committee members.
 - Still allows the opportunity for those juniors wanting to play seniors to do so;
 - The end state will allow juniors to play multiple games on the weekend (Eg U12 metro can play U12 state; U12 state could play U14 State).
- The 23/24 MoB recommendation was to move all senior competition games to Saturday. Based on the current number of senior and women's teams, it is not possible to fixture all games on the one day with three timeslots used. As a result, Women's games and Senior Premier League Games will be played to Saturday, with State and Regional Leagues remaining on Sundays.
 - The concern around Juniors playing Seniors across two days was considered and it was found that less than 10% of existing Premier League Firsts and Reserves and State League Firsts and Reserves are U17's players (that played more than 8 games at the senior level).
 - Based on participation numbers in 23/24, keeping all other Senior Competitions on Sunday means 90%+ of Juniors can play juniors and seniors on the same day; the remaining <10% can choose to play both days or just one.
- With a strong focus from all clubs to have playing level lights installed, as 2027/2028 and beyond approaches, it is recommended to consider midweek games for senior or junior regional competitions, reducing the pressure on having to deliver all competitions on weekends and providing opportunities for delivery of new types of games.

5. PLAYING CONDITIONS REVIEW

The following Playing Condition Recommendations were proposed in the original MoB. The TWG provides the following recommendations for these playing conditions. Moving forward, any playing condition recommendations are to be facilitated by the Pennant Committee.

5.1. Game Length

No changes are recommended to Seniors and Womens competitions (except alignment to the naming conventions).

Minor changes have been recommended for Juniors in the U12 age groups.

	Regular Season	Finals
Seniors Premier League 1 & 2	Weekend Games: 9 innings Midweek Games: 9 innings or 120 minutes (with 5-minute rule)	9 innings (no change)
Seniors Premier League Reserves 1 & 2	9 innings or 120 minutes (with 5-minute rule)	9 innings (no change)
Seniors State and Regional	7 innings or 120 minutes (with 5-minute rule)	7 innings (no change)
Womens Premier	Weekend Games: 7 innings or 150 minutes (with 5-minute rule) Midweek Games: 7 innings or 120 minutes (with 5-minute rule)	7 innings (no change)
Womens State and Regional	7 innings or 120 minutes (with 5 minute rule)	7 innings (no change)
U17 & U14 State & Regional	7 innings or 120 minutes (with 5 minute rule), with hard stop at 140 minutes*	7 innings or 120 minutes (with 5 minute rule), with hard stop at 140 minutes*
U12 State	6 innings or 105 minutes (with 5 minute rule), with hard stop at 125 minutes*	6 innings or 105 minutes (with 5 minute rule), with hard stop at 125 minutes*
U12 Regional and Rookie	6 innings or 75 minutes (with 5 minute rule)	6 innings or 105 minutes (with 5 minute rule), with hard stop at 125 minutes* Rookie Ball - no finals.

*Pennant committee to review and update Playing Conditions for hard stop timing. Nothing addresses this in the current Playing Conditions.

5.2. Pace of Play

Overall, no changes are proposed to the current pace of play playing conditions. However, these were included in the original Modernisation of Baseball plans, which is why these have been addressed here.

- **90 Second Changeovers:** *Recommend no change to playing conditions.* This should just be common practice for teams and become the goal if not currently complying;
- **Batters keep one foot in box:** *Recommend no change to playing conditions.* This is part of the Rules of Baseball already (Rule 7, Section 3), with exceptions clearly defined;
- **5 run rule:** *Recommend change to playing conditions.* The TWG recommends that a **7-run rule** which is already present for Regional Leagues, is applied to all Seniors and Womens Leagues except Premier (& Reserves). The intent is that this will have the potential for closer games, shorter

innings, and potentially more plate appearances for players on both teams. *Recommend to review the impact at the end of Season 24/25 and make changes as necessary.*

- **Disengagements by Pitcher:** *Recommend no change to playing conditions.* Rule introduced to shorten games and increase steal opportunities in the MLB. Believed would have a relatively low impact on games in the VSBL (particularly game length) and adds additional complexity to umpire. *Recommend to review rule in future years as a potential to reduce game times if there is a significant increase in game times.*
- **Mound Visits:** *Recommend no change to playing conditions.* 5 mound visits per 9 inning game with an additional mound visit for extra innings.

5.3. Clearances

Changes to Playing Conditions for Clearances were adopted for Season 23/24:

All clearances must be submitted by 30th September with a \$25 administration fee. After 30th September, Clubs can apply for a clearance via the Pennant Committee with a \$100 Non-refundable administration fee.

For the 2023/24 season, no clubs were charged any administration fee. As it was the first year of this concept, this rule will be enforced moving forward.

5.4. Multiple Games / One Round Rule

Changes to Playing Conditions for Multiple Games / One Round were adopted for Season 23/24:

Any player who participates in an earlier game can only participate in a later game that round in a higher grade (seniors) or higher age group (juniors) than the respective grade or age group played in the earlier game.

Re-entry Rule is already under review by the Pennant Committee. No further consideration by TWG provided.

5.5. Non-National Players

Changes to Playing Conditions for Clearances were proposed for the Season 23/24; however were not enforced.

It is recommended these changes be implemented for the 25/26 season, giving clubs and players who need to plan in advance a timeframe to transition to.

A player will be deemed 'non-national if they are not an Australian Citizen or Permanent Resident or have not continuously resided in Australia for the 13 months immediately prior). The exception to this rule is for students who are actively studying in Australia.

6. IMPLEMENTATION OF KEY CRITERIA TO DEVELOP CLUB SUSTAINABILITY AND CAPACITY

6.1. Seniors Premier League 1 and Premier League 2 Competition

For the 23/24 Season, a new criteria was implemented for the Premier and State League Seniors Competition. The following recommendation builds on these criteria and aligns to the new competition structure:

Eligibility for Premier League 1 and Premier League 2 in 2024/2025:

- Both Premier League 1 and Premier League 2 competitions will require clubs to enter two Senior teams (Premier League 1s + Reserves/Premier League 2 + Reserves) in their respective competition. The Pennant Committee reserve the right to accept nominations from clubs to enter one team in Premier League 2 or Premier League 2 Reserves.
- The Pennant Committee will review eligibility requirements each season and notify clubs of upcoming season requirements.

Promotion and Relegation

The intent of promotion and relegation is to reward those clubs who are driving growth and maintaining a minimum level of participation in the key priority growth areas (currently women's and juniors).

- If a club does not meet the criteria within a given year, they will be ineligible for finals, moved down to the minor competition mid season and a division lower for the following season.
 - Eg. If a club applies to play Premier League 1, and as of 1 November of that season, they do not have enough points to qualify for Premier League 1, they will drop to the minor division of Premier League 1 mid-season, and to Premier League 2 for the following season.
 - If a club applies to play Premier League 2, and as of 1 November of that season, they do not have enough points to qualify for Premier League 2, they will drop to the Premier League minor division mid-season, and to State League 1 for the following season.

Points eligibility

Points are allocated for each Registered Junior Player 5 years or older and each Women's team entered into a VSBL Competition:

Premier League 1 and 2 Eligibility Point Calculations

- All points will be calculated at and applied as at the 1st November of each season.

Premier League Criteria					
Juniors		Seniors	Required for 23/24	Required for 24/25	
League Age 13 - 17	League Age 5-12	Women's			
1 point per player	2 points per player	10 points per team	Premier League 1: 80 State League 2: 60	Premier League 1: TBC by Pennant Committee Premier League 2: TBC by Pennant Committee	

Future Requirements

It is recommended to the Pennant Committee to continuously review the criteria on a yearly basis to modify and adjust to the state of the competition, to drive further growth in the junior and women's competitions. Further criteria can also be explored to be added in future years such as points allocated for:

- Clubs with accredited coaches, scorers or umpires. Example: 1 point for every Level A and B accredited coach; 5 points for each certified and registered umpire.
- Clubs with strategic plans; and/or
- Good administration (No late match sheets, fines etc get bonus points for following year).

6.2. Womens Competition

The only change recommended for the Women's competition is a change to the eligibility requirements to play Women's Premier League.

It is recommended the requirement for clubs to have a Women's Premier League and Premier League Reserves team to be eligible for Women's Premier League be removed. This is to encourage more single team clubs to be able to participate in the Women's Premier League competition, and allow for the current Premier League Reserves teams to play in a league that suits their level of competition (State League or Regional Competitions).

7. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND BARRIERS

7.1. Barriers

In consultation with clubs, the following barriers and risks have been identified by the TWG:

- **Volunteer Burnout:** There is expected to be a challenge, requiring clubs to evolve how some clubs have traditionally approached how they administer the club. It is recommended for BV to facilitate volunteer recruitment and management workshops to support clubs recruitment efforts.
- **Senior Player Availability:** There is a concern identified by some clubs they will lose players due to unavailability to playing on Saturdays. This proposal moves only ~33% of Senior Competitions to Saturday, leaving 67% of senior competitions, and 100% of women's competitions unchanged.
- **Juniors Playing Seniors:** Changes to the competition structure and day of play could impact whether junior players eligible for Seniors, play in both competitions or just one of the two options. The data suggests that less than 10% of players will be impacted by the changes to come into play.
- **Facility Availability:** Some clubs have indicated difficulty in access to facilities (fields, and / or clubrooms) on the defined days of play. It is recommended that clubs notify Baseball Victoria of these situations and work together to find a suitable option.
- **Financial Impact:** Some clubs have indicated a negative financial impact is expected from canteen revenue from a change in day of play. This plan offers opportunities for clubs to run canteens more than currently, opening up the possibility of increased revenue. That being said, it is not possible to know what impacts the increased focus on growth and capacity at the junior levels will have in the short or long term, requiring clubs to maintain a strong understanding of their profit and losses, and continuously exploring ways to run in a sustainable manner.
- **'The Unknown':** There may be unforeseen challenges for both the league and clubs that have not yet been considered.

The TWG recognise a number of these potential risks, barriers and unknowns. Each VSBL club has different needs and priorities, which means that compromise will be necessary and being able to satisfy all clubs will not be possible. We also recognise the importance of external stakeholders (councils, private partners, sponsors etc) on the ability and willingness to support the change, through facility availability and investment.

The TWG recommends that clubs approach Baseball Victoria with their unique operational requirements as the changes are implemented.

7.2. Recommendation to support Priorities

The following recommendations have been identified by the TWG:

- **Volunteer Recruitment and Training:** Consistent feedback from clubs and councils is that volunteer burnout is an issue and that additional days of play will put additional strain on the volunteer community. Some clubs have demonstrated a high level of success in recruiting high numbers of volunteers, others have not had the same level of success. For the next three years, it is recommended BV coordinate annual volunteer recruitment and best practice training sessions across multiple regions (instead of everyone having to come to the CBD). A key success factor will be for clubs to share resources and approaches more broadly.
- **Forums for best practices and growth:** Clubs have unique strengths and approaches that other clubs can leverage off of. It is recommended that annual opportunities for club administrators to meet, discuss club challenges and share best practices are established.
- **Facilities:** The delivery of our sport is heavily reliant on quantity of fields and availability, geographic location (ability to get to fields) and weather. Our sport is also heavily reliant on weekends. To support quicker and broader facility upgrades provide new delivery methods through new time slots, an approach to support clubs to work with councils to attaining game playing lights and playing grounds that can be used quickly after adverse weather across the clubs is highly recommended. By having more fields with lights, this opens up 1-2 time slots/field/day, opening up options for:
 - Midweek junior, women or senior games. Masters and Premier Leagues play mid-week games. This should be considered for other leagues (e.g. Senior or Junior Regional League games);
 - Tournament play. With less reliance on weekends for games, and additional timeslots, opportunities exist for clubs to host one, two or three day tournaments.
- **Junior Recruitment:** The current recruitment strategy relies on clubs attracting new players to the club. It is recommended a recruitment and communication campaign is undertaken in partnership between Baseball Victoria and junior clubs on an annual basis to attract new junior males and females, and their families to the game.
- **Vision for the future of baseball:** The development and documentation of a longer-term plan for the future of our sport. One that gives clubs a clear view of what the future of our game could look like, and the impact on them and their members, backed by research, exploration and understanding of other competitions.

8. ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

8.1. Older Age Junior Competitions

1. It is recommended an U19 Premier event viability be considered. This would be made available to the top U19 players in the state to participate in. An example of what it could look like:
 - Facilitated by Baseball Victoria's Pathway Program, and not club.
 - Games occur from mid-September to Mid November (ends before mid week Premier League games begin)
 - No team training - players would continue to train at their clubs.
 - Four teams (48-52 players); games hosted at a location with lights (eg Altona, back to back games).

8.2. Premier League Splitting at Mid Year

In an effort to increase the number of Premier League teams and facilitate more competitive games post-Christmas, the Premier League 1s competition was increased to 16 teams in 23/24 with a split at Christmas,.

Feedback on the split season has been mixed. Some clubs felt it was difficult to plan activities post Christmas (games, functions, and other events). Administratively, it created fixturing challenges for BV administration. Other clubs felt it created a more even competitive split, providing meaningful games throughout the entire season.

Of note, the intent was for the 23/24 State League (to be known in the future as Premier League 2) to also introduce a split, but did not have enough teams (9 teams) to facilitate.

Moving forward, the TWG recommends for the Pennant Committee to consider 2 options on whether to continue with a split at the mid-season point:

1. Option 1: Make no changes from 23/24 season; PL1 remains at 16 teams (29 Games), with a split Post Christmas; and PL2 is based on team entries up to a 16-team competition, run similarly as Premier League 1;
2. Option 2: Remove the split, PL1 remains at 16 teams (now 30 games); and PL2 is based on team entries up to a 16-team competition;
This option has the potential for more blowout scores in PL1 in the second half of the season, and requires one additional midweek game across the season. It does provide clubs (and BV) a fixed schedule though makes planning much easier throughout the season.

8.3. Alignment of the Winter and Summer Competitions for Juniors

The TWG identifies an opportunity for the Winter Competitions and the VSBL to align in some of their competition delivery methods, particularly around Junior Age Groups, to 'standardise' these across all leagues. It is recommended Summer and Winter competitions align on age matrixes to create a clear and defined pathway and competition delivery (basepaths, pitching distance, home run distance, bat rules etc) for all players and volunteers as they move through the age groups.

The example of the current differences is shown in the table below:

VSBL	MWBL	DBA	GBA	LVBA	Bendigo	Sunraysia	North Eastern
U17	U17	U18	U16		U16	U16	
U14	U15	U15	U14	U16	U14	U13	U15
U12	U13	U13	U12	U13	U12	U10	U12
Rookie	Rookie	Rookie				U7	

The age groups are an example of where alignment could be made across all Victorian baseball competitions. By aligning league ages across all leagues creates less confusion for families and should remove the need for players to play on different sized fields in different competitions (e.g. league play vs state competitions).

8. ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Baseball Victoria's board is required to sign off on this paper. Following the 1st of May workshop, and understanding of operational questions and clarifications sought, the intent is to present the transition plan at the BV board meeting in May for sign off.