

Box Hill North Football Club would like to make the following statement in response to recent media coverage and the VAFA's statement regarding our club's decision to place our men's VAFA open teams into a period of recess for the 2026 season.

In 2002, Box Hill North entered a senior men's and reserves team in the VAFA, having previously competed in the Southern and Eastern Churches leagues since 1983. Over the past 24 years, through the hard work of our committee and volunteers, the club has grown to field more teams, become more inclusive, and participate across various competitions. This growth peaked in 2024, when the club fielded seven teams, including three VAFA men's teams, one VAFA women's team, one Masters women's team and two Masters men's teams.

In 2026, while Box Hill North has made the decision to place our open teams into recess, it is pleasing that the club will continue to operate strongly. Our club will still have more than 100 footballers and four teams participating in the AFL Masters Victorian Metropolitan League, including Masters women, and men's 35s, 50s and 55s.

While this is a disappointing outcome for our club, we would like to clarify that this situation is separate from the previously reported Social Media incidents that occurred at the end of the 2025 season. The club executive and all players involved engaged fully with AFL Victoria and the VAFA regarding these matters. The investigations and findings were resolved and concluded more than two months ago. The club and individuals involved have learnt valuable lessons from these experiences, and Box Hill North will continue to follow all advised and required steps to ensure a safe, positive and inclusive football environment.

In response to the VAFA statement dated 14 April 2026, we wish to inform our members and supporters that from early March, the club clearly and consistently communicated to the VAFA that we did not have the playing numbers required to sustainably field two teams, and subsequently that we could not confidently field a Division 3 senior team. At that time, we formally requested to transition into the Thirds competition to allow the club to stabilise and rebuild.

In the weeks that followed, the club worked diligently to meet the expectations set by the VAFA. This included:

- Extensive player recruitment efforts
- Contacting past players and broader networks
- Engaging with other clubs regarding player movement and potential collaboration
- Exploring alternative structures and solutions to support the competition
- Attempting to source enough players to field a single senior men's team in Division 3, as offered by the VAFA

Despite these efforts, and despite ongoing communication outlining the reality of our playing list — including limited committed senior players — the club's request to enter a more appropriate competition structure was not approved by the VAFA.

We also note that during this period, competition structures continued to evolve, including multiple clubs entering more than one team in the Thirds competition, and some clubs opting to enter Thirds teams due to having excess players. Despite this, our club remained without a viable pathway to participate in the Thirds competition.

The club repeatedly advised that requiring participation in Division 3 seniors under these circumstances would place us at significant risk of being unable to field a team during the season, leading to greater disruption for the competition.

Ultimately, despite exhausting all available avenues and acting in good faith throughout the process, Box Hill North Football Club was left without a sustainable option to compete in 2026.

While we acknowledge the complexities involved in managing a competition, we believe that an earlier and more flexible response may have led to a more positive outcome for both our club and the broader competition.

Our priority now is to regroup, rebuild and ensure a strong and sustainable future for Box Hill North Football Club. We will be exploring the most appropriate pathway forward to support our players, members and community.

Box Hill North Football Club has a proud history, and that history will continue. This period represents a reset, not an end.

We thank our players, members, volunteers and supporters for their understanding and continued support during this period.

This statement represents the club's final comment on these matters.

Our focus now is on supporting our players, members and volunteers, and on rebuilding for the future.

We will not be making any further public comment.

Box Hill North Football Club