**MESSAGE FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER**

Firstly, can I say on behalf of the organisation that we hope that all within the NSW Touch Footballing Community are staying safe and at this time and adhering the Public Health orders that are in place. By doing so, you are aiding in the efforts that will help the Government get to a position where current restrictions on community sport can be relaxed. So we can all get back on the park sooner.

The Board and Staff have been continuing to closely monitor developments regarding the COVID-19 pandemic with the Board meeting weekly during this time. This is in conjunction with the work being done collaboratively with the national body, Touch Football Australia (TFA) and Queensland Touch Football (QTF) to devise a pathway to recovery. We now provide a further status update to our NSW Touch community.

**NSWTA Staff**

COVID-19 has impacted every aspect of life right across Australia. Members of our Touch Footballing family at all levels are aware of this, and no doubt have also been affected. We, like all, are not immune to the impacts and have experienced a significant downturn in our business. Unfortunately, this means that we must now scale back our operations due to the effects of the pandemic.

From Monday, May 4, all staff will be placed on reduced hours. Senior Management (General Manager, Business Operations Manager, State Participation Manager and Event Manager) will be working four days per week, Monday through Thursday. Member Service Coordinators, Game Development Officers, Sport, Event and Technical support staff, will all be working three days per week, Tuesday through Thursday. Staff remain in place in a reduced capacity to assist our Touch Football community; however, it may mean that response times are slightly longer in some instances.

These are unprecedented times, and like everyone else, the NSWTA has been affected. While it is a difficult decision to make, we do have to act for the health and wellbeing of the organisation, in a manner that gives us the best platform to assist all our affiliates through recovery.

It was challenging to give the news to so many dedicated, hard-working staff who consistently go above and beyond what is required to assist our members. While a decision to ensure we can manage today to enable tomorrow was needed, it did not make it any easier. I would acknowledge and thank the staff for how they have understood and accepted the decision but also for the professionalism in the way they have handled it.

As we move through this COVID-19 situation, I can advise Affiliates, Regions and members alike that the Board and the staff continue to work on critical items of the business.

All can be contacted via their email or mobile phone. [Click here to find the relevant contacts](https://www.nswtouch.com.au/state-office/).

**Affiliate Competitions**

We have been buoyed by the current discussions with several our Season 1 Affiliates who are looking to start their planning processes to run a Season 1 when we are allowed to play again. Even if these are only short competitions. We would encourage all affiliates to continue with your planning efforts and ensure your bookings are in place. I would like to thank these Affiliates again for their efforts in pulling together for the greater good at this time of unforeseen crisis. In conjunction with both TFA and QTF, we consider it vital that we provide ongoing guidance to our membership on our current thinking as to when our Affiliates look to commence and or recommence. As you are aware, the temporary national suspension of all community competitions is in place until June 1 2020. I can advise that this matter is discussed weekly between all three bodies. Also, the National Cabinet will shortly look at a process by which community sport can return to play. At this point, we are not aware of what that plan will look like; however, in line with other relaxations, it is likely to be a staged approach. What we do know is that in NSW, the current NSW Public Health (COVID-19 Restrictions on Gathering and Movement) Order 2020 (Public Health Order) is presently in force until Monday, June 29 2020. While we have seen in recent days some level of relaxation and this is encouraging, these have not yet been extended to community sport.

While challenging and we all certainly acknowledge this, it does not mean that Affiliates cannot continue their planning and preparation for a potential late or deferred Season 1 in 2020. As the famous American College Basketball coach John Wooden said- ***“do not let what you can’t do, interfere with what you can do.”***

**NSWTA Events**

NSWTA has continued to work on scenario planning to prepare for what the 2020 senior representative season might look. These are primarily subject to the status of the public health orders and the level of rewinding of current lockdown provisions. However, we will continue to put plans in place for our events to occur should the green light be given. Some of these plans involve a ‘look and feel’ of events that many may not recognise. While it is our goal to be able to run our usual suite of events, they may not be able (for 2020) to be run in their typical fashion. Should we be under any restrictions, we are looking at innovative ways to both comply with those orders and run the events. Everyone would appreciate that there is still a lot we do not know about how NSW will roll out of the current Public Health Orders and isolation protocols. How all tiers of Government respond will dictate the when and importantly the how our events can be played.

 Best wishes and stay safe,

Dean Russell

General Manager

New South Wales Touch Association