

## Lakes Entrance Football Netball Club

***“In Victoria’s country towns, it doesn’t get much bigger than the local football netball club”***



Whether it be for exercise, friendships, social connections, a day out, to attend an event or watch a friend or family member, most residents of country towns have engaged in some way with the local football netball club. These clubs are the epicentre and social fabric that bind a community. As such, they have a pivotal role to play in the promotion of a healthy and happy community.

The Lakes Entrance Football Netball Club plays in the East Gippsland Football Netball League, a competition with eight clubs across the area. The football club has won four senior premierships: in 1988, back to back in 1994 and 1995, and the most recent being in 2003. The Reserve grade side has won more than twenty flags in that time including 2012, while the thirds have also tasted plenty of success over the years, from winning their first in 1974 through to capturing the 2012 premiership. The under 16’s won the premiership in 2014.

A few years ago the netball club and football club amalgamated. The netball club has four senior sides: A, B, C and D grade. The juniors consist of 17 and under and 15 and under. The club has won five A grade premierships - 1995, 1998, 2005, 2006 and 2012. B grade had plenty of success in that time too, with the most recent win in 2011. The C grade side won the flag in 2012 and D grade achieved the ultimate success in 2008.

The Lakes Entrance Junior Football club fields three sides each year in the Bairnsdale & District Football League. In 2012 they had two sides in each age level: U16, U14 and U12.

There are qualified coaches in every team and home games at Lakes Entrance every second weekend. Rounding out the involvement for all ages, the Auskick program is a great success with more than 80 children registered. The junior club is in the process of amalgamating with the senior club to strengthen the core base of volunteers.

In 2012 the club joined the VicHealth Healthy Sporting Environments (HSE) program and re-entered the Level 3 - Good Sports Club program after exiting the program in previous years. The club wanted to ensure that they were proactively supporting the members to drink responsibly as well as creating a family friendly culture at the club. Jaquie Nethercote from GippSport jumped at the opportunity to work with Lakes Entrance Football Netball Club, *“it was great to see a strong local club commit to the HSE program and try some new initiatives in a traditional sporting environment”*.

Involvement in the program led to the club actively promoting awareness of injury prevention through the ‘*smart play*’ posters, implementation of a Medical Emergency plan, appointment of a safety coordinator, development of Codes of Conduct protocols and distribution of handbooks that the AFL Vic Country provide, including the league codes of conduct protocols. The club’s mission and vision statement was also reviewed as a part of the HSE process.

To ensure the sustainability of this program, the club have developed new policies including a Smoke Free policy, Alcohol Management policy and Social Media policy, which are all on the club website. In 2014 the club conducted two social media training sessions and developed a social media policy with input from the members. Danny Moorhouse, club Vice President said, *“the development of these policies has been critical to the members understanding the issues and the complex role that clubs have to play”*.

With four women on the committee and female sports trainers, this club is working hard to ensure they are progressive and fair. The club attracts many indigenous players and has a number of facilities that are accessible to the community. They are thinking ‘outside the box’ for ideas that will further embed their policies developed as part of the HSE program. In 2014 the club trialled the first ‘car free match’ which meant that people had to park outside of the reserve. This made it easier to control alcohol being brought into the ground and to manage the crowd. It was a very large event that attracted approximately 2,000 people.

Lakes Entrance Football Netball Club is a proud and respected club. Its ability to improve and support a healthy lifestyle for its members and visitors is being played out week in and week out. Through the Smoke Free policy, injury prevention strategies and work in managing alcohol, the club has developed an environment and culture to not only progress the club, but also to support the health and wellbeing of each individual who comes into contact with it. Their work is not yet done, but through the HSE program the club has made significant improvements. Country towns need clubs like this.