



Hunter Netball Guidelines

Modern, athlete-centred guidance for players, coaches, officials and volunteers

Read with the Hunter Netball Constitution and all current Netball Australia and Netball NSW policies, competition rules and pathway requirements.

1. Purpose and scope

Hunter Netball brings together affiliated associations across the Hunter region to provide a clear pre-elite pathway for players, coaches, managers, umpires and bench officials.

Hunter Netball is a not-for-profit organisation. Its money and resources must be used to develop pathway opportunities, including relevant Netball NSW competitions.

These guidelines explain how Hunter Netball will govern, select, develop and support people in its pre-elite programs. Competition rules and current governing-body policies take priority if they conflict with this document.

Hunter Netball aligns its programs with the Netball NSW athlete pathway, including the Foundation, Talent, Elite and Mastery framework and the “Sparkle, Strive, Shine” approach. The program sits mainly in the talent and pre-elite stages and helps participants prepare for higher pathway opportunities.

Our aim is to identify potential, develop the whole person and support long-term progress. Selection does not guarantee future selection or progression.

We provide the right support at the right time through quality coaching, appropriate challenge, individual feedback, safe training loads and access to competition.

Hunter Netball’s colours are sky blue, yellow, white and black, reflecting the foundation colours of the former Hunter Jaegers.

2. Program principles

Hunter Netball will provide a positive, challenging and supportive environment that develops players, coaches, managers, umpires and bench officials for the next level of the pathway.

The program is athlete-centred and considers technical skill, tactical understanding, decision-making, physical preparation, recovery, wellbeing, education, work and family commitments.

Talent develops at different rates. Selectors and coaches will consider current performance, potential, coachability, effort, learning speed, integrity and readiness for the program.

Training will follow a logical progression based on the Netball Australia Skills Development Framework. Players should build sound technique, decision-making and spatial awareness before moving to greater complexity.

The Executive Committee is accountable for good governance, fair processes, child safety, financial oversight, risk management and regular communication with member associations.

2.1 What participants can expect

- Clear program goals, selection criteria and role expectations.
- Individual feedback and development priorities.
- Planned training, match play and recovery that suit the participant’s stage of development.
- A safe, inclusive and respectful environment.
- Reasonable adjustments where practical, without changing the essential requirements of the program.

- Clear ways to raise a concern, report unsafe conduct or request a process review.

3. Policy alignment, integrity and child safety

The Executive Committee will review these guidelines every year and whenever a governing-body policy, competition rule or legal requirement changes. Material changes will be shared with member associations before they take effect.

Where practical, changes will apply from the next program cycle. Safety, integrity, legal or competition-rule changes may apply immediately.

Everyone involved in Hunter Netball must follow the current Netball Australia Integrity Policy Framework, the Code of Conduct for Community Netball, the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy, the Member Protection Policy, the relevant Sports Medicine Policy, current concussion guidance, and all applicable Netball NSW policies and competition rules.

Current policy areas include adverse weather; infectious disease; photography and media; pregnancy; social media; work health and safety; healthy food and drink; privacy; complaints and discipline; competition manipulation and wagering; inclusion; safeguarding; member protection; and sports medicine.

Hunter Netball will publish or point participants to the current policy source rather than rely on PDF links. Procedures may be updated at any time to stay consistent with governing-body requirements.

3.1 Child-safe practice

- Child safety comes before performance outcomes.
- All child-related roles must meet current Working with Children Check, registration, screening and training requirements.
- Adults must use approved communication channels and follow child-safe practices for transport, changing areas, overnight stays, photography and one-to-one contact.
- Concerns about abuse, harm, neglect or prohibited conduct must be reported promptly through the required channel. Immediate danger must be reported to emergency services.
- A person who raises a concern must be treated fairly and protected from victimisation.

4. Membership and fees

Member association fees will be approved and communicated each year through Hunter Netball's governance and budget process. Fees should be fair, transparent and based on an agreed membership measure.

- The annual fee schedule will state each membership band, amount, invoice date and due date.
- Membership numbers include junior and senior playing members unless the approved schedule says otherwise.
- An association that does not pay by the due date may lose ordinary-member rights in line with the Constitution.

- Financial hardship or payment-plan requests will be considered fairly and confidentially.

4.1 Athlete Hunter Netball fees

- Hunter Netball will advise each athlete of the annual program fee, what it covers and the payment arrangements before the athlete accepts their position.
- All Hunter Netball athlete fees must be paid in full by 30 June each year.
- An athlete or their parent or guardian must contact Hunter Netball before the due date if they need to request a confidential payment plan or financial-hardship arrangement. Any approved arrangement must be in writing.
- An athlete who withdraws remains liable for the percentage of the program period during which they were part of the program. Hunter Netball will calculate this amount on a pro-rata basis from the athlete's accepted start date to their effective withdrawal date.
- Any non-refundable costs already committed specifically for the athlete, such as registration, competition, uniform, venue, travel or service-provider costs, may also remain payable where this was explained in the fee schedule.
- The effective withdrawal date is the date Hunter Netball receives written notice, unless Hunter Netball approves another date because of exceptional circumstances.
- Any amount paid above the athlete's final liability will be refunded. Any outstanding amount remains payable by the due date stated in the final account.
- An athlete with outstanding Hunter Netball fees is not eligible to apply for the following year's program until all outstanding fees are paid in full, unless the Executive Committee grants a written exemption. The Executive Committee may set conditions on an exemption and will consider requests fairly and confidentially.

5. Selection governance

The Executive Committee will appoint selection panels before trials. Appointments should cover the full selection period, so decisions are consistent.

Each panel will normally have at least three voting selectors. The Executive Committee may approve a different number when required by a competition rule or an exceptional circumstance, provided the process remains fair and documented.

Panels should include independent expertise and may include appointed coaches. A selector with an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest must declare it before selection and follow the approved conflict-management plan, which may include leaving the discussion or not scoring a player.

Selectors must be current registered members, understand the relevant pathway and competition level, and hold the required Netball Australia learning or accreditation for their role. Selection-specific education should be completed where available.

Selectors must attend all scheduled sessions unless the Selection Convenor approves an alternative. Players should be observed across relevant technical, tactical, physical and performance-behaviour criteria.

Selectors must keep information confidential, use the published criteria, record scores and reasons consistently, and comply with integrity, member-protection, safeguarding and

privacy requirements. Selection records will be stored securely for the period set by Hunter Netball.

5.1 Selection criteria

- Current skill and game performance.
- Decision-making and ability to apply feedback.
- Physical readiness appropriate to the role and stage, assessed safely and without diagnosis by selectors.
- Potential for development and capacity to meet the program's demands.
- Team balance, positional coverage and competition requirements.
- Performance behaviours, including effort, communication, reliability and respect.

6. Player nominations and trials

Hunter Netball will publish nomination and trial information with enough notice for players to prepare. Information will include eligibility, fees, key dates, selection criteria, required forms, expected commitment, available adjustments and contact details.

Notices will be shared through official Hunter Netball channels and member association networks.

Players must submit the approved nomination form by the stated deadline. Late nominations may be accepted only where the published process allows it or exceptional circumstances are approved and documented.

Players will receive the date, time, venue, check-in requirements, trial format and contact details as early as practical and normally at least seven days before the trial.

Players should arrive by the stated check-in time, complete any required screening and advise staff promptly if they are delayed.

Players must wear safe, suitable sports clothing and footwear. Trial clothing should not identify a current association, academy or Netball NSW program unless Hunter Netball advises otherwise.

Each player will be identified by a trial number or another neutral method used consistently by selectors.

Hunter Netball will aim to give players fair court time in their nominated positions. Equal time cannot always be guaranteed because of attendance, injury, team balance or safety.

The panel may ask a player to trial in another position to assess versatility or meet positional needs. This will not unfairly reduce the player's assessment in their nominated positions.

Before the trial ends, players will have a clear opportunity to tell the Selection Convenor if they believe they were not assessed in a nominated position.

A player who is injured, ill or unable to attend must contact Hunter Netball as soon as possible. The panel may use verified prior observations, arrange another assessment, offer a later trial where practical, or decide that there is not enough evidence to select. Medical information will be limited to what is reasonably needed for safety and participation.

7. Squad and team selection

Hunter Netball may first select a development squad. Timing will be set each year to support the relevant competition and pathway calendar.

The panel will decide squad size using program capacity, player needs, positional balance and the published pathway purpose.

Squad members must take part in the agreed training, education, match simulation, fitness, recovery and wellbeing activities. Individual development goals will be reviewed during the program.

7.1 Athlete selection categoriescategories7.1 Final teams and training partners

Final selections will be completed in time to meet the relevant Netball NSW registration and competition deadlines. An athlete may be selected into one of the following categories:

- **Metro League Team:** an athlete selected and registered as a team member for a specific Netball NSW Metro League division. The athlete must meet the current Netball NSW age and eligibility requirements for that division.
- **Training Partner:** an athlete appointed to train with a Metro League team to support their development and the team's training needs. A Training Partner must meet the current Netball NSW age and eligibility requirements for the specific division to which they are appointed. Appointment as a Training Partner does not guarantee match selection or registration.
- **Future Partners Program:** a development opportunity for athletes who are 15 or 16 years of age in the relevant program year. Future Partners are not selected as Metro League players or Training Partners unless they separately meet all Netball NSW requirements and are formally appointed to one of those categories.

Hunter Netball will state each athlete's category, role, training expectations, fees, match eligibility and review arrangements in writing. A category may be changed only through a documented selection or appointment decision and, where relevant, in line with current Netball NSW competition rules.

Selection decisions are based on the panel's judgement against the published criteria and are not re-run because a player disagrees with the outcome. A player may request a process review if they believe the published process was not followed, there was a material conflict of interest, or relevant information was not considered. A review does not reassess selectors' sporting judgement unless a process error affected the decision.

Hunter Netball will notify players privately as soon as practical. Public announcements will be made only after acceptance and any required consent, and in line with privacy, safeguarding, photography and social media requirements.

7.2 Vacancies after selection

- A suitable training partner or squad member may be offered the position.
- If no suitable person is available before the season, Hunter Netball may run a targeted or open supplementary selection process.
- During the season, an eligible replacement may be appointed in line with competition rules, team needs and a documented approval by the Executive Committee.

- All replacements must meet registration, integrity, safeguarding and eligibility requirements before joining program activities.

8. Selected-player expectations

Selected players must:

- Follow all applicable codes, integrity policies, safeguarding requirements, team standards and competition rules.
- Take an active part in agreed training, matches, education, recovery, team activities and individual development reviews.
- Communicate early about availability, workload, injury, illness, study, work or wellbeing concerns.
- Use mobile devices, images and social media only in line with team instructions and policy.
- Meet agreed financial, uniform, equipment and fundraising requirements, with confidential support pathways available for hardship.
- Treat teammates, opponents, officials, volunteers and staff with respect.
- Return Hunter Netball property in good condition, allowing for fair wear and tear.

Attendance will be managed case by case. There is no automatic monthly absence allowance or automatic requirement for a medical certificate. Players must notify the Team Manager or Coach as soon as practical. Hunter Netball may ask for reasonable evidence where needed for safety, return-to-play planning, competition eligibility or repeated unexplained absence.

8.1 Health and return to play

- Players must promptly tell the Team Manager or Coach about any illness, medical condition, medication change or other health issue that may affect safe participation.
- A player must not train or play while unwell where participation could worsen the condition, place others at risk or prevent safe performance.
- A medical certificate may be requested where the illness is prolonged. Written, a return- to- play clearance certificate may also be required before the player resumes training or competition.

8.2 Injury and return to play

- All injuries must be reported promptly to the Team Manager or Coach and recorded in the required injury or incident record.
- The athlete should be assessed and managed by an appropriately qualified treating physiotherapist or doctor. Hunter Netball officials must not diagnose an injury.
- After each treatment or review session, the athlete must provide Hunter Netball with updated written advice from the treating physiotherapist or doctor. The advice must cover the athlete's current status, permitted activity, restrictions, rehabilitation requirements, expected next review and any change to the return-to-play plan.
- The athlete, parent or guardian remains responsible for arranging ordinary treatment. Hunter Netball may refer the athlete to a physiotherapist or doctor of Hunter Netball's choice for an independent assessment or second opinion. Hunter Netball will pay the reasonable cost of the requested assessment and written opinion.

- The athlete must provide a written return-to-play plan before taking part in any training session, including modified training. The plan must set out clear stages, permitted netball and conditioning activities, restrictions, progression criteria and the date for clinical review.
- Training and match loads will be increased gradually and only within the treating practitioner's written advice. Pain, swelling, loss of function, a new symptom, a setback or failure to meet a progression criterion must be reported immediately and may require the athlete to stop or step back.
- Final clearance to return to unrestricted training and competition must be provided in writing by the treating doctor or physiotherapist, unless Hunter Netball reasonably requires medical clearance from a doctor because of the injury's nature or severity.
- If advice differs, is unclear or is out of date, Hunter Netball may pause participation until it receives enough current information to make a safe decision.

8.3 Concussion return to play

- Any player with a suspected concussion must be removed from training or play immediately and must not return that day. If in doubt, sit them out.
- The incident and all head impacts must be recorded using the current required assessment or incident process. Red-flag symptoms require urgent medical assessment or emergency care.
- The player must be assessed by an appropriately qualified healthcare practitioner and follow the current Netball Australia Guidelines for the Management of Sports Related Concussion in Netball — NA Pathways, Youth and Community Netball.
- A separate written concussion return-to-play plan must be provided to the Team Manager before the player takes part in any training session. It must cover return to school, study or work where relevant, symptom monitoring, staged physical activity, netball-specific progression, medical reviews and final clearance.
- The player must progress through the graded return-to-play stages without symptoms and must step back if symptoms return. Hunter Netball will apply the current minimum stand-down period and medical-clearance requirements in the Netball Australia guidelines; the current community and pathway minimum is 21 days from the concussion incident, with return no earlier than day 21 and only after medical clearance.
- No coach, manager, athlete or parent may shorten the staged process, override medical advice or use a general injury clearance instead of the separate concussion plan and clearance.
- Hunter Netball may refer the athlete to a doctor or other appropriately qualified practitioner of its choice for an independent concussion opinion and will pay the reasonable cost of that requested assessment and written opinion.
- Where the current Netball Australia concussion guidance changes, the current guidance applies immediately.

8.4 Managing concerns about participation

- Hunter Netball will first discuss the concern with the player and, for a child, their parent or guardian where appropriate.
- The player will be told the concern, the expected improvement, the support available and a reasonable review period.

- Temporary modification or withdrawal may occur immediately where safety, integrity or competition eligibility requires it.
- Any decision to replace or remove a player must be documented, proportionate, consistent with policy and approved by the Executive Committee.
- The player may use the relevant grievance, complaint or review pathway.

9. Team officials

The Executive Committee will appoint team officials through a fair, documented process using role descriptions, selection criteria, conflict declarations, screening and reference checks appropriate to the role.

A family relationship does not automatically prevent appointment. Any actual, potential or perceived conflict must be declared and managed so that decisions remain fair, safe and transparent.

9.1 Head coaches and assistant coaches

Hunter Netball will invite coach applications in time for the next program cycle.

Applicants must:

- Show relevant experience and provide a current coaching résumé.
- Hold the current Netball Australia accreditation required for the role and competition. For representative, talent-identification and state-league environments, Intermediate or higher accreditation may be expected depending on the role.
- Meet current registration, Working with Children Check, safeguarding and screening requirements.
- Explain how they will plan, deliver and review an athlete-centred program across the season.
- Commit to continuing professional development and current rules knowledge.

9.2 Coach responsibilities

- Plan and deliver safe, engaging and progressive technical, tactical, physical and performance-behaviour development.
- Set individual and team goals, provide timely feedback and review progress.
- Use appropriate training loads, recovery and return-to-play practices, and refer health matters to qualified professionals.
- Create an inclusive, child-safe environment and use approved communication channels.
- Work with the Team Manager and support staff, with any additional specialist approved before involvement.
- Keep necessary information private and share it only for safety, participation or lawful program administration.
- Report safeguarding, integrity, welfare and serious conduct concerns through the required channel.
- Manage conflicts of interest and avoid taking part in decisions where impartiality may reasonably be questioned.
- Wear approved uniform and model the required standards of behaviour.

9.3 Team managers

Hunter Netball will invite Team Manager applications in time for the next program cycle.

Applicants must show relevant experience, provide a current résumé, and meet current registration, Working with Children Check, safeguarding and screening requirements. Team Bench accreditation is desirable where the competition requires regular bench-official liaison.

Appointed Team Managers must:

- Follow all relevant codes, policies, child-safe practices and competition rules.
- Coordinate team administration, attendance, travel, uniforms, equipment and approved communications.
- Keep emergency contacts, consent, medical-management information and other records secure and accessible only to authorised people.
- Support the coach to manage availability, workload, injury and wellbeing concerns without diagnosing or disclosing unnecessary personal information.
- Ensure travel, overnight stays, photography and changing-area arrangements follow current safeguarding requirements.
- Report safety, safeguarding, integrity and serious conduct concerns promptly.
- Manage declared conflicts of interest.
- Return Hunter Netball property and records at the end of the season.

10. Umpires and bench officials

Hunter Netball will invite expressions of interest from umpires and bench officials in time for the next program cycle.

Applicants should hold or be working towards the national accreditation required for the relevant competition and comply with current registration, integrity and child-safety requirements.

Where Netball NSW appoints or allocates officials, Hunter Netball will provide nominations and information in the required format and will respect the governing body's final allocation decision.

Officials may be invited to team training and match simulation to develop fitness, communication and game understanding. Participation must be planned, safe and consistent with the official's development needs.

11. Important fact sheet for athletes and families

What to expect from the Hunter Netball program

This summary is a quick guide only. The Hunter Netball Guidelines, Constitution, current Netball Australia and Netball NSW policies, competition rules, team communications and the athlete's written offer apply.

Program and selection

- The program is athlete-centred and prepares participants for higher pathway opportunities.

- Selection considers performance, potential, coachability, effort, learning, reliability, respect, team balance and positional needs.
- Selection does not guarantee future selection, progression or match time.
- Athletes will be told in writing whether they are a Metro League player, Training Partner or Future Partner, together with their role, eligibility, fees and review arrangements.
- A process review may be requested if the published selection process was not followed; it is not a re-assessment simply because an athlete disagrees with the outcome.

Fees and financial commitments

- The annual offer and fee schedule will explain the program fee, what it covers and payment arrangements before acceptance.
- All Hunter Netball athlete fees must be paid in full by **30 June** each year.
- Contact Hunter Netball before the due date to request a confidential payment plan or financial-hardship arrangement; approval must be in writing.
- Withdrawing athletes remain responsible for the pro-rata program period already used and any disclosed, non-refundable costs committed for them.
- Written notice determines the effective withdrawal date unless another date is approved due to exceptional circumstances.
- Outstanding fees must generally be paid before applying for the next year's program, unless a written exemption is granted.
- Additional financial obligations may include uniform, equipment and approved fundraising requirements.

Training, games and development

- Athletes are expected to participate actively in scheduled training, match play, education, recovery, team activities and development reviews.
- Training will be progressive and may include technical and tactical work, decision-making, conditioning, match simulation, recovery and wellbeing activities.
- Loads will be planned for the athlete's stage and adjusted where needed for safety, injury, illness, study, work or wellbeing.
- Metro League players may be eligible for games subject to current competition rules, registration, team needs and coach selection.
- Training Partners train with a team but are not guaranteed match selection or registration.
- Future Partners are development athletes and are not Metro League players or Training Partners unless separately eligible and formally appointed.
- Athletes must wear approved uniform, bring required equipment and follow team instructions for arrival, travel, devices, images and social media.

Attendance and communication

- Advise the Team Manager or Coach as early as possible about absence, lateness, availability, workload, injury, illness, study, work or wellbeing concerns.
- Attendance is managed case by case. There is no automatic monthly absence allowance and no automatic requirement for a medical certificate.
- Reasonable evidence may be requested for safety, return-to-play planning, competition eligibility or repeated unexplained absence.

- Use approved communication channels. Parents or guardians should be included where required for child-safe communication.
- Treat teammates, opponents, officials, volunteers and staff respectfully and follow all codes, policies and team standards.

Illness

- Promptly tell the Team Manager or Coach about any illness, medical condition, medication change or health issue that could affect safe participation.
- Do not train or play if participation could worsen the condition, expose others to illness or prevent safe performance.
- Follow current infectious-disease and sports-medicine requirements.
- A medical certificate or written clearance may be requested for prolonged illness or before returning to training or competition.

Injury and return to play

- Report every injury promptly to the Team Manager or Coach so it can be recorded.
- Arrange assessment and treatment with an appropriately qualified physiotherapist or doctor; Hunter Netball officials do not diagnose injuries.
- After each treatment or review, provide updated written advice covering status, permitted activity, restrictions, rehabilitation, next review and any change to the plan.
- A written return-to-play plan is required before any training, including modified training.
- Progress only within the treating practitioner's advice. Report pain, swelling, loss of function, new symptoms or setbacks immediately.
- Written final clearance is required before unrestricted training and competition. Participation may be paused if advice is unclear, inconsistent or out of date.
- Hunter Netball may request an independent assessment or second opinion and will pay the reasonable cost of an assessment it requests.

Concussion: immediate action

- **Suspected concussion: remove the athlete immediately and do not allow a return that day. If in doubt, sit them out.**
- Record the incident and seek urgent medical assessment or emergency care for red-flag symptoms.
- The athlete must be assessed by an appropriately qualified healthcare practitioner and follow the current Netball Australia pathway, youth and community concussion guidance.
- A separate written concussion return-to-play plan is required before any training.
- The athlete must complete the graded process without symptoms, meet the current minimum stand-down period and obtain medical clearance before returning to play.
- No coach, manager, parent or athlete may shorten the process or override medical advice.

Family checklist

- Read the athlete's written offer, fee schedule, team calendar and communication instructions.
- Save the Team Manager and Coach contact details.
- Confirm emergency contacts, consent and relevant medical-management information are current.

- Tell staff early about clashes, concerns or support needs.
- Keep copies of medical advice, return-to-play plans and clearances.
- Check current competition information because fixtures, eligibility, fees and rules may change.
- Raise safety, safeguarding, integrity or serious conduct concerns promptly through the required channel; call emergency services for immediate danger.