

NATIONAL PREMIER LEAGUES (NPL) PLAYER ROSTER PRINCIPLES

Football Australia's XI Principles outlines the importance of ensuring alignment in the Australian football pyramid, which is connected through optimised and consistent competition structures, as well as establishing, evolving and growing a modern domestic transfer system (*DTS*).

The domestic transfer system includes a series of measures which are designed to grow the Australian football economy, reward and protect Clubs investing in player development, incentivise more Clubs to train and develop higher quality players, increase the length of contracts for young players, reduce unnecessary restrictions on the market, and comply with FIFA regulations.

In line with these principles, Football Australia presents the National Premier Leagues (*NPL*) Player Roster Principles. These principles include the below objectives, which align with the domestic transfer system initiatives:

- Provide greater opportunities to Australian players
- Ensure a focus on youth development
- Incentivise and reward Clubs that develop players
- Simplify the roster management system for the NPL
- Establish consistent roster principles at multiple levels of the football pyramid, with specific numbers and elements to be adapted for the level of competition

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GENERAL DEFINITIONS

The general definitions are provided for ease of reference.

The following discussion points and examples are intended to provide Member Federations and NPL Clubs with further clarity with respect to each 2026 NPL Roster Principle.

AUSTRALIAN PLAYER

An Australian Player is any player who is:

- (a) A citizen of Australia;
- (b) A permanent resident of Australia (where Permanent Resident means a person residing in Australia on a “permanent” visa class issued by the Australian Government, evidenced by either the person’s Visa Grant Notice or as a listed entitlement on the person’s online Visa Entitlement Verification); or
- (c) The holder of a refugee visa, humanitarian visa or protection visa issued by the Australian government. For further details, visit <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/>.

DOMESTIC TRAINING COMPENSATION

Domestic Training Compensation takes into account the Australian structure of Member Federations and National Leagues as well as the need to compensate Clubs that invest in the training and education of young Players. Domestic training compensation is due when a player registers as a professional for the first time or a professional is transferred between clubs and signs a subsequent professional player contract until the end of the season of his 23rd birthday.

FIRST TEAM

First Team means the NPL Club’s senior team participating in the NPL fixture.

FIRST TEAM PLAYER ROSTER

First Team Player Roster means the roster of Players for a NPL Club’s First Team maintained in accordance with the NPL Roster Principles and in line with NPL competition regulations provided by the applicable Member Federation.

HOMEGROWN PLAYER

A Player, who between the ages of 12 – 21, was registered for a period of three (3) entire seasons or 36 months in total (noting such periods are aggregate and not required to be continuous) with their NPL Club.

LOAN

Loan means the temporary transfer of a Player’s registration from the Parent Club to the Loan Club, effected in accordance with the FA National Registration, Status and Transfer Regulations.

LOAN CLUB

Loan Club means the Club to which the registration of a Player subject to a Loan is, will be, or has been temporarily transferred from a Parent Club for the term of a Loan.

MATCH DAY TEAM SHEET

Match Day Team Sheet means the list of minimum sixteen (16) and up to eighteen (18) players from the First Team Player Roster who will participate in a specific NPL fixture as a starter or as a potential substitute.

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NATIONAL PREMIER LEAGUE (NPL)

NPL means the national men's second tier club competition staged in each Member Federation in Australia.

NPL CLUB AGE-ELIGIBLE TEAMS

NPL Club Age-Eligible Teams are the teams that sit below the NPL Club First Team, including the reserve team, as determined by each Member Federation. For clarity purposes:

- where NPL Competitions commence from Under 12s, these include Under 12s through to Under 20/23
- where NPL Competitions commence from Under 13s, these include Under 13s through to Under 20/23
- where NPL Competitions commence from Under 14s, these include Under 14s through to Under 20/23

NPL CLUB

NPL Club means any entity admitted by a Member Federation to field a team in the NPL as per the conditions stipulated in the Club Participation Agreement and in compliance with the FA Club Licensing Regulations.

PARENT CLUB

Parent Club means the Club from which the registration of a Player subject to a Loan is, will be, or has been temporarily transferred to a Loan Club for the term of a Loan.

PROFESSIONAL

Professional means a Player who has a written contract with a Club, under which they are paid more than the expenses they effectively incur to play football for that Club. All Professionals on the First Team Player Roster must have a written contract and comply with clause 6 of the FA National Registration, Status and Transfer Regulations.

PROFESSIONAL PLAYER CONTRACT

Professional Player Contract means the legally binding document ([NRR Prescribed Form 05 –Professional Player Contract](#)) between two parties being the Player & NPL Club that defines and governs the rights and duties of the parties to an agreement, in accordance with the FA National Registration, Status and Transfer Regulations.

PLAYER LOAN

Player Loan means the temporary transfer of a Player's registration from that Player's Parent Club to the Player's Loan Club, effected in accordance with the FA National Registration, Status and Transfer Regulations.

PLAYER ROSTER PRINCIPLES

Player Roster Principles means the system of roster requirements set out in this document for the First Team Player Roster.

VISA PLAYER

A Visa Player is any Player who is not an Australian Player.

AFC/OFC VISA PLAYER

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An Asian Football Confederation (AFC) / Oceania Football Confederation (OFC) Visa Player is any player who is not an Australian Player and who holds a citizenship from an AFC or OFC Member Association nation. Annexures 1 and 2 outline the list of AFC and OFC Member Association nations, respectively.

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NATIONAL PREMIER LEAGUE (NPL) FIRST TEAM PLAYER ROSTER PRINCIPLES

ROSTER CATEGORY	ROSTER PRINCIPLE
Player Roster Minimum and Maximum	<p>NPL First Team Player Rosters must have a minimum of 20 and a maximum of 23 players.</p> <p>All First Team Player Rosters must have a minimum of two (2) Australian Goalkeepers always listed.</p> <p>All First Team Player Rosters must have a minimum of six (6) U23 Players on the Match Day Team Sheet, with a requirement of at least three (3) of these players being an U20 player.</p> <p>*Goalkeepers that are U23 or U20 will be considered U23 or U20 Youth Players on the First Team Player Roster.</p>
U20 Youth Player	<p>A U20 Youth Player is 20 years of age or younger as at 31 December of the current NPL Season.</p> <p>A U23 Youth Player is 23 years of age or younger as at 31 December of the current NPL season.</p> <p>Season 2026: NPL First Team Player Rosters must have a minimum of three (3) U23 Players on the Matchday Team Sheet, with a requirement of at least one (1) of these players being an U20 player.</p>
U23 Youth Player	<p>*Starting goalkeepers that are U23 or U20 will be considered U23 or U20 Youth Players on Match Day Team Sheet.</p> <p>*Substitute goalkeepers that are U23 or U20 will not be considered U23 or U20 Youth Players on Match Day Team Sheet.</p> <p>*Visa Players that are U23 or U20 will not be considered as U23 or U20 Youth Players.</p>
Visa Player	<p>A Visa Player is any Player who is not an Australian Player.</p> <p>An NPL Club may have a maximum of two (2) outfield Visa Players plus one (1) outfield AFC/OFC Visa Player on their NPL First Team Player Roster at any one time.</p> <p>An AFC/OFC Visa Player is any player who is not an Australian player and who holds a citizenship from an AFC or OFC Member Association.</p> <p>*Goalkeepers who are not classified as an Australian Player will not be permitted to be on an NPL First Team Player Roster.</p> <p>*Goalkeepers who are not Australian Players with pre-existing multiyear professional contracts (executed and in force prior to 19 September 2024) with an NPL Club for the 2026 season will be permitted to be listed on the NPL First Team Player Roster.</p>
Homegrown Player	<p>An NPL Club must have a minimum of three (3) Homegrown Players on their NPL First Team Player Roster. For Clarity, this is a Player, who between the ages of 12 – 21, was registered for a period of three (3) entire seasons or 36 months in total (noting such periods are aggregate and not required to be continuous) with their NPL Club.</p>
Loaned Players	<p>In line with FIFA and FA implemented loan provisions, NPL Clubs will adhere to a limit on the total number of domestic and international loans, as outlined below and in the Football Australia National Registration, Status and Transfer Regulations:</p>

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Domestic Loans:

Six (6) players loaned out and six players loaned in from 1 July 2024 & beyond.

International Loans:

Six (6) players loaned out and six players loaned in from 1 July 2024 & beyond.

Additionally, a maximum of three (3) players may be loaned out to the same club and a maximum of three (3) players may be loaned in from the same club.

For both international and domestic loans, the loan of a player is exempt from the total loan limits if the professional is a club-trained player with the parent club, as defined in the Football Australia National Registration, Status and Transfer Regulations (NRSTRs), and the loan occurs before the end of the season in which the player turns 21.

NPL FIRST TEAM PLAYER ROSTER PRINCIPLES - ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional information for each player roster category and principle outlined in the above table, as well as a few related domestic transfer system initiatives, is included below.

FIRST TEAM PLAYER ROSTER MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM

At all times during a NPL season, a NPL Club must include a minimum of 20 Players on its First Team Player Roster and may include a maximum of 23 Players on its First Team Player Roster.

All Players must be registered to the appropriate age-category (where applicable). Any Player who during the 2026 NPL season exceeds the age-limit for the oldest NPL Age-Eligible Team at an NPL Club (e.g. a 24-year-old in an U23 competition), must be included on his NPL Club's First Team Player Roster.

All NRR Prescribed Form 05 –Professional Player Contracted Players must be listed on to NPL Club First Team Roster and registered through the [Domestic Transfer Matching System \(DTMS\)](#) as necessary.

NPL Club First Team Player Rosters must list a minimum of two (2) Australian Goalkeepers.

U23 AND U20 YOUTH PLAYERS

Football Australia is committed to promoting a greater focus on the importance of youth development in an increasingly competitive global market.

As a result, one of the key Player Roster Principles in 2026 will capture the requirement for NPL Clubs to list a minimum of three (3) U23 Youth Players on its NPL Club First Team Matchday Team Sheet of up to eighteen (18) players, of which one (1) must be U20 Youth Players, with the aim of increasing match minutes for youth players. This minimum will increase to six (6) U23 Youth Players in 2027, of which three (3) must be U20 Youth Players.

Please refer to the table below which categorises Youth Player year of birth for the 2026 NPL season:

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PLAYER'S AGE AS AT 31 DECEMBER IN CURRENT NPL SEASON

23 years old (2003)
22 years old (2004)
21 years old (2005)
20 years old (2006)
19 years old (2007)
18 years old (2008)
17 years old (2009)
16 years old (2010)

AUSTRALIAN PLAYER

An Australian Player is any Player who is:

- a) a citizen of Australia;
- b) a Permanent Resident of Australia (where Permanent Resident means a person residing in Australia on a "permanent" visa class issued by the Australian Government, evidenced by either the person's Visa Grant Notice or as a listed entitlement on the person's online Visa Entitlement Verification); or
- c) the holder of a refugee visa, humanitarian visa or protection visa issued by the Australian government. For further details see: <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/>.

VISA PLAYER

Member Federations and NPL Clubs are encouraged to refer to the following website for further clarification regarding visas: <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/>.

For the purposes of the NPL Player Roster Principles, a New Zealand Citizen is classified as a Visa Player unless he satisfies the definition of an Australian Player. Please refer to the Department of Home Affairs for further clarification regarding the visa status of New Zealand Citizens in Australia: <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/>.

HOMEGROWN PLAYER

The Homegrown Player category is a Football Australia initiative to encourage more players on the First Team Player Roster to be developed within the Club from an earlier age, with the intention of promoting investment into club-based talent between the ages of **U12 to U21**. In 2026, an NPL Club must have a minimum of three (3) Homegrown Players on their NPL First Team Player Roster.

A Player does not need to be registered in continuous seasons in a NPL Club's Age-Eligible Teams to be considered as Homegrown Player.

Example: A player is required to be registered to an NPL Club for a total of three (3) seasons or 36 months. For avoidance of doubt, this may be for the **U12** and U16 and U20 teams, and the player could have been registered with another Club for his **U13, U14 & U18 season**.

LOANED PLAYER

In line with FIFA implemented international loan provisions and Football Australia implemented domestic loan provisions, NPL Clubs will adhere to a limit on the total number of domestic and international loans, as outlined below:

Domestic Loans: Six (6) players loaned out and six players loaned in from 1 July 2024 and beyond.

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International Loans: Six (6) players loaned out and six players loaned in from 1 July 2024 and beyond.

Additionally, a maximum of three (3) players may be loaned out to the same club and a maximum of three (3) players may be loaned in from the same club.

Example: The below table provides an example which uses South Melbourne FC as a Parent Club. Two of the requested loans have been denied due to the regulations as outlined.

For avoidance of doubt for both international and domestic loans, the loan of a player is exempt from the total loan limits if the professional is a club-trained player with the parent club, as defined in the Football Australia National Registration, Status and Transfer Regulations (NRSTRs), and the loan occurs before the end of the season in which the player turns 21.

Player	Player Status	Parent Club	Loan Club	Approval
Player 1	Professional	South Melbourne FC	Marconi Stallions	Approved
Player 2	Professional	South Melbourne FC	Marconi Stallions	Approved
Player 3	Professional	South Melbourne FC	Marconi Stallions	Approved
Player 4	Professional	South Melbourne FC	Marconi Stallions	Denied: Maximum Quota of three (3) players to the one Club have been exhausted. Denied: Player must be signed to a professional contract with Parent Club and registered on DTMS before Loan can take place, whereby the Loan Club also signs the player on a professional contract.
Player 5	Amateur	South Melbourne FC	Gold Coast Knights FC	Approved
Player 6	Professional	South Melbourne FC	Adelaide City FC	Approved
Player 7	Professional	South Melbourne FC	Hume City FC	Approved

DOMESTIC TRAINING COMPENSATION

The current Domestic Training Compensation system is outlined in clause 14 of the FA National Registration, Status and Transfer Regulations. FA is currently in consultations to update the domestic training compensation system from a one-time payment to an annual payment, with updated amounts and club categories anticipated to be introduced prior to the 2026 NPL season. This document will be updated accordingly once these updates have been implemented.

2026 NPL FIRST TEAM PLAYER ROSTER EXAMPLE

#	Player	Status	Category	Notes
1	Goalkeeper	Australian Player	Unrestricted	
2	Goalkeeper	Australian Player	Unrestricted	
3	Player	Australian Player	Unrestricted	
4	Player	Australian Player	Unrestricted	
5	Player	Australian Player	Unrestricted	
6	Player	Australian Player	Unrestricted	
7	Player	Australian Player	Unrestricted	
8	Player	Australian Player	Unrestricted	
9	Player	Australian Player	Unrestricted	
10	Player	Australian Player	Unrestricted	
11	Player	Australian Player	Unrestricted	

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12	Player	Australian Player	Unrestricted	
13	Player	Australian Player	Unrestricted	
14	Player	Australian Player	Unrestricted	
15	Player	AFC/OFC Visa Player	Unrestricted	Does not qualify as a Youth Player Does not qualify as a Homegrown Player
16	Visa Player	Visa Player	Unrestricted	Does not qualify as a Youth Player Does not qualify as a Homegrown Player
17	Visa Player	Visa Player	Unrestricted	Does not qualify as a Youth Player Does not qualify as a Homegrown Player
18	U23 Player	Australian Player	Youth Player	
19	U23 Player	Australian Player	Youth Player	
20	U23 Player	Australian Player	Youth Player	
21	U20 Player	Australian Player	Youth Player	
22	U20 Player	Australian Player	Youth Player	
23	U20 Player	Australian Player	Youth Player	

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2026 NPL FIRST TEAM MATCHDAY TEAM SHEET EXAMPLE

#	Player	Notes
1	Goalkeeper	Team Sheet
2	Player	Team Sheet
3	Player	Team Sheet
4	Player	Team Sheet
5	Player	Team Sheet
6	Player	Team Sheet
7	U20 Player	Team Sheet
8	U23 Player	Team Sheet
9	U23 Player	Team Sheet
10	Player	Team Sheet
11	Visa Player	Team Sheet
12	Goalkeeper	Team Sheet
13	Player (Home Grown Player)	Team Sheet
14	Player	Team Sheet
15	Player	Team Sheet
16	Player	Team Sheet
17	Visa AFC/OFC Player	Team Sheet
18	Visa Player	Team Sheet
19	Player	NA
20	U23 Player (Home Grown Player)	NA
21	U20 Player	NA
22	U23 Player	NA
23	U20 Player (Home Grown Player)	NA

- In the instance where an U20/U23 player is unavailable for selection due to injury or suspension, the NPL Club is required to replace this player with a like for like player from within its NPL Club Age-Eligible Teams Roster.
- For clarity, the NPL Club must list two (2) Australian Goalkeepers in its NPL Roster at all times.

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**ANNEXURE 1 – ASIAN FOOTBALL CONFEDERATION (AFC)
LIST OF MEMBER ASSOCIATION NATIONS**

ASEAN		SOUTH	
1	Australia	23	Bangladesh
2	Brunei Darussalam	24	Bhutan
3	Cambodia	25	India
4	Indonesia	26	Maldives
5	Laos	27	Nepal
6	Malaysia	28	Pakistan
7	Myanmar	29	Sri Lanka
8	Philippines	WEST	
9	Singapore	30	Bahrain
10	Thailand	31	Iraq
11	Timor-Leste	32	Jordan
12	Vietnam	33	Kuwait
EAST		34	Lebanon
13	China PR	35	Oman
14	Chinese Taipei	36	Palestine
15	DPR Korea	37	Qatar
16	Guam	38	Saudi Arabia
17	Hong Kong, China	39	Syria
18	Japan	40	United Arab Emirates
19	Korea Republic	41	Yemen
20	Macau	CENTRAL	
21	Mongolia	42	Afghanistan
22	Northern Mariana Islands	43	Islamic Republic of Iran
		44	Kyrgyz Republic
		45	Tajikistan
		46	Turkmenistan
		47	Uzbekistan

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ANNEXURE 2 – OCEANIA FOOTBALL CONFEDERATION (OFC) LIST OF MEMBER ASSOCIATION NATIONS

1	American Samoa	7	Samoa
2	Cook Islands	8	Solomon Islands
3	Fiji	9	Tahiti (French Polynesia)
4	New Caledonia	10	Tonga
5	New Zealand	11	Vanuatu
6	Papua New Guinea		