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# Meeting Minutes

## Functional United – Junior Hockey Discussion

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### 1. Meeting Details

**Meeting Title:** Functional United – Junior Hockey Pathways

**Date:** Tuesday, 11 March 2026

**Time:** 6:45am – 8:48am (AEDT)

**Location:** Online (Microsoft Teams)

**Chair:** Mark Berwick

**Minute Taker:** NSBHA Secretary

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### 2. Attendance

**Clubs / Representatives Present (non-exhaustive):**

- Manly Hockey Club
- Mosman Hockey Club
- Gordon Hockey Club
- Northern Districts Hockey Club
- NSBHA representatives
- Junior Presidents, Secretaries, Coaches, and Convenors
- Parent representatives

**Apologies:**

- None formally recorded
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### 3. Purpose of Meeting

To discuss concerns regarding the **current junior hockey competition structure**, particularly for **Under 12s**, and to explore **alternative development-focused models** that better support participation, retention, and long-term club sustainability.

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## 4. Key Issues Raised

### 4.1 Declining Participation and Retention

- Most clubs reported **reduced junior numbers**, especially at Under 12 level.
- Recruitment into junior hockey is increasingly difficult.
- Retention beyond early junior years is declining.
- Concern expressed that current trends will impact Under 14 and Under 16 competitions in coming years.

### 4.2 Suitability of Full-Field Hockey at Under 12 Level

- Strong concern that **full-field competition is being imposed too early**.
- Many clubs lack sufficient numbers and depth to support full-field teams appropriately.
- Mixed ability groups are being placed into formats that limit engagement and development.

### 4.3 Travel and Family Impact

- Long travel times and late finishes were identified as a **major barrier for families**.
- Impact on siblings, school commitments, and volunteer fatigue was noted.
- Current competition scheduling is not considered family-friendly.

### 4.4 Over-Emphasis on Elite Pathways

- Perception that junior hockey has become overly focused on elite progression.
  - Acknowledgement that only a small percentage of players progress to representative or elite levels.
  - Agreement that the majority of players need **development, enjoyment, and community**, not early selection pressure.
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## 5. Principles Agreed

The following principles were broadly supported:

- Junior hockey should prioritise **engagement, enjoyment, and skill development**
  - **Small-sided and half-field formats** are appropriate and beneficial for younger age groups
  - Clubs should retain **choice and autonomy** in selecting competitions that suit their members
  - Strong local competitions support **recruitment, retention, and club culture**
  - Community connection is critical to long-term participation
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## 6. Options and Models Discussed

### 6.1 Local / Association-Run Competitions

- Exploration of **club-controlled or association-run competitions**, particularly for Under 12s.
- Clubs set rules, formats, and development focus rather than external competition bodies.
- Emphasis on local venues and consistent scheduling.

### 6.2 Proof of Concept / Trial Approach

- Support for a **trial or pilot program** before any large-scale change.
- Suggested focus on:
  - Under 12s
  - Under 14 / Under 16 “B” teams
- Trials could operate alongside existing competitions initially.

### 6.3 Hybrid Models

- Discussion of hybrid seasons combining:
    - Small-sided hockey for most of the year
    - Limited full-field blocks around championships
  - Consideration of combined or “Harlequin” teams for higher-level competition where appropriate.
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## 7. Club Perspectives (Summary)

- **Manly, Mosman, Gordon:**  
Supportive of alternative models, particularly for Under 12s and B teams; cautious about immediate withdrawal from Metro competitions without a proven alternative.
  - **Northern Districts:**  
Supportive in principle but highlighted trust, transition, and planning concerns; preference for planning towards next season.
  - **General Consensus:**  
Change is required; timing and communication are critical; doing nothing presents greater long-term risk.
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## 8. Risks and Considerations

- Acknowledgement that any significant change may result in **short-term player movement**.

- View expressed that inaction is likely to result in similar or greater losses over time.
  - Importance of:
    - Clear communication with parents
    - Strong leadership
    - A clearly defined alternative product before implementation
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## 9. Actions and Next Steps

1. **Chair to prepare a written summary** of proposed alternative models and circulate to clubs.
  2. **Clubs to consult internally** (committees, coaches, parents) regarding appetite for:
    - Under 12 local competition
    - Trial or pilot programs
  3. **Investigate feasibility:**
    - Field availability
    - Scheduling options (including non-Friday/Saturday alternatives)
    - Resource and volunteer capacity
  4. **Further meeting to be scheduled** to review options and determine next steps.
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## 10. Meeting Close

The Chair thanked all participants for their time, openness, and commitment to junior hockey.

**Meeting closed:** 8:48am

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### **Prepared by:**

NSBHA Secretary

**Date:** 22 March 2026

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If you'd like, I can also:

- Convert this into **official AGM-style minutes**
- Add a **formal resolutions section**
- Create a **short action register**
- Tailor the minutes to a **specific club or association template**

Just tell me how you need to use them.