



PENNANT HILLS DEMONS AFC CLUB STATEMENT

Following the AFL's confirmation today that the Sydney Football League (SFL) will be established as New South Wales' premier competition from 2027, the Pennant Hills Demons AFC are proud to announce that we have been awarded a license to compete in the SFL in Season 2027.

A recent competition review discovered the need to elevate the standard of football in Greater Sydney, and following an extensive consultation it was determined that a Sydney-based premier competition would be formed. Licenses to compete in the SFL were awarded after a tender and assessment process, requiring clubs to satisfy a series of prescribed minimum and optimal standards.

The dedicated panel to oversee the tender process was overseen by AFL Commissioner Andrew Ireland, and comprised of Emma Moore (AFLW General Manager - Growth), Andrew Varasdi (Head of AFL NSW/ACT), John Longmire (Sydney Swans Executive Director of Club Performance) and Jason McCartney OAM (GWS Giants Executive General Manager).

AFL Chief Operating Officer Tom Harley said: *"The Sydney Football League represents a significant investment by the AFL in the state's football landscape. The SFL has been designed to support and accelerate [that] growth and will provide a clear and accessible pathway for those aspiring to reach the highest level".*

The inaugural SFL season will commence in April 2027, and will be established as the only premier-level competition in New South Wales that develops, retains and attracts talented players, coaches, and officials in Sydney and New South Wales, sitting above AFL Sydney's community competitions.

Club President Stewart Woodward Said: *"Participation in the new competition continues the history of our club competing in the top competition in Sydney.*

The granting of the licenses to our club also expands our area for development of players, including the Central Coast and Newcastle. This will allow us to improve and expand on our player development program. The Pennant Hills Football Club has a long history of developing players to play at the elite level, and the Sydney Football League will provide additional pathways for players and the opportunity to play at the highest level.

These are exciting times ahead for our club, and the general football community at large".

The Pennant Hills Demons will field four teams in the SFL in 2027: Senior Mens, Senior Womens, U19.5 Mens and U20 Womens, and will be positioned as a destination SFL Club for players in the North West, Central Coast, Newcastle and Hunter Region.

Head of Football Operations Ben Papandrea said: *"Being awarded all four licenses in the inaugural season of the SFL is a significant achievement for Pennant Hills Demons AFC and reflects the rich legacy built by generations of players, volunteers, and members.*

The club has a proud history of developing AFL and VFL-listed talent, and the introduction of this elevated competition provides the platform our football program deserves to showcase its strengths on a broader stage.

2026 marks the highest participation year in the club's history, and all indications suggest that 2027 will be even stronger. As a club, we are excited to continue strengthening our partnerships with our junior clubs and pathway programs, while also expanding our collaboration with clubs across the Hunter Central Coast region and both elite academy pathways. Together, we look forward to fostering the continued growth and success of Australian Rules Football across our community."

This announcement is the culmination of months of planning, consultation and dedication from a committed group of Club volunteers who have led the tender process. Their professionalism, vision and countless hours of work have been instrumental in securing a SFL license for the Pennant Hills Demons and ensuring the Club is well positioned for continued growth.

Head of AFL NSW/ACT Andrew Varasdi said: *"...The SFL will ensure our football system keeps pace with the growth of the game while creating stronger pathways and higher standards across the board. We are investing in the people, clubs and competition s that will drive the next phase of growth for Australian Rules Football in New South Wales, and the SFL will play a critical role in that future".*

The Pennant Hills Demons remain committed to being a high-performing, destination football club across the SFL, divisional and Masters football in Season 2027 and beyond, and look forward to this exciting new chapter.

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