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## MEDIA RELEASE

### ***Central Murray FNL Confirms Week 1 Structure for Historic Top 8 Finals Series***

*\*FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION\**

The Central Murray Football Netball League (CMFNL) has confirmed the Week 1 hosting structure for its new Top 8 Finals Series, which will be introduced for the first time in season 2026.

The expanded finals format will see eight clubs in each grade compete across a four-week finals campaign, creating additional opportunities for clubs and supporters while delivering an exciting new finals structure for both football and netball competitions.

Under the new system, Week 1 of finals will feature 2 Qualifying Finals and 2 Elimination Finals across Saturday and Sunday.

#### **The format will operate as follows:**

##### **Week 1 – Qualifying & Elimination Finals**

Saturday – August 29

- 1<sup>st</sup> vs 4<sup>th</sup> (*1<sup>st</sup> qualifying*)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> vs 3<sup>rd</sup> (*2<sup>nd</sup> qualifying*)

Sunday – August 30

- 5<sup>th</sup> vs 8<sup>th</sup> (loser eliminated) (*1<sup>st</sup> elimination*)
- 6<sup>th</sup> vs 7<sup>th</sup> (loser eliminated) (*2<sup>nd</sup> elimination*)

##### **Week 2 – Semi Finals**

Saturday – Semi Final 1 - 5 September

- Loser of 1st Qualifying plays Winner of 1st Elimination

Sunday – Semi Final 2 - 6 September

- Loser of 2nd Qualifying plays Winner of 2nd Elimination

##### **Week 3 – Preliminary Finals**

Saturday - 12 September

- Winner of 1st Qualifying plays Winner of Semi Final 2

Sunday - 13 September

- Winner of 2nd Qualifying plays Winner of Semi Final 1

##### **Week 4 – Grand Final - Saturday 19 September**

- Winners of each Preliminary Finals play in the Grand Final.

As part of the transition to the new Top 8 system, the Central Rivers Board undertook a club consultation and survey process throughout April & early May to determine the preferred method to host Week 1, given the challenge of conducting 4 separate finals across 2 days.

Following the consultation period, the Central Rivers Board met on Wednesday night to review all feedback and voting outcomes in detail.

Based on the results of the club consultation the Board has unanimously endorsed the hosting of all matches at the Alan Garden and Swan Hill Recreation Reserves as the preferred hosting model for Week 1 of the 2026 Finals Series.

The Board believes the adopted model provides the strongest outcome for clubs, supporters and officials by allowing clubs with teams competing across different grades and ladder positions to remain at the one venue throughout the weekend.

The structure will also support the League's umpiring group through improved appointments, travel and logistical efficiencies.

Central Rivers Board Chair Gavin Campbell said *"this will be one of the biggest weekends of football and netball the region, or possibly Country Victoria has ever seen. 16 games of football and 28 games of netball will be played on one precinct across the weekend of August 29 & 30. The way things are shaping up with the season thus far, it is highly likely that every one of the 16 clubs in the Central Murray, will have a team participating. Everyone should be really excited about it!"*

Several clubs have already expressed interest in hosting matches under the approved model.

Over the coming weeks, clubs included in the 2026 finals hosting rotation will be invited to submit hosting preferences for the full finals' series. Final venue allocations and host clubs will be confirmed by the Board following their June Board Meeting.

Further information regarding finals venues and hosting allocations will be released following the June Board Meeting.

*\*ENDS\**

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