



Shepparton Gators VJBL Annual Program Report 2024-2025

The Shepparton Gators VJBL Program commenced its first season of operations in 2024, with a motion moved by Greater Shepparton Basketball Association, Committee of Management (GSBA CoM) in June 2024 to support the establishment of the program following a call for Expressions of Interest for voluntary committee members.

The VJBL Committee established in July 2024, consulted widely with GSBA internal and external stakeholders to develop and adopt the following program philosophy:

- To provide Goulburn Valley athletes with realistic pathways; an elite pathway for players seeking the highest level of competition relevant to their age group and a development pathway for upcoming athletes that acknowledges that progress occurs at different times for individual players.
- To enhance participation rates, we aim to improve the competitiveness of our junior representative squad programs and provide developed players with a relevant step in career paths from domestic basketball through to state, national and international levels.
- To ensure all players can develop their skills in a safe, friendly, productive, and enjoyable learning environment.
- To build a solid foundation of individual skills for the future development of basketball in the region.
- To offer all players a high standard of coaching and instruction.
- To deliver high-quality and well-structured training sessions to all players.
- To provide all coaches with guidance and opportunities to enhance their skills.
- To provide all Referees with guidance and opportunities to enhance their skills.
- To provide Administrators with guidance and opportunities to enhance their skills

Committee Members have expanded since the establishment of the program, supporting up to 40 weeks of training and 30 competitive games each year.

| Committee Position | Committee Member |
|--|-------------------------|
| Director of Coaching | Joshua Waight |
| VJBL Delegate | Tony Long |
| Chair | Joanne Kinder |
| Program Coordinator | Annie Manning |
| Secretary | Melissa Black |
| Training Coordinator | Shantell Smith |
| Home Game Coordinator & Junior Representative Delegate | Lynda Ford |
| Team Manager Coordinator | Joanne Pickles |
| Social Media & Events Coordinator | Melinda Watson |

Player trials were held in September with a total of 94 players participating in the selection process, achieving significant representation from the Goulburn Valley and wider catchment areas including Echuca, Wallan and Wangaratta. Squad viability was based on the achievement of a minimum of 10 players per team, with the view of filling the approved Basketball Victoria VJBL League squad formation of one team per age and gender category.
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During the trial process it became clear that we would be unable to achieve the minimum player numbers for U18 boys, with a decision made to advise players and parents early to enable and encourage them to trial at neighboring associations. A request was made to Basketball Victoria VJBL League to enable the formation of two U16 boy teams which was supported based on sufficient trial numbers.

Of the players that trialed, 65 players were assigned across 6 teams achieving 18 player transfers into the program from other associations, 9 players that declined offers and a total of 8 players registered from outside the Goulburn Valley region. The Director of Coaching and VJBL delegate successfully negotiated coaching appointments, with VJBL Committee members, Coaches assisting in the appointment of Assistant Coaches and Team Managers to support the program.

| Team | Head Coach | Assistant Coaches | Team Manager/s |
|-------------|-------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| U14 boys 1 | Steve Nioa | Renae Wayman | Daniel Watson |
| U14 girls 1 | Matthew Bartlett | Natalie Hicks Thomas Frame Joshua Kooiman | Annie Manning Natalie Hicks |
| U16 boys 1 | Duane Hueston | Daniel Boote | Bradley Campbell |
| U16 boys 2 | Shantell Smith | Carly Whittmore Paul Ingham Michale Dundon | Marissa Platfuss Kesley Young |
| U16 girls 1 | Chris Judd | | Michele Judd Joanne Pickles |
| U18 girls 1 | Tony Long | | Melissa Freestone Lynda Ford |

On Friday 15th November 2024, a total of 59 players participated in the first round of three grading games to ensure that players and teams were allocated to appropriate pools that promote competitive games. Games were held in Benalla, Shepparton, Wallan, Craigieburn, Sunbury and Waverley, with 3 teams achieving a win. Many of the players that travelled showed up the next day to represent the Gators at the annual McHappy Day with a huge smile and relief that they had made it through the first game.

To round up Grading Phase 1, 5 teams participated in cross-over grading rounds prior to Christmas and all teams have recommenced training as of 20th January to prepare for Round 1 of Grading Phase 2 on Friday 31st January 2025. The program since inception has also experienced natural attrition with 3 players withdrawing for various reasons and 2 expressions of interest to join as late participants to the program currently being considered alongside the programs operating guidelines.

The VJBL committee have obtained 40 athlete registrations along with adequate team officials to support 3 teams to participate in the USA Basketball Tour. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity that has been offered for top age U16 and bottom age U18 players to travel to Texas on 26 December 2025 for a 10 day program that will enable them to experience basketball in a larger world view context, gain exposure to US College opportunities and share the journey with friends and community.

Upon the VJBL season stabilizing, the committee will seek to further progress and advance in the following areas:

- VJBL Season Tournaments – dependent on EOI from coaches, players and parents to commit to these opportunities played outside of Junior Representative Program schedules;
- Social Activities and Fundraising Events - including team opportunities to support and have engage with professional players and mentors and family events and opportunities to fundraise to support program activities;
- Health Promotion – through education and participation that will support athletes to sustain healthy player strength, conditioning and growth;
- Sponsorship – an initial sponsor, Sherridon Homes was secured through the GSBA delegate, providing funding to support activities during the 2024 season. Further sponsors are required at both a team and

program level to assist in supporting the longevity and sustainability of the program for players, parents and officials;

- Improved GSBA program coordination and collaboration between programs.

The VJBL program is a huge commitment for players, parents, officials, VJBL Committee members and the GSBA CoM. The Shepparton Gators VJBL Committee would like to thank you for your support in the establishment of this program in 2024 and the future growth in 2025.