



AFL Cairns - Player Salary Cap (PSC) 2026

Purpose

The purpose of the Player Salary Cap (PSC) system in the AFL Cairns (AFLC) competition is to promote a dynamic and competitive brand of football providing stability for all Clubs.

Given the consistent improvement in playing performance across the League in recent years, demands for increased player payments have reached a level that require equalisation, as deemed by AFLC. Due to the significant difference in profit generation between the seven (7) Senior Clubs, the PSC is designed to narrow the financial gap, whilst also ensuring our competition attracts high quality players.

The below rules will be enforced by AFLC with harsh penalties for incorrect reporting or breaches.

Objectives

- To contain spending by Clubs to a manageable and affordable level relevant to the local AFLC environment.
- Encourage Clubs to develop and promote their junior players and promote Club loyalty.
- Encourage Clubs to manage their playing list in the short and long term.
- Better manage player payments and improve the financial stability of Clubs.
- To promote an agreed level of equity and fairness in our competition.

The System

1. Each Senior Club registered with AFLC will be advised of a prescribed 'Salary Cap' for each season, which must be adhered to as set out in this document.
2. Each Club must ensure every Senior player completes an AFLC Player Contract Agreement via Cognito Forms for each season, which indicates the conditions under which the player is engaged including all elements of any financial payment or reward being offered.
3. Any of the following are considered breaches of the PSC rules:
 - i. Any Club, player, official or individual connected to a Club providing false or misleading information, or complicit in the deliberate submission of false or misleading information.
 - ii. Failure of Clubs to declare any form of player payment, incentive, bonus or reimbursement.
 - iii. Nominated playing-coaches failure to meet the minimum attendance criteria whilst maintaining a dispensation from the PSC.
 - iv. Failure to provide AFLC with the correct Salary Cap Report in accordance with the dictated timelines.

4. In the event any of the above breaches are identified, or other breaches of the PSC as determined by the AFLC, a full investigation will be initiated by AFLC. On completion of the investigation, an AFLC Review Board will determine the appropriate outcome.
5. AFLC have also engaged a third party to assist with PSC compliance. Mr. Michael Delaney will take on the role of Salary Cap Auditor again in 2026. I certainly hope we don't need to call on Michael, but will do so if there is fair and reasonable evidence of club deception regarding the salary cap. If you have any evidence, based on fact, this can be communicated to us with full details confidentially to integrity@aflcairns.com.au. Penalties will apply for false or misleading accusations.

Appealing a Breach of the Salary Cap

The process where Clubs or a player wish to appeal the determination by AFLC of a PSC breach will follow the following process:

1. If a Club believes the PSC assessment is not correct, fair, or reasonable, it may lodge an appeal in writing to review the decision by the AFLC Review Board. This request must only contain sound, factual information supporting the appeal. The appeal will include a formal hearing with evidence to be presented by the Club in question and any other relevant parties at the discretion of the AFLC Review Board.
2. The Review Board will consist of one Executive Board Member, the AFLC General Manager (or other of similar position) and an AFLC Tribunal Member. The Review Board cannot consist of a person involved in the initial investigation.
3. All new appeal information and the original investigation information will be made available to the Review Board. The Club will have the opportunity to state their case to the Review Board before deliberation and a decision is determined.
4. The decision by the Review Board is final and there is no further form of recourse.

Penalties

Breaches: Penalties for breach of the PSC include, but are not limited to:

1. Suspension, disqualification, or deregistration from participation in AFLC competitions, events and activities. Applicable to a Club, player, official, member or individual associated with a Club.
2. \$10,000 fine for every \$1,000 over the salary cap (\$70,000/\$20,000), up to a total of \$200,000.
3. At the discretion of AFL Cairns:
 - i. Stripped of the Premiership if successful in the Grand Final.
 - ii. Up to \$10,000 off the Club salary cap the following season.
 - iii. Loss of Premiership Points to start the following season.
 - iv. Loss of AFL Cairns Sponsorship funding the following season.

Fines will double in value (ie - \$20,000 for every \$1,000 over the salary cap, up to \$200,000 for a second offence) if Clubs breach the cap multiple times within a five (5) year period.

Team Submission: Teams are to be selected in PlayHQ no later than 9am the day before a game. The 23 players + 6 emergencies listed in PlayHQ by this deadline will be the only players permitted to play in the game.

After the deadline, if a club wants to play a player outside of the those listed, they will require approval from AFL Cairns and will, at the discretion of AFL Cairns, receive a \$500 deduction from their salary cap.

In the event of extenuating circumstances (ie - multiple players sick), clubs can request exemptions to the listed players and \$500 salary cap penalty.

Salary Cap Conditions - Seniors

The agreed PSC for AFL Cairns Senior Men's Competition in 2026 will be **\$70,000** per Club/per season as determined by the AFLC and its members (the eight Clubs), which includes all 19 Home & Away rounds.

Salary Cap Conditions – Women's

The agreed PSC for AFL Cairns Chemist Warehouse Women's Competition in 2026 will be **\$20,000** per Club/per season as determined by the AFLC and its members (the eight Clubs), which includes all 19 Home & Away Rounds.

Salary Cap Conditions and Inclusions

Clubs can pay up to the PSC cap without penalty.

A Club paying over the PSC cap will be subject to the penalties above.

The annual Salary Cap includes the following (* indicates Exemptions & Variations may apply):

1. *All payments, by way of cash or goods or services, to a player or a Senior / Development grade coach playing in an AFLC match.
2. All payments, by way of cash or goods and services, to a player for performance in an AFLC match. This includes incentives and awards.
3. *Allowances for travel and/or accommodation.
4. Transfer and relocation fees and reimbursements.
5. *Employment by the Club for a role or job within the Club or its associated entities, including playing-coach.
6. *Employment of the spouse or partner of a player within the Club or its associated entities.
7. Sign on fees.
8. *Players Club Membership Fees.
9. Payments made to players whilst injured.
10. Board, rent and/or living expenses.
11. Debts owed at the player's original Club by the transferring player that are being paid by his new AFLC Club.
12. Club apparel or equipment over and above the Club 'on and off field' playing uniforms required by all players.
13. Lump sum payments to players on termination of a contract.
14. Bonuses from the Club for receiving Club or League awards.
15. Loans to a player or a spouse / partner.

Finals Series

All player match payments, bonuses, FIFO travel and ongoing payments paid during the AFLC Finals Series are exempt from the PSC, however, must still be recorded in the Salary Cap Report. Match payments, bonuses and ongoing payments are not to exceed those paid during the Home and Away season and in accordance with their individual Player Contract Agreement.

Rule Changes & Requests

Clubs requesting changes/exemptions to specified rules within the AFLQ Community Rules & Procedures and/or AFL Cairns By-Laws must submit a formal proposal to AFL Cairns identifying the specific rule, proposed change, impact on the League (not just their club) and detailed reasoning.

AFL Cairns reserves the right of approval, however, may seek input from other club president's, including a vote system to determine the outcome. The cut-off date for requesting rule changes is 01 March each year. After this date, exemptions can still be approved, but changes to rules will not be considered.

Exemptions & Variations

Playing Coaches

1. A maximum of two (2) Senior player-coaches are eligible for an exemption in the Club's PSC total. This can be structured either:
 - i. One (1) playing Head Coach, plus one (1) playing Assistant Coach or;
 - ii. Two (2) playing Assistant Coaches, should the Club appoint a non-playing Head Coach.
2. All playing Head and Assistant Coaches must attend at least one (1) training session per week at the home club venue and must hold a minimum of a Level 1 Coaching Accreditation.
3. A playing coaches' contract is divided by 16 (total Home & Away games), then the 50% reduction, which gives a 'payment per game' amount. This amount is then applied in the Salary Cap to only games played by the Playing Coach.
 - i. For example, if the Playing Coaches contract is \$10,000, their 'payment per game' will be \$312.50 ($10,000 / 16 / 2$). For every game the Playing Coach plays, \$312.50 is included in the Salary Cap.

Head Coaches

4. Senior players assigned the Head Coach of a Women's or Junior team at the same Club can have 50% of their total contract value deducted from the Club's PSC total.
 - i. A minimum of 80% attendance at training and games is required for this exemption to be claimed. Failure to meet the attendance standard will result in the exemption being withdrawn and possible additional penalties for the Club and/or individual.
5. Senior players assigned the Club Coach of the Superstars program can have 25% of their total contract value deducted from the Club's PSC total. Clubs may have a maximum of one (1) Senior player per team claiming this deduction each year.
 - i. A minimum of 9 out of 10 weeks attendance during the Superstars program is required for this exemption to be claimed. Failure to meet the attendance standard will result in the exemption being withdrawn and possible additional penalties for the Club and/or individual.
6. Senior players involved in an Auskick program as a Club Coach can have 25% of their total contract value deducted from the Club's PSC total. Clubs may have a maximum of two (2) Senior players claiming this deduction each year.

- i. A minimum of 7 out of 8 weeks attendance during the Auskick program is required for this exemption to be claimed. Failure to meet the attendance standard will result in the exemption being withdrawn and possible additional penalties for the Club and/or individual.

23rd Player

7. Each club will be allowed to nominate a 23rd player every game that acts as a 5th interchange and can be used at any point throughout the game. Here is the 23rd player eligibility:
 - i. The player must be under 21 years of age as of 01 January in the year of the season;
 - ii. The player can only play a maximum of 20 Senior grade games (across all Leagues);
 - iii. The player must be selected as '23rd player' in PlayHQ;
 - iv. An eligible player can only be nominated as 23rd player five (5) times in the Home & Away season; and
 - v. Any of the nominated 23rd players can be selected as 23rd player in the Finals Series.
8. The 23rd players point allocation will be included in the points cap, as will any expenses incurred in the salary cap. Clubs found to breach the 23rd player eligibility rules risk forfeiting the match and additional penalties at the discretion of AFL Cairns.

Marquee Players

9. Each Club can have one (1) Marquee Player excluded from the PSC.
10. Each Club Marquee Player must be nominated to AFLC for approval before the team selection deadline (8am Friday before match day) of Round 1 and a copy of their contract supplied.
11. A Marquee Player must have played a minimum of ten (10) Senior games for a Club in a State League competition or higher within two years of recruitment to the AFLC club.
12. Clubs are allowed to nominate the same Marquee Player for two (2) consecutive seasons. Marquee Players that meet the following criteria are eligible for a third season:
 - i. Senior Mens:
 - Played 100 or more Senior games for a State League Club, or
 - Played 50 or more games in the AFL.
 - ii. Senior Women's:
 - Played 50 or more Senior games for a State League Club, or
 - Played 15 or more games in the AFLW
13. Once a Marquee Player is no longer eligible and wishes to continue playing with the same AFLC Club, they will be included into the PSC. Other exemptions may apply (ie – playing-coach).
14. Upon approval by AFLC, all League Marquee Players will be publicly acknowledged prior to the season commencing.
15. If a Marquee Player receives a long-term injury that rules them out for the remainder of the season (minimum 6 rounds of the Home & Away season remaining) and they choose to relocate out of Cairns, Clubs may request through the AFLC to replace them with another player that meets the Marquee Player criteria.

- i. Approval is at the discretion of AFLC and will be based on the injured players reasons for relocation, impact from the injury on their ability to perform their other duties, replacement player credentials, and other factors determined by AFLC.
- ii. A medical certificate may be requested by AFLC to prove the significance of the injury and expected recovery timeframe.

One-Time Marquee Player Appearances

16. One-Time Marquee Players are exempt from the Salary Cap under the following conditions:

- i. Clubs may utilize one (1) one-time marquee player per season
- ii. Clubs provide AFLC with a copy of the players contract detailing their off-field and on-field requirements, as well as payment plan.
- iii. AFLC will confirm the player aligns with the values and vision of the League and is providing benefit to the Club and community.
- iv. No one-time marquee players are permitted to play post Round 14 of the home and away season. Players cannot be transferred post June 30.
- v. Requests for one-time marquee players to play after June 30, will be considered where circumstances prevent them from playing prior to June 30. Clubs will need to submit in writing at least 30 days prior to the scheduled match day to AFL Cairns outlining the reasons for consideration.
- vi. No players under any circumstances will be considered in the final five (5) rounds of the home and away season.

Veterans Exemption

17. Players with eight (8) years continuous service with one (1) AFLC Club are exempt from the PSC from their eighth (8th) season onwards.
18. This exemption condition is non-transferable to another AFLC Club, whereby the player will be included in the PSC.

Travel & Accommodation

19. Payment of a travel and/or accommodation subsidy to a player who has a round trip of 100km or more (via ground means only) to attend games or training at the player's home ground (only) from their bona fide home address, can have \$750 per season exempt from the PSC cap.
20. Clubs claiming this exemption will be required to show proof of the players' home address.
21. Clubs that finish outside of Finals (top 4) in the immediate previous season are allowed a \$5,000 exemption for transfer and relocation fees across all Senior players in the current season.

Fly In - Fly Out (FIFO) Players

22. Travel costs, fares and charges involved in transporting a player from more than 150km from a Club's home ground to play in the AFLC Senior competition (constituting a FIFO player) are exempt from the PSC.
23. A maximum of three (3) FIFO journeys per player will be exempt during the Home and Away fixtured matches of a season. These are to be clearly recorded in the Salary Cap Report.

24. Accommodation and meals for FIFO players at any time whilst travelling or within Cairns are not exempt.
25. FIFO players must play a minimum of five (5) regular season games to qualify for Finals.
26. Players travelling by car from Townsville are excluded from the definition of a Fly In – Fly Out Player. All costs associated with their travel and player payments must be included in the salary cap and in accordance with section 19 of this document.

Bona Fide Employment

27. A player can be employed by a Club sponsor, patron, bona fide entity or supporter if the employment position can be proven to be a genuine position required by the company or individual.

Membership Subscriptions

28. Club or Third Party Payments made to a player to cover their Club Membership fee can have \$300 per player exempt from the salary cap. This includes payments from Player Sponsors, Club Sponsors, the Club, or other third parties. All Club Membership fee payments must be tracked by receipt and recorded in the Salary Cap Report.

Third Party Payments

29. Due to the complexities of Third-Party Payments (TPP) and recency of Club enquiries into this matter, all TPPs will require AFL Cairns determination on whether they are exempt from the salary cap. Clubs requesting TPP determination are to send the AFLC Operations Manager an email with the proposed payments and/or arrangement including details of the beneficiaries of the TPPs.
30. Determinations will be based on whether the TPPs are in the best interest of promoting the League and Club, and the impact on the integrity of the competition. Any individual or Club found to be receiving TPPs without prior AFLC approval will be subject to the penalties listed above.
31. AFLC will continue to refine the rules around TPPs and aims to provide more clarification in season 2026 in order to remove the requirement of an AFLC determination.

Administration

Clubs are required to submit a Salary Cap Report at the following times:

1. Before the commencement of Round 8.
2. Before the commencement of Round 15.
3. No more than one (1) week after the Grand Final.

Salary Cap Reports are to be submitted using the AFLC Salary Cap template with all conditions and exemptions included, as per above. Clubs that fail to report correctly and in accordance with the timeframes will be subject to loss of Club Challenge points and possible penalties as detailed in this document.



AFL Cairns - Player Points System (PPS) - 2026

Player Assessment Criteria

Points	Category	Explanation
0	AFLC 5-year player	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A player with five (5) years continuous service to one AFLC Club. Eligible in the fifth (5th) year of registration – A player with eight (8) years continuous service to one AFLC Club that is returning after playing for any other Club
1	AFLC 8-year player	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A player with eight (8) years continuous service to one AFLC Club transferring to another AFLC Club. Eligible in the eighth (8th) year of registration
1	Local player	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A player that has never played in the AFL Cairns (AFLC) Senior grade competition – A player returning to their original AFLC Club after playing elsewhere outside AFLC – A player who joins an AFLC Club after two (2) years of not being registered with any other team
1	Transferring AFLC Development grade player	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A player that has played no more than three (3) Senior grade games and at least five (5) Development grade games with an AFL Cairns Club in the preceding year
1	Player from another Australian Regional or Metropolitan Football League	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A player from another League. For example, Townsville, Ovens & Murray, Central Wheatbelt, Essendon District, VAFA, SAAFL, TANFL, QFA
1	State League player	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A player who has played at least ten (10) games at this level in the past two (2) years. Leagues include VFL, SANFL, QAFL, WAFL and NTFL
1	Ex-AFL player	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A player who has been listed with an AFL Club in the past three (3) years and has not played with the registering AFLC Club as a Junior or has played for another AFLC Club previously
2	Player / Coach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A player who wishes to transfer to another AFLC Club and is appointed the Senior (sole) Head Coach of that Club
4	Fly-In, Fly-Out (FIFO) player	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A player who has not established permanent residence in the Cairns region (including Port Douglas) before 31 March in the year the competition commences (excluding players travelling from Townsville via Car).
8	Transferring AFLC Senior grade player	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A player that has played more than three (3) Senior grade games with one AFLC Club in the preceding two (2) years, transferring to another AFLC Club <p>*Points will reduce by two (2) each year the player is absent from their former AFLC Club</p>

Exemptions

Long Term Injury: If a player suffers a long-term injury that denies their ability to play an entire season, their continuous streak of registrations with a single club will remain intact. Clubs may be required to provide medical evidence of the injury to prove the player was not capable of playing at any stage during the Home & Away season. The player must re-register with the same club the following year to maintain or obtain their status as a five (5) or eight (8) year AFLC player.

Players Returning to Home Club after post-State League: Players that depart the AFL Cairns competition to play in a State League competition and return to the same AFL Cairns club, will not reset their registration streak with that club, allowing them to become a 0-point player once they are in their 5th year with that club and a Veteran Player once they are in their 8th year with that club.

This only applies if the player is registered in a State League competition for 3 seasons or less. If the player registers with a team outside of the State League, or does not register with any team, their AFL Cairns club streak will be broken. The PPS Board will be utilised for complex cases.

Junior Player Criteria for 0-Point Player Status: Juniors playing in the Senior competition (either Development or Senior grade, not Div 3), must play at least three (3) games to have that season included in the 5-year playing streak to become a 0-point player.

AFLC 5-year player/0 Point Exemption: A Player who has taken a break in service of no more than one (1) Season from an AFL Cairns Club may remain eligible for recognition as a Zero (0) Point Player, subject to application and subsequent approval by AFL Cairns.

- In considering such application, AFL Cairns must be satisfied that the Player has not participated with, or rendered playing service to, any other Club within any other League in Australia during the period of absence.
- For the avoidance of doubt, any Player who has provided playing service to another Club or League during this period shall forfeit eligibility for Zero (0) Point Player status.

Pregnancy: A Player who is required to sit out for a Season due to pregnancy or the birth of a child shall retain eligibility towards their five (5) or eight (8) year AFLC Player status, provided that the Player does not render playing service to any other Club within any league in Australia during the period of absence.

Club Points Allocation

The base allocation of player points for 2026 in the **Senior Men's will be thirty five (35)**. The base allocation of player points for 2026 in the **Senior Women's will be thirty four (34)**. Concessions will be added at the conclusion of each year as follows:

Teams finishing inside the top four based on the Senior Men's and Senior Women's competition ladder at the conclusion of the Home & Away season will be reduced four (4) points (to a minimum of 35/34) and teams finishing outside the top four will receive an additional four (4) points (to a maximum of 43/42), with the following exemptions:

1. Teams finishing the Home & Away season with two (2) or three (3) wins will receive eight (8) points to their Total Points Cap (beyond the maximum of 43/42).
2. Teams finishing the Home & Away season with zero (0) or one (1) win will receive 16 points to their Total Points Cap (beyond the maximum of 43/42).

Senior Men's Points Allocation

2026 Club Point Values	
Port Douglas	35 points
North Cairns	35 points
Centrals TB	35 points
South Cairns	35 points
Cairns Saints	43 points
City Lions	39 points
Manunda Hawks	59 points

Senior Women's Points Allocation

2026 Club Point Values	
Centrals TB	34 points
North Cairns	34 points
City Lions	34 points
Port Douglas	38 points
South Cairns	38 points
Cairns Saints	58 points
Manunda Hawks	42 points**

***Points allocation dependent on team entry into the competition for season 2026. Players who moved to another club from Manunda Hawks in season 2025 and return to the Club in season 2026, will be deemed a 1 point player.*

2026 Women's Points Allocation

The Senior Women's Competition will have the following dispensation applied for players who have internally transferred in the previous 4 season (8 point players):

- Players who have transferred from another AFLC club in the previous 4 seasons (Transferring AFLC Senior Grade Player), will have a 50% reduction applied to their player point allocation.
 - Players who have transferred to clubs for seasons 2025,2024,2023 and 2022 will be allocated 3,2 and 1 point for season 2026.
- Players who transfer to another AFLC Club for season 2026 will be classified as an 8 point player and no reduction will be applied.

Individual Points Allocation

AFLC is responsible for allocating individual player points through PlayHQ. All Senior players will require a points allocation in order to play during the season. Clubs found to have played a player without points allocated will be subject to fines at the discretion of AFLC, plus match forfeiture if the players points would have exceeded the teams Total Points Cap.

Player points will be allocated in accordance with the assessment criteria upon receipt of the players Player Contract Agreement from their associated Club.

Player Point Exemption Requirements: Clubs requesting a Player Point exemption are required to apply for approval to AFL Cairns within 30 days of the player transferring. Exemptions will only be considered if the player is forced to relocate for employment, study or compassionate reasons (ie – relocating closer to family after the birth of a child).

The club requesting the exemption must be the closest club to the player's new residential address. Players residing more than 150kms from their new club will be considered FIFO and will not be eligible for an exemption.

Applications will be considered by the PPS Board, consisting of at least three (3) members and the outcome decided by vote (majority wins). The PPS Board may request supporting documentation, including employment contracts, education certificates, etc. If approved, the PPS Board will determine the amount of player points allocated to the player at their new club.

Definitions

AFLC is AFL Cairns Ltd.

Associate of a Club means and includes an office bearer, sponsor, or member of the Club, a partner of the Club or a partnership in which the Club is a member, any person who is or was acting, or who proposes to act, on behalf of or in conjunction with the Club.

Associate of a Player means and includes any relative of the player or any of their relatives, trusts or provident funds for the players benefit or their relatives benefit and companies in which the player or their relative or partners hold shares or any person who is or was acting, or who proposes to act, on behalf of or in conjunction with the player.

A **Club** is an AFLC affiliated Football Club.

The Club is the Club with whom a player will play within a given season.

A **Season** is an AFLC football year commencing 01 November in a year until 31 October the following year.

Review Board is the AFLC Review Board.

Spouse or Partner is a person who has been in a relationship with a player (legal or de facto) for three (3) months or longer.

State League Club means a club participating in the VFL, SANFL, WAFL, QAFL and NTFL (*Note: QAFL will be removed from this category at the completion of the home and away season in 2026*)

Player is the footballer registered with or seeking registration and clearance to a Club.

PSC is the AFLC Player Salary Cap.

A **FIFO Player** is defined as a player who has not established permanent residence in the Cairns region (including Port Douglas) 7 days prior to the first match of the home and away season specific to the year of competition.

The AFL Cairns 'Residency Test' can be used to determine permanent residence:

1. *What is your current address, as listed in PlayHQ?*
2. *Can you produce:*
 - a. *Two recent household documents/bills with your name and current address listed; or*
 - b. *Two recent employment documents with your name and current address listed; or*
 - c. *One recent household document/bill and once recent employment document with your and current address listed.*
3. *Are you and your club president prepared to sign a Statutory Declaration and/or Affidavit to support your responses to these questions?*
4. *AFL Cairns may request a player to present at the AFL Cairns office at a requested time.*

Where a player relocates during the course of the season and no longer meets the AFL Cairns Residency Test, that player will be re-classified as a FIFO Player.

AFL Cairns reserves the right to make the final ruling on a Player(s) residency status, including by:

- a. Using the AFL Cairns Residency Test;
- b. Having regard to a player's particular circumstances.