



## Short History of the Ainslie Football Club

The first meeting at which it was decided to form the Ainslie Football Club was held on the 30th of March 1927. Northbourne Oval was to be the Club's home ground. The first General Meeting was held a week later on the 7th of April 1927. P.T.H. Macnamara was elected the Club's first President and it was decided that the team's colours would be red, black and white. The first Ainslie team played Acton on the 21st of May, 1927 at Northbourne Oval but were defeated 9.13 to 6.5. Harold Kilpatrick was the team's first Captain-Coach. Ainslie won its first match in June 1927 defeating Federals 8.10 to 6.4. Ainslie had two victories in its first season and finished fourth. The second season was much more successful having 11 wins from 15 games. Ainslie reached the Grand Final but were defeated by Eastlake. In 1929 Ainslie won their first Premiership defeating Eastlake 7.13 to 6.11. The team was led by George Hanley. Ainslie were runners-up in 1930. The early 30s were difficult times for the Club with the depression affecting the region and the team finished low down from 1931 to 1933. However the team was building and in 1934 finished third and by 1935 the team was on the rise losing only two games. They lost the Grand Final to Manuka 9.14 to 4.19. In 1936 the team, captained by Lionel James, went through the season undefeated and so became the first Championship team in the Senior competition. Dick Roe was the Club's first Mulrooney medallist. Ainslie defeated Acton in the Grand Final, 11.11 to 10.7. From 1937 to 1941 Ainslie struggled as players were lost to the war effort. In 1940 Robert Bloomfield won the Club's second Mulrooney Medal.

From 1942 to 1945 no senior Ainslie team took the field. After the war in 1946 under Ralph Lewis as President the Club returned to the competition. With Lionel James as coach and Alan Stevens captain Ainslie had a very successful season and defeated the previously undefeated Eastlake in the Grand Final 12.19 to 8.6 to win their third Premiership. Captain Alan "Ginty" Stevens won the Mulrooney Medal. The team followed on in 1947 to again defeat Eastlake in the Grand Final, 15.9 to 9.17. Although making the finals from 1948 to 1950 Ainslie could not reach the Grand Final. Brendan Cain was joint winner of the Mulrooney Medal in 1950. 1951 was a disappointing year for the senior team finishing out of the finals but Barry McCabe became the fifth Ainslie player to win the Mulrooney Medal. In 1952 the Club transferred to Ainslie Oval and work began on its clubrooms. 1952 was an outstanding season as Ainslie went through undefeated and had an average winning margin of 7 goals. They defeated Queanbeyan-Acton 13.20 to 12.12 in the Grand Final. Alan Stevens had returned from a stint at St Kilda and several young players had moved up from the juniors such as Barry Browning, Lionel James Junior and Alan Hawke. Ainslie were very competitive from 1953 to 1957 competing in the finals but unable to reach the Grand Final. Barry Browning won the Mulrooney medal in successive seasons in 1955 and 1956.

In 1957 the licensed premises of the Ainslie Football and Social Club were completed next to Ainslie Oval. In 1958 with Ray Donnellan as coach Ainslie had only two defeats on their way to the Premiership defeating Eastlake in the Grand Final 20.12 to 9.7. The effort was repeated in 1959 and a second successive Premiership was won again defeating Eastlake 11.12 to 8.8. Ainslie reached the Grand Final in 1960 but were defeated by Eastlake. 1961 was another very successful season under new coach Norm Neeson with only two defeats and a win over Queanbeyan, 9.12 to 9.4, in the Grand Final to take out their third Premiership in four years. Playing in their fifth successive Grand Final in 1962 Ainslie were defeated by Eastlake. Ainslie finished third in 1963 and 1964, dropping to fourth in 1965. Ainslie made the Grand Final again in 1966 under the leadership of Captain-Coach Bill Drake who went on to win the Mulrooney Medal. Ainslie were defeated by Eastlake to finish in second place. From 1967 to 1969 Ainslie played in the finals but were unable to reach the Grand Final. In 1970 former junior and ex-Geelong player John Davies was appointed Captain-Coach. For the first time since 1961 Ainslie were able to win the Premiership narrowly defeating Manuka 12.23 to 13.11. After finishing 1971 in third place Ainslie again reached the Grand Final in 1972 but were defeated by Eastlake.

In 1973 Ralph Rendell won the Mulrooney Medal as Ainslie under Captain-Coach John Jillard were defeated by 1 point in the Grand Final by Manuka. After finishing fourth in 1974 Ainslie again reached the Grand Final in 1975 but were defeated. Ainslie left their home ground of Ainslie Oval in 1975 when the League abandoned the oval and finished third in 1976. In 1977 they missed out on the finals for the first time since 1957, finishing in fifth place. In 1978 the Club appointed Kevin "Cowboy" Neale, the ex-St Kilda player, as Captain-Coach. The move had a great impact not only on Ainslie but also on the local league. Ainslie reached the 1978 Grand Final against Eastlake and led by 27 points only to suffer a defeat. Determined to make amends the Ainslie team convincingly won the 1979 Grand Final, defeating Belconnen 17.18 to 11.8. They followed up in 1980 to go through the season undefeated to become Premiers and Champions for the third time defeating Manuka in the Grand Final 21.10 to 12.15. During the 1980 season an ACT side led by Kevin Neale and which included 8 Ainslie players defeated the VFL 13.17 to 11.16 at Manuka Oval. To top off a great 1980 season John Miller won the Mulrooney Medal. In 1981 Ainslie reached the Grand Final again but were defeated by Manuka. 1982 was another great year for the Club as the seniors were again Premiers and Champions. They defeated Eastlake in the Grand Final 22.19 to 11.9. The Club also became the first Club to win Premierships in all grades as the Reserves and Under 19s also were victorious. Greg Nichols won the Mulrooney Medal. Kevin Neale played his 400th senior game in the Grand Final and kicked 125 goals during the season after kicking 139 in 1981 and 149 in 1980. The Reserves had great success during the preceding years winning Premierships in 1967, 1968, 1969, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1976, 1977 and 1981 before winning this Premiership in 1982. The Under 19 team won its first Premiership in 1977 and followed up again to win the 1978 Premiership. The effort was repeated in 1983 as all grades again won the Premiership, with the Seniors defeating Eastlake 18.13 to 13.11. Rod Osborne was appointed coach in 1984 and the seniors and reserves again won the Premiership. On May 27 Ainslie kicked a record score of 53.15(333) against West Canberra with their full-forward Paul Angelis contributing 29 goals. In the Grand Final Ainslie defeated Eastlake 20.14 to 12.13.

In 1985 Ainslie reached the Grand Final but were defeated by Queanbeyan. Brian Cook was appointed Captain-Coach in 1986 but Ainslie failed to reach the Grand Final. However Peter Hamilton won the Mulrooney Medal. A further premiership followed in 1987 under Captain-Coach Russel Durnan with Ainslie defeating Queanbeyan 21.9 to 11.15. Ainslie finished second in 1988 and third in 1989. Ainslie won another Premiership in 1990 under Captain-Coach and former junior Brett Hannam defeating Queanbeyan in the Grand Final 16.12 to 10.21. In 1991 the team finished in third place.

David Cloke the ex-Richmond and Collingwood player was appointed Captain-Coach in 1992 and Ainslie went on to win the Premiership defeating Queanbeyan 9.18 to 7.20. So began a succession of six Premierships as Ainslie were triumphant in 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996 and 1997. Coaches during this period were David Cloke (1992-1993), Peter Banfield (1994-1996) and Ross Smith (1997).

Since 1998 the Club has had its ups and downs. In 1998 and 1999 Ainslie missed the finals and finished in fifth place. From 2000 to 2006 the club played in finals in all years apart from 2002 when they finished fifth. In 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004 and 2006 the Club finished fourth and in 2005 finished third. Coaches from 1998 to 2006 were Kevin Neale (1998), Brent Heaver (1999), Pat Gribble (2000), Jamie Shanahan (2001-2), Brett Knowles (2003-5) and Andrew Bishop (2006).

In 2007 Chris Rourke was appointed coach. It was a difficult year in 2007 with the Club finishing out of the finals. The Club concentrated on recruiting young players and developing their juniors. The team finished fourth in 2008 and Ryan Lewis won the Mulrooney Medal. In 2009 with a stable playing group Ainslie continued its improvement and played off in the Grand Final losing by 6 points to Belconnen. In 2010 still under coach Chris Rourke the Club took the next step winning the Premiership by defeating Eastlake in the Grand Final.

2011 saw the introduction of the new North East Australian Football League (NEAFL) competition with Ainslie playing in the Eastern Conference with the ACT and Sydney teams while Queensland and NT teams made up the Northern Conference. Again 2011 was a very successful year under coach Chris Rourke with Ainslie defeating the Sydney Swans in the Grand Final to win the first NEAFL Eastern Conference Premiership. The following week Ainslie played Northern Conference Premiers for the NEAFL Championship in Alice Springs but went down by 22 points.

After a 12 year break without success Ainslie won its 23rd and 24th Premierships in consecutive years and continues its proud history since being formed in 1927.

2015 saw Ainslie leave the NEAFL and immediately return to Premiership success with wins from 2016 to 2019. These wins were mirrored in Reserve Grade for period 2016-2018, with Rising Stars also winning 2016 and 2018. The change in competition saw a renewed approach towards reconnecting the Men's 1st Grade team with the all other teams. In recent years we have seen a very significant number of our Juniors into Senior football, at rates unmatched for many decades.

2018 saw the commencement of a Women's Second Grade competition reflecting the increased interest in Women's Footy. This growth has also been evident in the Girls' Footy space, with numbers continuing to grow in enormous numbers.

2020 saw Chris Rourke send an Ainslie team onto the park for the last time. Chris commenced with the club in 2007, an amazing 14 years at Ainslie. Six premierships tell only a very small part of the story, his influence on the players and the club was simply outstanding.