

Auckland Cup Proposal

Proposal: that the Board agree to prioritise consulting on the establishment of a regional draft-based hockey league based upon this proposal document.

This board proposal outlines the Auckland Cup as a regional competition to be held either pre-season (March) or post-season (September). The tournament will feature a draft-based system and would involve age groups in the 10, 12, 14, 16, and Senior and Masters grades.

While this document presents this competition as The Auckland Cup, it could equally be The Wellington Cup, The Christchurch Cup, or even The Queenstown Cup if IHNZ had enough interested players in those locations.

Background.

Inline Hockey New Zealand (IHNZ) has received considerable interest in organizing more draft-based hockey competitions. The proposed Auckland Cup offers an opportunity to trial this concept and enhance regional development in Auckland, Waikato, and Bay of Plenty, with future expansion possibilities to Wellington and Christchurch. The tournament could serve as a prototype for a broader initiative if successful.

Targeted IHNZ Members/ Clubs to Invite.

- Orcas, Panthers, Vipers, and Stingrays members.
- Additional members and teams from Waikato and the Bay of Plenty (Mustangs, Devils, Miners, and Pirates).
 - If there is buy-in from Waikato and the Bay of Plenty it is possible that one round could be held at either the Mount or Hamilton depending on both rink availability and tactical choices to grow engagement.

Competition Format.

- *Draft Selection:* Coaches will be appointed for each grade. Teams will be selected based on coach preference through a serpentine draft system.
- *Round Robin & Playoffs:* Each grade will engage in round robin play, followed by playoffs to determine the champion.
- *Trophy Award:* The winner of the competition will receive a trophy named the Auckland Cup.

Logistics & Cost Considerations.

- *Esports Integration & Stats Tracking:* To drive engagement, games will be scored via esports platforms, with real-time stats tracking for all players.
- *Team Names and Jerseys:* While using IHNZ's old Super League jerseys would reduce initial costs, there's significant long-term marketing potential in designing a custom jersey range with an attractive, innovative theme and linked team names. Introducing unique designs could not only enhance the identity and appeal of the competition but also open up other opportunities. Custom jerseys would create stronger connections with the community, offer a memorable visual presence, and provide event marketing opportunities. This approach would be explored depending on funding availability, but the potential impact on brand growth and audience engagement makes it worth considering for future seasons.
- *Costing:* Detailed costs for team entry, operations, and jersey options will be finalized, but the aim is to keep the tournament affordable for all participants.

Social Media & Promotion Plan.

To generate excitement and encourage participation, a comprehensive social media strategy will be implemented:

1. *Teaser Announcements:* Leading up to the event, teaser posts will announce team names, participating clubs, and age grades.
2. *Player Draft Highlights:* The draft will be shared through social media posts.
3. *Game Day Coverage:* Regular updates, match highlights, and player interviews will be shared on IHNZ's platforms, ensuring engagement with the broader community.
4. *Fan Involvement:* The community will be invited to vote on team names.
5. *Partnerships:* Explore partnerships with local businesses or sponsors in Auckland, Waikato, and Bay of Plenty to support the event.

Future Expansion.

If successful, the Auckland Cup concept can be replicated in other regions, with the next likely location being Wellington. Eventually, a South Island edition could be held, furthering IHNZ's vision for regional growth and broader player participation.

Consultation Process.

To ensure this proposal meets the needs of the IHNZ community, we recommend a broad consultation process. This should include an opportunity to provide input.

The Board recommends that the following clubs are invited to participate in this consultation:

- Hamilton Devils (Jan Botha)
- Hutt City Hawks (Sandy Nimmo)
- Levin Thunder (Connie Hirst)
- Vipers Inline Hockey (Adrian Koit)
- Wanganui Lightning (James O'Donnell)
- Wolves Inline Hockey Club (Nick Thom)

The consultation must be complete within 21 days of this proposal being tabled at a Board meeting, allowing for sufficient feedback while keeping the timeline on track for the 2025 season.

Conclusion.

The Auckland Cup provides a unique opportunity to trial a draft-based regional hockey series that could expand IHNZ's offerings while fostering excitement around the sport. The event would serve as a regional competition and a platform for community engagement and regional development.

This proposal seeks board approval to move forward with planning and implementation.