



# ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL CLUBS

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**Re:** Association of Australian Football Clubs (AAFC)

**Dated** 11<sup>th</sup> March 2017

Dear Ravi,

Our very recently formed organisation represents semi-professional clubs from each State and region of Australia which participate in what is known as The National Premier Leagues (NPL). Despite our organisation only being 4 days old, it has already attracted 53 member clubs from all over Australia, representing about 43% of all NPL Clubs nationally and we are confident this number will grow to incorporate most NPL Clubs by the time the AAFC's first formal meeting is held which is scheduled for Monday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2017, in Melbourne.

The NPL is an initiative of Football Federation Australia although it is administered, under licence from FFA, by each State Federation. NPL Clubs participate in their State competitions. It was conceived and implemented as a national second tier of competition, although without any formal connection to the A League. NPL Clubs cannot be promoted into the A League and A League teams cannot be relegated into the NPL. FFA developed Participation rules for the NPL designed to develop elite players for the A League and national teams. These rules generate a significant financial imposition which NPL Clubs must meet.

Following the operation of the NPL for 5 years, the frustration and sense of grievance experienced by NPL Clubs throughout the country has reached a crescendo. That is evident from the formation of our group and the rush among clubs throughout Australia to join it. The absence of any financial or other tangible support for the NPL by FFA has been keenly felt by the Clubs.

Collectively, the NPL Clubs have approximately 30,000 registered players nationally. These players represent the talented players from which it is intended they be identified and developed. The clubs are left to fund the costs and to secure the necessary high-standard facilities as well as to maintain and improve them, often against increased competition from other better funded and supported sports. Of the approximately \$500M revenue received by FFA in the period the NPL has operated, none of it has filtered to the NPL Clubs to assist them with this most important responsibility with which they are tasked.

In recent months the governance of football in Australia has come under scrutiny from FIFA as well as increased scrutiny by the AFC, as part of the ongoing requirement of these bodies that FFA comply with the FIFA Standard Statutes. Separately, the A League teams have sought a greater say in their own destiny through greater representation on the within the National Association congress which elects the Board charged with governing the game. While the State

Federations and the A League all have a say on the FFA board and the A League teams are seeking a greater say, the NPL Clubs, which have their own unique challenges, do not have the opportunity to express these directly to those in charge and to have their concerns properly addressed by the National Association.

Populated by the most experienced people in Australian football, almost all volunteers who love the game and are passionate about its future, these Clubs are uniquely placed to constructively assist in the advancement of the governing bodies and FFA in particular of the strategic integration of the game, which is presently lacking. This will lead to the game's increased prosperity and the achievement of the outcomes and objectives FFA has identified in line with the requirements of the AFC.

As we move through this critical time for the future of football in Australia, the NPL Clubs are very keen to ensure their concerns are heard and addressed. They feel strongly that they are uniquely able to constructively assist in ensuring the future prosperity of the game to which their members and volunteers have devoted their lives. Participating in the General Congress of Membership of FFA would help facilitate this goal.

AAFC aims to be a democratic voice of the NPL Clubs and to pursue the concerns they identify as most important to them from time to time. Each club will have an equal say. The agenda will be set by the clubs. The specific issues which the Clubs identify at the inaugural AAFC meeting of all NPL Clubs, we expect will reflect the broad areas of concern held by the clubs, which include:

- **Securing appropriate financial and tangible assistance to help it meet the objectives assigned to it and reflecting its importance to the game and the obligations its clubs are required to meet. Appropriate and fair compensation from A League teams for players transferred to them from NPL Clubs, which identified and developed them, would assist this aim;**
- **Developing a clear policy and timeframe for the formal development of the NPL into a truly national second tier. This would include promotion and relegation to and from the A League and NPL which would satisfy the requirement in the FIFA statutes and circular No 1132;**
- **Better connecting the game at all levels, including Senior men and women and junior boys and girls, which will engender increased goodwill and prosperity within the game throughout Australia;**
- **Developing appropriate links between the A League and the NPL;**
- **Implementing measures which will improve player retention both within clubs and the game as a whole;**

- **Recognising the critical role of the NPL in the health of the game and the achievement by FFA of its aims by providing appropriate opportunities for it to contribute to the game's governance, particularly in areas directly affecting it;**

AAFC stands for appropriate and necessary structural change, which it seeks to help achieve constructively and collaboratively, for the better future of the sport in Australia. This will lead to a more fulfilled and inclusive experience of all those intimately involved with it, be they players, parents, administrators, coaches or fans.

Please let us know if you require any further information at this stage. As you will appreciate, AAFC is in its formative stages and it will be better able to articulate its position following its meeting of members on 20 March 2017.

Yours Sincerely,  
Association of Australian Football Clubs

Board of Directors  
Pave Jusup, Ezel Hikmet, Tom Kalas, Peter Kotsiris, Nick Galatas, Dean Hennessey