COACHING
COACHING

SITUATION

Coaches have more influence over the enjoyment of participants than any other person in the game. This is particularly so for participants at the start of the journey; young boys and girls.

Coaches have the unique opportunity and responsibility to nurture children’s psychological growth and development. Football is a way for children to develop health and well-being, a positive self-image, sporting skills and life skills, such as socialisation and group behaviour.

The same is true throughout the lifelong participation pathway. At every age group, a coach who provides a positive environment will have happy players. At the elite level, the same basic expectations remain, with the added complexity of high performance and the associated pressures. Whether they are helping six year olds or developing world class players, coaches have a huge responsibility to carry on behalf of the game.

CHALLENGE

Currently, Football focuses its education resources too strongly on coaches working with elite players. As a result, Football is failing to provide adequate support to grassroots coaches. This means too many coaches don’t enjoy their experience because they are ill-equipped for the task. Being unable to give players the experience they want produces frustration for coaches, participants and parents alike. Even at the elite level, advanced coaching education has been inaccessible for many people because of cost, infrequency of courses or distance from learning centres. To further complicate matters, Australia’s coaches are a diverse array of individuals who each require outcomes that are customised to their individual needs.
WHO ARE AUSTRALIA’S COACHES?

FOOTBALL HELPERS

Football Helpers are mostly parents who coach because of their children’s involvement or teachers who want to provide children with harmonious sporting opportunities. Few are interested in gaining “accreditations”, which the game must accept as a necessary concession. It’s more important that these coaches enjoy their experience and exhibit the essential behaviours that ensure children enjoy their experience.

COMMUNITY COMMITTED

The Community Committed coach is likely to be an ex-community player or parent who has stayed after their children have moved on. They are there because they like coaching. They also gain a sense of identity and status from the role. They like the social part of sport and often take other roles around the club. These people are the life blood of Football in Australia and must be formally supported and recognised.

FOOTBALL COMMITTED

Football Committed are typically teens or young adults. They may have shown some leadership qualities while playing and they have a sense of pride about being invited to coach. Their motivations are quite different to Football Helpers and Community Committed. They are usually involved for personal benefit; they see coaching as a career or as a means for professional development. Pragmatically, it’s also a chance for them to earn income.

ADVANCED COACHES

Advanced Coaches are often ex-professional players who are seeking to make a career out of Football. They will likely be looking for accreditations and will seek out opportunities for full-time coaching roles in club academies or in elite environments. They may potentially want to gain specialist knowledge in specific areas of Football, for example, player conditioning.
TARGETS

In 2015, Australia has just 24,000 registered coaches. In the future there will need to be 100,000 recognised coaches who display the essential behaviours and football acumen necessary to coach Australia’s players. Football will embrace all of Australia’s coaches and target teachers to become coaches. Coach development will focus on delivering a quality experience for Football’s participants by giving coaches the support and resources they require.

A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO COACHING

Football must take a holistic approach to coaching, with every strand interconnected and with pathways easily integrated. A structure that incorporates formal and informal strands of learning opportunities must be developed. Good coaching will be measured by a coach’s ability to help a player enjoy Football and fulfill their potential at whatever level that may be. By providing this support we will encourage more people to become coaches. There will be four elements to Football’s approach to coaching:

ESSENTIAL BEHAVIOURS

All coaches will undertake training in essential behaviours. Football will target coaches who naturally exhibit these qualities; whether they have played Football or not. All coaches, no matter what level they are at should be:

RESPONSIBLE

Coaches have a responsibility to ensure a safe environment is provided for all participants; where players are both physically safe and encouraged to learn through trial and error without criticism.

ORGANISED

“Fail to prepare, prepare to fail”. Coaches need to be organised in order to facilitate a training session appropriately and evaluate the performance of players and, crucially, themselves.

POSITIVE

Football should be enjoyable for all participants. Coaches who give positive reinforcement, encouragement, instruction and less criticism have players with higher levels of self-esteem who enjoy Football more.

PLAYER FOCUSED

The players’ development must be at the centre of every training session. This does not just mean merely the players’ technical development. For example, coaches who increase coach-player interaction, intra-team cohesion and promote participation in Football as an opportunity for achievement rather than failure, will have happier players and better retention rates.
NATIONAL CURRICULUM

The National Curriculum is Australia’s instrument to compete on the world stage. However, it can only be disseminated across the country via the support and commitment of our coaches. The best way to become an expert in the National Curriculum is to become an accredited coach, but it’s understood that many coaches do not want this. As an alternative, we will provide practical coach education to all coaches.

COACH EDUCATION (PRACTICAL)
As well as being educated in essential behaviours, all coaches will be educated in practical applications of the National Curriculum. This will not be technical education, but simple, easy to follow guides in how to coach players in the fundamentals of Football.

COACH ACCREDITATION (TECHNICAL)
A coach does not need to be an ex-player to work at the elite level. Anyone who wishes to gain accreditation should be treated equally. However, in acknowledgement of ex-players’ Football acumen, the system must help them gain accreditations while ensuring they exhibit the behaviours expected of all coaches.

In order to be successful on the world stage, Australia needs more accredited coaches. To attract more coaches, we need to make accreditation more accessible and affordable. Indeed, there is a direct link between the cost of coach accreditations and success on the international stage. Germany and Spain have some of the most affordable courses in the world and are the winners of the past two FIFA World Cups. The cost of all accreditations must be reduced so that they are some of the cheapest in Asia, specifically, working towards a C-Licence that costs under $500.

The geography of Australia poses a unique challenge to coach education because centralised programs are not suitable. There must be staff in every Australian state and territory delivering C-Licence accreditations, while other accreditation courses (Futsal, B and A) must be run in every state capital on a regular basis. Furthermore, the C-Licence must be broken down into manageable sections to allow aspiring coaches to undertake the course in a manner that fits around their daily routine, rather than as a compulsory block.
COACHING Whole of Football Plan
SUPPORT

A NETWORK OF MENTORS
Every coach in Australia must have access to a coach mentor. Mentors will provide on the ground guidance to coaches. The coach network will link together mentors at every level of the game. Mentors will be the conduit between clubs and educators.

A NETWORK OF EDUCATORS
A network of educators will be created to guide coaches in the essential behaviours required to coach and educate them in the national curriculum. The network will create an environment of knowledge sharing between the different levels in Australian Football.

RESOURCES

DIGITAL RESOURCES
A consistent plea at the town hall forums for the Football community was that coaches need digital resources to support their endeavours. Online modules must be available to support grassroots coaches. The first of these modules will be based on the “Essential Behaviours” expected of all coaches. Additionally, optional Football modules will support coaches at all levels of the game.

KNOWLEDGE SHARING
For those coaches who are thirsty for knowledge, seminars will be organised at the state and territory level. These will provide an opportunity for coaches to come together and discuss the technical aspects of the game. These seminars will be supported by an annual conference.

REAL TIME DEVELOPMENT
National Team coaches will host special practical training sessions for elite coaches. Coaches will be invited to attend National Team training sessions and matches where they will be able to see the training patterns identified in the National Curriculum in action.