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FAN CONNECTION
Fans are the heartbeat of Australian Football. The popularity of the game in the modern era is a tribute to the passion and commitment of fans that follow club and country in ever-increasing numbers. In the Australian sporting landscape, Football fans are unique for the atmosphere they create and the sense of pride and belonging they display. In particular, active supporters are redefining what it means to be an Australian sports fan by the songs they sing, the colours they wear and the banners they display.

From existing research in 2015, Australian Football fandom is based on:

- **Tribalism**: fans want to belong and feel part of something bigger.
- **Identity**: fans want Football to be part of who they are.
- **Loyalty**: Football fans want to be valued by their club and, in return, will support them whether they win or lose.
- **Social**: fans want to spend time with their friends and family.
CHALLENGES

The percentage of the Football Community who are fans of Top Tier clubs remains low. Research shows that 22% of junior participants are fans of an A-League club. The conversion rate is below what is required to deliver sustained growth. Other Australian sports count up to 70% of their junior participation base as fans of their Australian clubs, although these other sports do not have the complication of attractive international club brands, as Football does. In any case, the Australian Football fan base needs to grow exponentially to include more people who already love the game as participants or who are fans of international Football brands. The fan base needs to be commercialised for the common good of the game. For this to happen, Football’s commercial partners need to be connected to fans and the broader Football community, who in turn need to accrue value from the relationship.

The equation is not about one side extracting value from the other; rather it’s about growing the size of the economic pie to the satisfaction of all stakeholders.

Attracting junior fans is a critical element for the growth of football. Australian Football must aim to convert more junior participants into fans; this would transform the game’s attendances, TV ratings and digital audiences which would flow into greater commercial revenues and in turn more funds to invest in community Football and elite player development.
TARGETS

HOW DO WE INSPIRE AUSTRALIANS TO BECOME FANS AND TO CONNECT WITH AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL?

Football will be “Anytime, Anyhow, Anywhere”

There will be one brand and a unifying identity that encompasses every element of Football and covers all Football’s stakeholders. The unity of purpose will increase the popularity and visibility of Australian Football. 75% of junior participants will support an Australian Top Tier club. The objective is to increase the size of the Football Community from 7.5 million to 15 million, and in doing so lift the percentage of those participants who are fans. This will mean more Australians interested in Australian Football and more connected as fans.

SPORTS ORGANISATION
Can best reach participants and less engaged fans

CLUBS
The focal point for highly engaged fans

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FAN PASSION
Football will focus on digital channels to connect with fans

- The youth of Australia grow up in a digital world that’s evolving towards personalisation and catering to individual preferences.

- Australian Football already skews towards a young demographic and digital channels will enable a lifetime connection.

The creation of a ‘fan loyalty program’ that delivers value to fans and commercial partners alike is a key objective.

Supporting one team will not stop you supporting another

- Fans will connect with multiple clubs at one time; some Australian, some international. Clubs deliver that sense of belonging that is so unique in Football and it will be clubs who will be the focal point to drive participants into fans.
LIFETIME RELATIONSHIP

PRE-BIRTH

The lifetime relationship with Football should begin before a child is born, as the parents will be fans who understand the values and culture of Football and the benefits the game brings. The club that a family supports will become part of their identity and Football will become even more entrenched in Australia’s culture.

CHILDREN

A child’s first experience of playing Football will be Miniroos, in a pre-school, school or club environment. Miniroos will encourage kids to have fun while they sample Football and enjoy a positive first experience. From this point, Football’s Top Tier clubs will be visible in the community. This will include: regular community visits, co-ordinated school programs and a co-ordinated approach to grassroots clubs.

For this to happen, FFA, Member Federations, local associations, zones, clubs and schools need to work in harmony to deliver programs that put children first.

TEENAGERS

Teenagers make up one of Football’s biggest participation groups and are among the most avid fans and biggest consumers of digital content. In these years, Football offers participation opportunities, skills development, health and well-being, social time with friends and the sense of belonging so important to adolescents.

There are stakeholders who can ensure teenagers develop a lifetime affinity.

Grassroots Clubs and Schools
Clubs and schools can create a bond between individuals and an allegiance to a team that becomes a gateway to fandom even when playing days are over.

Clubs
A-League, W-League and NPL clubs must connect with community clubs and schools in their catchment to provide opportunities for teenagers to engage with the brands and see their stars, in particular via digital channels.

Gamers
Gamers are an active part of the Football community. National tournaments will be created and gamers’ talents will be recognised. These events will be used to nurture gamers to become fans of Football in the real world.
**ADULTS**

Football’s lifetime relationship with fans will mean that in 20 years Football will have one million members (ticketed and non-ticketed).

- Football will work with fans to ensure their opinions are valued and included. This will mean regular feedback sessions and dedicated fan resources.
- Clubs will be actively engage in communities and respect the responsibility they have to the Football Community.
- The most atmospheric stadiums in Australia will be used to provide a unique experience for fans.
- Our Competitions will entertain fans with world class Football.

Fans will then repay this engagement by continuing to create the best atmosphere in Australian sports, becoming the sport’s biggest advocates and connecting with commercial partners in a way that provides unique value.

**PARENTS**

Football must hold the objective of being the sport of choice for parents in Australia. Football must continually promote its virtues as the most accessible and inclusive sport in the world. Football has an obligation to make sure the game retains its hallmarks as a safe, simple and skilful recreation and to ensure parents choose Football we will ensure that it is: Affordable and Fun!