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COMPETITIONS
FOOTBALL COMMUNITY

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FAN CONNECTION

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SITUATION

Australia’s Top Tier competitions, the A-League and W-League are the showcase of Football’s endeavours to make the game the biggest and most popular in Australia. The key elements of community relations, fan engagement, elite player development and commercialisation come together in these competitions. They are the weekly shop window of Football and their clubs are what make fans feel like they belong. Australia currently has four elite competitions:

The A-League is the Top Tier competition for men’s Football in Australia. Football’s overall broadcast rights and sponsorship income are anchored by the A-League. The live TV and radio coverage of every match is a key marketing, promotional and fan acquisition tool for Australian Football. The competition plays a key role in the elite player pathway through the National Youth League. Its clubs provide approximately 25% of Socceroos players.

The W-League is the Top Tier of women’s Football. It is one of the premier women’s leagues in the world, attracting some of the best players and producing some of the best women’s Football anywhere. It is one of the only women’s competitions in the world to have regular live TV coverage.

The National Premier Leagues is Australia’s Second Tier competition. Launched in 2013, it includes over 100 semi-professional clubs playing in eight states and territories. The NPL is the engine room of elite player development from 12 to 18 years and into senior Football and a pathway for referees and coaches who aspire to perform in the Top Tier.

Australia’s national knockout cup competition, the FFA Cup, connects the grassroots with the Top Tier and provides an opportunity for every Footballer to reach for the stars. Over 600 clubs enter the knock out rounds. Community and NPL clubs can dream of hosting an A-League club and pulling off a giant-killing upset. The FFA Cup is a unifying force in Australian Football and has become an instant hit with live TV and digital audiences.
The A-League will be the most popular sporting competition in Australia.

STABLE AND SUSTAINABLE STRUCTURE
The A-League will be an actively managed and competitively balanced league within a stable and sustainable structure. What does that mean?

» It means that there will always be a role for a central body that can place the common good and long-term strategic objectives of the game at the heart of every decision.

» It means that the A-League will always be a competitively balanced league with the instruments of a salary cap, squad limits, player quotas and player acquisition rules.

» The best run and best organised clubs will rise to the top, but Australia’s national league will be based on collective commercialisation of rights and a centralised distribution of revenue to ensure the A-League does not become unbalanced.

In order for the A-League to become a financially strong and stable league, it must:

» Strengthen the operations of clubs by centralising select administrative services enabling clubs to focus on Football.

» Expand club Football operations and community engagement activities.
Hold clubs accountable for core functions and benchmarks that will help the league to grow.
Support our players by educating them as they enter professional sport and by assisting them to transition out of the professional playing ranks at the end of their careers.

**COMPOSITION OF THE A-LEAGUE**

The A-League will aim to be the strongest Football league in our region.

Every major Australian centre with a population over 500,000 has the market size to host an A-League club.

A-League competition expansion will come as a product of sustainable commercial growth, via a managed process of “in and out” as circumstances arise, rather than a relegation and promotion system based purely on results. This is critical to retain the strategic market placement of clubs which underpins the commercial viability of the league.

New entrants to the A-League will need to meet criteria based on funding, football development, stadium capacity and facilities, and community engagement that any NPL Club or New Consortium will need to satisfy:

- In particular any NPL Club or New Consortium will need to be professionally run, and prove a concrete demand based on participation and population in a region.

**INTEGRATE CLUBS AND COMMUNITIES**

The loudest message that we heard during the Whole of Football Plan consultation period is that Australia’s professional clubs need to play a more active and prominent role in their communities.

- Clubs will help nurture a “Lifetime Relationship” with their fans. Fans will follow clubs and not just players. This will mean each club will have a unique identity with a multi-generational heritage and fans will feel a strong sense of connectedness.

- Football will provide the platforms and the support necessary so that Australia’s clubs can play a prominent role in their communities. This will result in 75% of participants supporting one of our Top Tier clubs.

- Football will ensure that the game is widely available by providing football content across as many media platforms as possible.
The popularity of Australia’s clubs will be reflected in our growing membership numbers which will surpass one million members (ticketed and non-ticketed).

STRIVE FOR TECHNICAL EXCELLENCE
When we asked the Football community what you wanted from the A-League, the most popular answer was the “Best Australian players playing in Australia” – this must become a key objective. To achieve this we need to raise the standard of the whole league. This means that every Australian A-League club will have a world class facility and academy capable of producing world class Australian players.

ATMOSPHERIC STADIA
Football generates an atmosphere like no other sport in Australia. The Sydney and Melbourne derbies are the envy of every Australian sport and we want to re-create these atmospheres across the country.

As a long-term goal we will ensure that A-League games are played in intimate stadiums where fans feel, and are, part of the action.

We will create a differentiated match day experience to broadcast experience – including providing exclusive digital content in stadia.
THE W-LEAGUE

A-LEAGUE AND W-LEAGUE – ONE CLUB
The W-League will follow the structure of the A-League. This means, at a minimum, that every Top Tier club in Australia should have an A-League team and a W-League team. This is important because:

- Unlike every other Australian sport, Football clubs will be able to connect to their communities by providing male and female role models.

- It makes commercial sense. Female customers are the most influential consumers in Australian society; Football will talk to them through ONE platform - clubs that have both A-League and W-League teams.

- Above everything else, Football fans appreciate good Football and the W-League is top quality Football that attracts male and female fans. Furthermore, having an A-League and W-League team will allow clubs to host more top quality double headers.

- The ONE Club mentality will spread throughout our Top Tier clubs, meaning that ultimately club academies will incorporate both boys and girls enabling us to attract all of the best athletes in Australia.

GROWING LEAGUE
In order to harness the rapid growth in women’s Football, it is crucial that the W-League is structured to provide a world class women’s league. This means:

- The W-League will be between 20 and 30 rounds long. This extended season will allow W-League clubs to consolidate their status and create the potential of additional tournaments, such as a Women’s FFA Cup. The W-League will generate more interest and help inspire potential Matildas.

- The growth in women’s grassroots Football will support a commercialised and creditable alternative to dominant male sports. This commercialisation will enable the W-League to be a fully professional training and playing environment.

- Support our players by educating them as they enter professional sport and by assisting them to transition into roles that will help grow the women’s game.

- The W-League will be underpinned by a women’s NPL competition that will help provide a clear pathway for aspiring players.
ENGAGED FANS
Clubs will build stronger relationships with the community and fans of W-League teams will enjoy W-League games in intimate boutique stadiums that provide a high quality platform for players. In addition, W-League fans will always be able to watch the W-League via a televised platform.

THE NATIONAL PREMIER LEAGUES

- The National Premier Leagues (NPL) will be an elite competition comprised of elite clubs.
- Football’s administration will work with NPL clubs to help them become more professional. A key part of this will be helping them to secure new sources of revenue through providing national exposure for the NPL. This will mean providing TV coverage of Australia’s grassroots competition.
- NPL’s clubs represent some of Australia’s historic footballing communities. Clubs will continue to be pillars of their communities, being inclusive of all fans, and developing a life time relationship with their followers.
- NPL Clubs will maintain a high quality youth development structure that provides a pathway for their talented players. Clubs will be recognised and better rewarded for the critical role they play in player development.
- A WNPL will be created in every federation to both support the W-League and provide an elite second tier of women’s Football in Australia. The WNPL will be underpinned by a vibrant junior structure that increases opportunities for girls.

THE FFA CUP
The FFA Cup will continue to be the unique connection between grassroots and the Top Tier of Football in Australia. This means:

- Ensuring that any club in Australia can enter the tournament and has the ability to progress to play A-League teams.
- The FFA Cup Final will be position as the second biggest event on the Australian Football calendar after the A-League Grand Final. It will unite the whole Football community and be a celebration of Football at every level in Australia.