

FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF AFL SYDNEY PROJECT

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Background

AFL Sydney Seniors was formed in order to provide an elevated level of competition for players in Sydney. In 1998, AFL NSW/ ACT assumed control of the senior leagues in Sydney, then known as the Sydney Football League and the Sydney Football Association, renaming the first division 'AFL Sydney' with the 'Sydney Football Association' comprising the second division competitions. Since 2005, all senior men's competitions have fallen under the 'AFL Sydney' banner as part of a divisionalized competition structure.

The Sydney Women's Australian Football League (SWAFL) was the governing body of Women's Football in New South Wales from 2000-2011. In 2012, the women's competitions came under the umbrella of 'AFL Sydney'.

AFL Sydney Juniors (formerly AFL Greater Sydney Juniors) was established in 2006 in order to provide central governance and direction to numerous independently run junior leagues across the greater Sydney region. In recent years, the league has become more Sydney focused with Wollongong, Central Coast and Newcastle Juniors all establishing their own governance and competition structures. AFL Sydney Juniors is separately governed from AFL Sydney Seniors via an Incorporated Association with two Regional Committees (Sydney Harbour and Western Sydney).

Over the past two decades, the structure of AFL Sydney (comprising AFL Sydney Men's, AFL Sydney Women's, AFL Sydney Juniors and Independent Schools) has evolved significantly over this period – to now comprise 79 male senior teams, 17 women's senior teams, 443 junior teams across two regions and 43 Independent Schools teams, to be a tier below the NEAFL (men's) and AFL Women's League (women's) respectively.

Largely as a result of a significant increase in the amount of direct AFL content into Sydney, the profile and health of AFL football in the city has grown strongly over the last 15-20 years. This is evidenced by an increasing number of fans, crowds, members, TV audiences, as well as clubs, teams and participants.

In March 2013, AFL NSW/ ACT developed Stage 1 of the *AFL Sydney Strategic Plan 2013-2016* which primarily focused on the AFL Sydney Senior competition. Amongst other things, the Stage 1 Report recommended the introduction of the Strategy Group to provide consistent strategic direction over senior and junior leagues, to establish a new divisional structure for under 18s competitions and that there be no direct Club Pathway Policy for under 16s junior footballers through to senior club football.

In 2015, the AFL undertook a national *Future Directions of Australian Football Project*, led by former AFL Commissioner, Bill Kelty. The Project involved consultation with a broad range of volunteers, administrators and leaders across AFL Clubs, State and Territory Bodies, Community Leagues, Clubs and Schools, as well as subject matter experts. Subsequently, the AFL's *Future Directions of Australian Football – Stage 1 Report* was issued which summarised the outcomes of the consultation process.

A key component of this report was reiterating the importance of state/ community football and strong competition structures and clubs.

As part of planning for 2017, the AFL NSW/ ACT Executive has committed to developing a long term vision for AFL Sydney (AFL Sydney Men's, AFL Sydney Women's, AFL Sydney Juniors and Independent Schools), including identifying the key strategic priorities and timeline for implementation.

To that end, as a first step in the strategic planning process, a key objective of this project will be investigating the purpose and identity of AFL Sydney.

Purpose of the Project

The Project will develop and test Sydney specific recommendations that are flowing from the AFL's *Future Directions of Australian Football* project. The project will include key recommendations on:

- The long term vision and overall objectives of AFL Sydney;
- The structures and resourcing that will best support, strengthen and grow the various AFL Sydney competitions across men's, women's and juniors;
- The optimal governance structure of AFL Sydney (across senior men's, women's, junior and schools);
- The structure of competitions, in particular divisionalisation, appropriate junior age groups and the relationship between seniors and juniors;
- The resources needed to support the growth of female football, in particular the depth and competitive balance of the AFL Sydney Women's Premier competition;
- The structures underpinning the talent pathway model across Men's (Sydney University FC, GWS Giants and Sydney Swans NEAFL teams) and Women's (GWS Giants Women's AFL team); and
- The level of funding required to implement any recommendations arising from the project.

The project will also identify the strategic priorities for 2017 onwards and plan the staged implementation for 2018 season onwards.

Scope of the Project

1. Examine current state of AFL Sydney (AFL Sydney Men's, AFL Sydney Women's, AFL Sydney Juniors and Independent Schools) including governance, structures and funding of football, namely, to determine:
 - a. the effectiveness of the current competition structures, governance, scheduling, age groups and pathways;
 - b. any level of duplication of resources and opportunities for increased administrative efficiencies;
 - c. the levels of collaboration between various stakeholders;
 - d. the importance of communication and transparency between stakeholders and different levels of the game; and
 - e. the support and structures applying to umpiring.
2. Assess the effectiveness of current competition structures in linking community football to the NEAFL, AFL and AFL Women's League competitions.
3. Determine the vision for AFL Sydney including:
 - a. the purpose for all participants; and
 - b. the identity and community relevance.
4. Identify initiatives and priorities, and potential investments required to address current challenges and opportunities, including:
 - a. areas that potentially require additional resources or investment;
 - b. mechanisms to improve sustainability and competitiveness of clubs and competitions;
 - c. how to best provide resources and support to club administrators, coaches and umpires;
 - d. improving player pathways to support AFL and NEAFL Club academies including junior and schools competitions;

- e. investment in community facilities;
- f. better supporting the growth of women's football; and
- g. recommendations to improve governance, structures and appropriate levels of funding.

Key Stakeholders

This project will seek feedback and submissions from a wide range of stakeholders in relation to the above areas, including but not limited to:

- AFL Sydney Clubs and Independent Schools, including presidents and committees;
- AFL Sydney participants including, players, coaches, umpires and parents;
- AFL Sydney Juniors Executive;
- AFL Sydney Juniors Regional Committees (Sydney Harbour and Greater Western Sydney);
- AFL Sydney Strategy Group;
- AFL, AFL NSW/ ACT and AFL Sydney staff;
- AFL Game Development department (national);
- NEAFL Club (Sydney University);
- AFL Sydney Umpires Association;
- AFL Clubs (GWS Giants and Sydney Swans).

Project Structure

Ultimately the project will deliver key findings and specific strategic priorities for consideration by the AFL NSW/ ACT Executive.

The project will be structured with a working party, the role of which is described below. Sam Chadwick (State Manager – Football Operations, Governance and Policy, AFL NSW/ ACT) will chair the Working Party and conduct a high-level situation analysis to inform the areas of focus and deliberations.

Working Party

- Role – to provide support, expertise and guidance to ensure the work of the project is in-line with the terms of reference and that it ultimately deliver recommendations having taken into consideration the feedback and advice of all key stakeholder consultations.
- Members – Refer Schedule 1

The working party will be supported by project consultants who will provide strategic guidance and administrative resources provided by the AFL Game Development and Strategy departments, as well as AFL NSW/ ACT CEO, AFL Queensland and other key subject matter experts. Please see Schedule 1 for further detail.

Timing of the Project

This project is intended to provide recommendations that will shape the future of AFL Sydney both in the short term (next 12-24 months) and over the longer term (next 10 years).

With these horizons in mind, the project will have three major reporting milestones that will enable recommendations to flow effectively into the consideration of the AFL NSW/ ACT Executive.

- 1. Consultation and research phase – due February 2017**
 - Conduct series of meetings with key stakeholders.
 - Initial scoping meetings with Working Party.
- 2. Initial Findings – due March 2017**
 - Initial factual findings and recommendations as strategic priorities considered appropriate for implementation or planning throughout 2016.
 - Additional recommendations for consideration by the AFL NSW/ ACT Executive as it considers its budget and investment plans.
- 3. Vision document – due April 2017**
 - Develop a long-term vision for AFL Sydney to help inform the strategic priorities.
 - Draft document circulated to stakeholders for feedback.
 - 1 page document.
- 4. Strategic Priorities – due May 2017**
 - Framing of the strategic priorities for AFL Sydney based on key findings and in line with AFL Sydney vision.
 - Establish specific working groups to implement the strategic priorities and recommendations.
 - Establish a timetable and project plan for implementation.
- 5. Implementation of any changes for the 2018 season – due August 2017**
 - The tabling of any structural changes for AFL Sydney competitions for the 2018 season.
 - The agreed implementation of any structural changes for AFL Sydney competitions for the 2018 season.

SCHEDULE 1

FUTURE OF AFL SYDNEY FOOTBALL PROJECT STRUCTURE

NAME	ORGANISATION / ROLE
PROJECT SPONSOR	
Sam Graham	Chief Executive Officer (AFL NSW/ ACT)
PROJECT LEAD	
Sam Chadwick	State Manager – Football Operations, Governance & Policy (AFL NSW/ ACT)
WORKING PARTY	
Simon Wilson	Regional Manager – Sydney and Illawarra (AFL NSW/ ACT)
Lauren Bunting	Football Operations Manager, AFL Sydney (AFL NSW/ ACT)
Carl Fletcher	Football Operations Manager, AFL Sydney Juniors (AFL NSW/ ACT)
Darren Denneman	State Manager – Talent and Coaching (AFL NSW/ ACT)
Rebecca Marshall	Regional Manager – Greater Western Sydney (AFL NSW/ ACT)
Damian Anderson	State Umpiring & Elite Programs Manager (AFL NSW/ ACT)
David Burgess	Chair – AFL Sydney Juniors Executive
PROJECT CONSULTANTS	
Andrew Gennai-Garino	Strategic Planning Analyst (AFL)
Barry Gibson	State Football Operations Manager (AFL Queensland)
Simon Laughton	State League & International Manager, Game Development (AFL)
Grant Williams	Head of International and Community Development (AFL)
Bob Robinson	Regulatory Manager (AFL NSW/ ACT)
Dean Connors	State Manager – Regions and Programs (AFL NSW/ ACT)
Joseph La Posta	State Manager – Partnerships, Diversity & Major Projects (AFL NSW/ACT)
Dean Lee	Competition Administrator – Sydney Harbour