



Media Statement

NPL Clubs Setting the Record Straight

Canberra 17 December 2015

In response to the recent article in the *Canberra Times* dated the 16 December 2015, the eight National Premier (NPL) Clubs would like to clarify some of the statements made by Mr Warren Grieve, Capital Football Technical Director.

Background

Around 15 weeks ago the NPL clubs were invited by the Board of Capital Football to meet with them and the Management team of Capital Football to discuss concerns raised by the NPL clubs regarding the management of the Canberra Sony Playstation 4 NPL Competition. Following that meeting the NPL clubs have met on a number of occasions, with a majority of these being attended by the Chairperson of the Board of Directors of Capital Football, Mr Mark O'Neill. The topics discussed at those meetings included the current and proposed future competition structure and the working relationship between the Clubs and Capital Football including the Technical Football Department. As a result of these meetings a documented plan titled *Growing Football in Our Region* (the Plan) was developed by the NPL clubs and sent to Capital Football on 5 November 2015 and later to Football Federation Australia (FFA) on 30 November 2015. The Plan suggested a high performance pathway that is consistent and is in line with the direction of Football Federation of Australia as documented in their *Whole of Football Plan*. The Plan also acknowledged that Capital Football has a part to play in development of elite players and the management of ACT representative teams. Furthermore, the Plan mentioned that all NPL clubs are supportive of a Canberra National Youth team playing in a national competition, if it is financially sustainable and is not a user pay system.

On 3 December 2015 the NPL clubs, Mr Mark O'Neill and Mr Mike Shanahan, a Capital Football Director, met with FFA Technical Director Eric Abrams and the FFA Head of National Performance, Luke Casserly in Canberra to discuss high performance pathways. At this meeting both FFA representatives advised that the proposed high performance model suggested by the NPL clubs in the *Growing Football in Our Region* Plan is consistent with the *Whole of Football Plan* and it is the model that all Member Federations are working towards implementing. This model includes elite players returning to their NPL clubs to train and play and also provides extra training and playing opportunities in a Capital Football high performance program.

On Monday 14 December 2015 the eight NPL clubs again met with Mr Mark O'Neill and Mr Mike Shanahan. At the conclusion of the meeting an agreement was finally reached where the NPL clubs and Capital Football can work collaboratively to support high performance pathways. It was also agreed by both the Clubs and the Capital Football Board members that there will be a joint statement released to the media outlining the content of the agreement.





Setting the Record Straight

The NPL clubs are disappointed to read a number of misleading and inaccurate statements made in the article by Mr Grieve in the *Canberra Times* article dated 16 December 2015. Mr Grieve has not been present at any of the meetings during the past 15 weeks nor was he present at the meeting of 14 December 2015 when the agreement was reached. Accordingly, he should not speculate, particularly in the media as to the detail of the discussion or the nature of any agreement.

To set the record straight, the agreement reached by the NPL clubs and Capital Football Board members in regards to the High Performance squads is that the competition structure for the 2016 season shall have all Capital Football High Performance players under the age of 12 years return to their respective NPL club, those above the age of 12 will be dual registered with Capital Football and their NPL club of their choice. This will allow players to return to their club at any time should they so desire. This structure will only apply until October 2016, with a full transition in 2017 that will see all High Performance players in Capital Football programs return to their NPL clubs. Capital Football will still manage a High Performance program that provides extra training and matches for elite players. It was also agreed that Capital Football would develop a detailed implementation plan with key milestone dates for a full transition by no later than October 2016.

In addition to these changes Capital Football will endorse all NPL club Presidents as members of Capital Football with full voting rights. Mr O'Neill and Mr Shanahan also gave the Clubs a guarantee that should the Board working with the Clubs fail to produce a competition structure to the satisfaction of the clubs by October 2016, then the competition structure as submitted by the NPL clubs to Capital Football and Football Federation of Australia (*Growing Football in Our Region*) shall default into being the policy of the Board of Capital Football and be fully implemented. This model includes elite players returning to their NPL clubs to train and play and also provides extra training and playing opportunities in a Capital Football high performance program.

It was also agreed contrary to recent announcements that the launch of Canberra United as an Academy would not occur or be approved by the Board of Capital Football. It was also agreed that Capital Football High Performance playing squads would continue as previous years and the Academy notion would be a part of discussions for 2016.

None of the above matters have anything to do with aspirations for an A-League team in Canberra or a National Youth League licence for Canberra - they are not related. In fact it was mentioned at the meeting on 3 December 2015 by FFA representatives that they will be reviewing the National Youth League competition at the end of the current season. At this meeting FFA representatives did not give any commitment that a National Youth League licence will in fact be granted to Capital Football.

It must be made very clear that the NPL clubs are unanimously and fully supportive for Canberra to have a National Youth League licence. The concerns of all clubs relate to how a team would be funded and how sustainable it will be. The NPL clubs have asked Capital Football on a number of occasions to submit a financial model to demonstrate its viability. To date their only response is that it will be a user pay system, which is inconsistent with the *Whole of Football Plan*. The NPL clubs do not want a National Youth League team to become yet another financial burden to our members or the parents of the National Youth League players.

