

A-Leagues Fan Representative Group **APL**

Meeting #2

DATE	LOCATION	START TIME	END TIME
22 Nov 2023	VIRTUAL (GOOGLE MEET)	6:00PM	8:00PM

MEMBER LIST

ATTENDEES REQUESTED	ATTENDANCE	CLUB/LEAGUE	RESPONSIBILITY
Nick Garcia	Attended Virtually ▾	A-Leagues Commissioner	Meeting Chair ▾
Joe Aylward	Attended Virtually ▾	Adelaide United FRG	Club FRG Representative ▾
Chris May	Attended Virtually ▾	Brisbane Roar FRG	Club FRG Representative ▾
Erin Morrow	Attended Virtually ▾	Central Coast Mariners	Club FRG Representative ▾
Kathleen Crawford	Attended Virtually ▾	Melbourne City FRG	Club FRG Representative ▾
Maria Berry	Attended Virtually ▾	Melbourne Victory FRG	Club FRG Representative ▾
David Morgan	Attended Virtually ▾	Macarthur Bulls FRG	Club FRG Representative ▾
Luke Welsman	Attended Virtually ▾	Newcastle Jets FRG	Club FRG Representative ▾
Kim Hawkins	Attended Virtually ▾	Perth Glory FRG	Club FRG Representative ▾
Yousef Hassain	Attended Virtually ▾	Sydney FC FRG	Club FRG Representative ▾

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Susan Baikie	Attended Virtually ▾	Wellington Phoenix FRG	Club FRG Representative ▾
James Plozza	Attended Virtually ▾	Western United FRG	Club FRG Representative ▾
Josh Inns (Harry Inns replacement)	Attended Virtually ▾	Western Sydney Wanderers FRG	Club FRG Representative ▾
N/A	Did Not Attend ▾	Canberra United	N/A ▾

A-LEAGUES ATTENDEE LIST

Jack Mesley	Attended Virtually ▾	A-Leagues Commercial	APL Representative ▾
Nick Varney	Attended Virtually ▾	A-Leagues Marketing	APL Representative ▾
Hannah Lidster	Attended Virtually ▾	A-Leagues Club Services	APL Representative ▾
Matt Ellenby	Attended Virtually ▾	A-Leagues Comms	APL Representative ▾
Chris Schimizzi	Attended Virtually ▾	A-Leagues Strategy	APL Representative ▾

FRG #1 MEETING MINUTES

The meeting opens at 5.57PM AEDT.

INTRODUCTION

- Nick Garcia welcomes all to the meeting and introduces the agenda, highlighting the addition of Erin Morrow from Central Coast Mariners and Luke Welsman from Newcastle Jets as new chairs.
- Nick Varney further outlines the agenda and touches on the intent to discuss feedback forms and key topics such as the 'Unite Round' and the sport's visibility, allocating 30 minutes for each topic. Plans for the A-League's 20th anniversary are also to be discussed, with a 25-minute slot for any other business and closing remarks.
- New members of the A-League FRG Introduced themselves and noted:
 - Erin Morrow shared his experience with the Central Coast Mariners, emphasising his connection with the fans and the club's achievements.
 - Luke Welsman talked about his history with Newcastle Jets and his goal to represent the 'every man' and address attendance challenges in Newcastle.
- Nick Garcia spoke about A-League's organizational changes, including Danny Townsend's move to Saudi Arabia and the new dual leadership structure with James Rushton.
 - The group discussed the importance of aligning with a football-first business strategy and being commercially ruthless while adding structure and governance.
- Nick Garcia opens up a discussion on expansion. Outlining the new ownership landscape, particularly the Auckland franchise deal with investor Bill Foley, emphasising sustainable business practices and community connection.
 - Part of the conversation touched on the importance of the next TV deal for the league and the strategic approach to expanding into new markets like Auckland and Canberra.

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- Nick Garcia discussed the strategic decisions and launch event for a new club, emphasising the importance of credible ownership and long-term vision.
- Kathleen Crawford also highlighted the positive grassroots impact of a potential A-League team in Auckland.
- Nick Garcia addressed questions from the FRG about other bidders for team expansions, emphasising the selection of credible partners with a sustainable approach.
 - Updates on the Canberra team were provided, with advanced discussions with a consortium noted.
 - Dave Morgan inquired about the deadline for the Canberra team setup, with Nick Garcia explaining the dependency on the experience of the incoming party.
 - Nick Garcia highlighted the importance of not compromising on the wrong partners for the sake of quick expansion.
- Discussions moved to existing clubs, with a focus on Perth Glory's & Newcastle Jet's current sales process and the search for credible buyers.

DISCUSSION TOPIC 1 - UNITE ROUND

- Unite Round was introduced as a discussion topic following feedback from the fans, with feedback sought from club representatives regarding fan engagement and logistics.
- Joe Aylward raised concerns about fan safety, especially regarding the proximity of opposing fans during matches.
- The potential for increased fan travel and engagement during the Unite Round was discussed.
- The need for clear communication and promotion of the Unite Round was emphasized.
- The possibility of engaging an events company for travel packages was suggested.
- The importance of targeting non-traditional football supporters to expand the fanbase was highlighted.
- Ideas for club representation and merchandising opportunities at the Unite Round were proposed.
- Feedback from a recent meeting about Melbourne City was reported to be positive, with details provided in the Club FRG minutes.

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- The sentiment around the Unite Round and general interest was discussed, with a notable positive response from certain club's social media groups and their individual members.
- Nick Varney and Kathleen Crawford discussed the positive reception to the return of the grand final and the Unite Round, while noting concerns about affordability and timing.
- Kathleen Crawford highlighted feedback from social media and the community's happiness about the grand final's return, interpreting it as a sign that fans felt heard.
- Concerns were raised about the logistics of travel during school holidays and the potential for fan conflicts on public transport, especially during Unite Round.
- Suggestions were made for unique merchandise to be sold at the ground during Unite Round to excite fans.
- James Plozza relayed feedback about the Unite Round's timing and some possible negative sentiment regarding the Liberty A-League Women's schedule.
- Kim Hawkins mentioned challenges with fan positivity due to ownership issues (Perth) and the high cost of travel and accommodation.
- Kathleen Crawford suggested exploring commercial arrangements with carriers and hotel groups to ease travel costs for fans.
 - Jack Mesley acknowledged the challenges of coordinating travel packages and the reality of better market offers.
- The importance of fan experience was emphasized, with plans for live sites and grassroots initiatives outlined by the A-Leagues.
 - Sydney/ Wellington/ Western Sydney Fans were encouraged to feedback separately as they did not have the chance to talk specifically about their club FRGs

DISCUSSION TOPIC 2 - GROWING THE VISIBILITY OF THE SPORT

- Jack Mesley opened a discussion on the visibility of the sport, framing the A-Leagues opportunities and challenges whilst requesting open discussion from the group.

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- The overall visibility of the sport and strategies to increase media coverage were discussed, with an emphasis on sharing more stories and partnering with media outlets.
- Jack noted the challenges of competing with other sports for media attention and the impact of the increased focus on women's football on the men's league's visibility.
- Kathleen Crawford discussed feedback from their chat group and meetings, mentioning a successful 'where are they now' piece in another sport and the need for content that appeals to younger audiences.
- There was a concern about confusion over where official announcements were being released, whether from clubs, APL channels or news outlets.
- Dave Morgan highlighted the need for better engagement from broadcast partners, suggesting they could contribute more to organic growth and community engagement, specifically on matchday.
 - Jack Mesley acknowledged the importance of integrating the league into key programming and mentioned ongoing discussions with broadcast partner to increase the league's presence.
- The discussion covered the importance of having the league available in pubs, with Paramount willing to provide permissions for pubs to show games at residential rates.
- There was a discussion about the lack of an out-of-home partner for the league and the potential opportunities for regional marketing.
- Marie Berry brought up concerns about media coverage in Melbourne and the challenges of getting visibility in a competitive market.
 - Matthew Ellenby provided updates on improving media relations in Melbourne and strategies for engaging with key journalists and media outlets.
- The possibility of international fans being able to watch games was discussed, with existing wide distribution and availability on YouTube for markets without broadcast deals.

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- A need for clear plans and budgeting for the next year was acknowledged, with the potential for incorporating local club documentaries.
- Matthew Ellenby discusses direct communication with Paramount and bimonthly calls with the commentary team to ensure they are informed about key messages.
- Jack Mesley mentions state-based publicists working closely with clubs to tell more club stories beyond standard press conferences.
- Luke Welsman suggests setting up local pubs in smaller towns as official A-League viewing locations to increase fan engagement.
- Jack Mesley explains Paramount's offer to pubs to show A-League games at residential subscription rates and the need for clubs and fan groups to ensure pubs take up the offer.

DISCUSSION TOPIC 3 - A-LEAGUES 20TH ANNIVERSARY

- The upcoming 20th anniversary of the men's league was discussed, with ideas for celebrating the milestone and acknowledging the history of the league before the A-League.
- Additional considerations noted by A-Leagues Executives surrounding how the A-Leagues can reach the wider group of fans who were supporters prior to the formation of the A-Leagues.
- Nick Garcia and Jack Mesley acknowledge that there is a need to understand how clubs fit into this with a number having already celebrated that milestone.
- Discussion on the potential for local clubs to create their own video content to celebrate the A-League's 20th anniversary and the possibility of a national campaign.
- Chris May mentioned that most clubs have digital partners capable of creating video content and suggested utilizing digital channels for distribution.

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- Various club representatives identified the need to represent best moments/ players via strong video content, citing a successful example from another sport.
- Adelaide United representative acknowledges the processes currently underway to celebrate their 20th Anniversary

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- James Plozza asks for the APL's reflections on the National Second Tier and its implications for the A-League.
 - Nick Garcia discusses the importance of integrating the National Second Tier with the A-League and plans to collaborate with the FA on this.
- Nick Garcia and Dave Morgan discussed the potential for federal funding to support club facilities and the importance of having influential figures like Steven Conroy advocating for the sport.
- Maria Berry suggests improvements for the A-League app, emphasising its importance for fans during matches. Maria Berry critiqued the A-League app for its poor navigation, small font size, and lack of accessibility features like text resizing.
 - Nick Garcia acknowledges Maria's feedback and committed to addressing the list of issues with the A-League app.
- Kathleen raises concerns about the accessibility of venues for individuals with disabilities and suggests practical solutions from the community.
 - Jack Mesley acknowledges the challenges of stadium operations at a national level but is open to discussing and addressing accessibility concerns.
 - Nick Garcia and Jack Mesley agree to consider community-provided solutions for improving venue accessibility.
- The meeting concludes with a reminder of the next meeting date and an invitation for feedback on the meeting format.

The meeting closed at 8.01PM AEDT.