

# A-LEAGUES FRG #8

## [KEY MEETING INFORMATION]

DATE	LOCATION	START TIME	END TIME
4 Feb 2025	VIRTUAL (GOOGLE MEET)	6:00 PM	8:00PM

## [ATTENDEE LIST / RESPONSIBILITY]

ATTENDEES REQUESTED	ATTENDANCE	ROLE	REPRESENTATION
Nick Garcia	TBC	Meeting Chair	APL
Hannah Lidster	TBC	APL Representative	APL
Maggie Isaac	TBC	APL Representative Minutes	APL
Matthew Ellenby	TBC	APL Representative	APL
Chris Schmizzi	TBC	APL Representative	APL
Joe Aylward	TBC	Club Representative	Adelaide United FRG
David Morgan	TBC	Club Representative	Macarthur Bulls FRG
Susan Baikie	TBC	Club Representative	Wellington Phoenix FRG
Luke Welsman	TBC	Club Representative	Newcastle Jets FRG

# LEAGUES

Yousef Hussain	TBC ▾	Club Representative ▾	Sydney FC FRG
Maria Berry	TBC ▾	Club Representative ▾	Melbourne Victory FRG
Kathleen Crawford	TBC ▾	Club Representative ▾	Melbourne City FRG
Harry Inns	Apologies ▾	Club Representative ▾	WSW FRG
Josh Inns	TBC ▾	Club Representative ▾	WSW FRG
Erin Morrow	TBC ▾	Club Representative ▾	Central Coast Mariners FRG
Kim Hawkins	TBC ▾	Club Representative ▾	Perth Glory FRG
Matt Mann	TBC ▾	Club Representative ▾	Melbourne City FRG
Daniel Hoogstra	TBC ▾	Club Representative ▾	Western United FRG
Chris May	TBC ▾	Club Representative ▾	Brisbane Roar FRG
Tim Adams	TBC ▾	Club Representative ▾	Auckland FC FRG

# LEAGUES

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## [AGENDA]

### Welcome

- NG (APL) welcomes all on the call
- TA (AKL) provides an introduction of himself to the group
- EB (NEW) welcomed as new representative for Newcastle Jets, and gives an introduction to the group
- Apologies: HI (WSW). JI attended on behalf of WSW

NG (APL) runs through the agenda

### Action Items

- MI (APL) recaps action points from previous meeting

### FRG Agenda Item 1: Refereeing

NG (APL) introduces Jon Moss, Head of Referees at Football Australia (FA) to the group.

JM (FA) provides an update to the group on current refereeing plans, including

- Four months into the role and has attended 40 live games so far this season across both leagues to assess referee performance and to meet key stakeholders
- Focuses for this season include: Higher intervention threshold for VAR and ensuring the overall refereeing is less intrusive to let the game flow. This is preferential direction he has received from fans and stakeholders in the game, including clubs.
- Continuous education and training of referees on and off field. Looking at a reduced panel of referees next season.
- Continued focus on nurturing the best Australian and NZ refereeing talent

JM (FA) opens the floor to questions.

JA (ADL): What are your thoughts of the talent pool and how are you addressing it?

# LEAGUES

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JM (FA): Generally happy but always room for improvement. Review process undertaken on a Monday each week on what Match Officials did well/need improvement on, working on efficiencies on the field such as whistle carrying on lanyards, how referees caution players, how referees run to allow best view position / viewing angle, encourage referees to be more approachable yet clinical where required, improve communication such as reasons for decisions. Looking ahead to next season, Match Officials may start to work in teams so referees work with the same assistants

MB (MVC): Going from 17 to 12 in a panel - will this be enough to cover both competitions?

JM (FA): There are two different panels; x12 in each competition.

MB (MVC): Colours worn by GK and refs and match officials, lots of fluorescent colours and potential clashes in jerseys.

JM (FA): all three teams should be in different colours, however, there are varying factors as to why this is not always achievable in every case.

DM (MAC): What does the game look like at the end of your tenure, what level do you want the league to look like, and leave fans with?

JM (FA): The plan is to have some of the best referees and panelists as well as establishing a pipeline of emerging talent. Training officials to be fit for purpose, adding value to the game, developing an exchange program with international leagues, focusing on development programs for officials.

The all female panel at the Isuzu UTE A-League Men WSW v MAC New Year's Day match - our aim is to have Match Officials at World Cup finals, one of our best chances of achieving that is within the Women's World Cup, so we need to provide opportunities for Women's Match Officials to gain further exposure and experience refereeing men's games, thus enabling talent to develop.

MM (MCY): Do you think the standard of referring can get to the level you want?

JM (FA) explains thoughts to reduce the Match Officials panels to 12 referees each and consider the contracting model in order to avoid losing talent overtime, therefore, developing local talent, while learning from other leagues on what they do well.

YH (SYD): what are your plans on addressing noticeable time wasting and feedback received on that?

# LEAGUES

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JM (FA) acknowledges the issue and that feedback has been received. Referees have spoken to certain clubs to stop wasting time and Match Officials have been trained to call out time-wasting during the match and manage the situation in the game.. Fourth Officials have been asked to work with the Match Officials team to add on extra time, or issue cards where appropriate. Discussions are had with the relevant Clubs post-match.. Time wasting is something the referees are constantly monitoring, and making sure the right amount of time is added.

EM (NEW): Mariners fans are querying the perception of advantage in terms of local referees officiating local matches.  
JM (FA) explains that the panel of officials is so big right now that referees are kept in their areas. Ideally, we have referees move around to navigate the perception of neutral refereeing.

EM (NEW): VAR in stadia announcements during last season's finals series saw decisions that fans felt were communicated vaguely. Are you improving that?

JM (FA) affirms the position that although there has been positive feedback from stakeholders about the introduction of announcements, referees are working on how they can give fans more information through the announcements. Unfortunately, we are limited to what we can do to involve fans by IFAB however we are working on additional avenues for more fan engagement and understanding of the VAR process.

## **FRG Agenda Item 2: Ticketing, Pricing, Accessibility for Fans**

HL (APL) confirms that a special guest Katie (KL) from Two Circles is joining this conversation as she works with clubs and the league on ticketing and membership strategy and she will help lead the workstream from this agenda item.

NG (APL) opens the floor to the FRG to start discussion on this agenda item.

- JA (ADL) states that there are varying ticket pricing for away supporters based on venue and match. Queries why there is a disparity and what can be done for away travelling supporters.
- EB (NEW) suggests the idea of giving members some sort of benefit would be helpful

# LEAGUES

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- KC (MCY) also adds that its even more complex when buying disability seating as an away fan as most builds cater to one companion seating only and restricts travel with a group or family.
- HL (APL) notes the differences in pricing. Asks if concerns also extend to seating and location inconsistencies between stadiums, and if a revamp of away fan ticketing (not just pricing) is required. Notes a conversation had with SB (WEL) offline about away placement of fans at certain stadiums as an example.
- KL (Two Circles) asks the group if there is also need for consideration for how the league and clubs communicate ticket pricing and deals for clubs.
- The group agrees that there is a lot unknown in this area and some promotions can be better communicated (ie the earlier you purchase, the cheaper your ticket).
- JA (ADL) suggests that on a pricing level, a set price for club members at a minimum could be considered.
- DM (MFC) states that he is aware some fans are annoyed at paying a higher cost on Matchday as opposed to earlier in the week and they do not understand why clubs do this.
- EM (CCM) acknowledges this is the first he knows of this tactic and queries if this is broader than away fans, and one club.
- HL (APL) confirms its common practice for most clubs and that is not specific to away fans, its designed as a way to incentivise early purchase in stadiums where supply outweighs demand. EM (CCM) confirms this is an example of what could be better communicated.
- NG (APL) advises that APL is pursuing conversations with airline partners about travel deals for fans which could help alleviate costs, and this above ticket pricing alone should help drive greater away attendance. KH (PER) asks the group to remember that not all away fans travel so sometimes ticket price is the only consideration factor.
- KH (PER) queries if venues or clubs set the prices

# LEAGUES

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- HL (APL) explains to the group that clubs set the ticketing pricing, however each works within the constraints of their own environment - including stadium costs, transport costs, demand etc and the challenge with blanket pricing is often some clubs have to take hits to their bottom line for the greater good, and this can be challenging to get all clubs on board with.
- DG (WUN) suggests we have to be careful in a blanket away price because for local derbies it could severely impact the highest generating match day revenue opportunity for clubs. HL (APL) responds that a tiered model could be explored to account for this but its a valid consideration.
- JI (WSW) states that a key frustration that he is aware of is that the away fans are priced higher than GA categories, and it forces fans to buy GA and then they face issues in accessing active bays on the day due to security.
- DM (MFC) expresses his thoughts that away bay ticketing should be no more than GA price.
- FRG suggest going back to one of the original questions is that it would be nice if away fans were given a more prominent location in stadium (ie behind goals everywhere)
- HL (APL) confirms that APL and Two Circles will start a work stream on away pricing with clubs and revert back at the next meeting. Asks if there are any other ticketing challenges the group wants to discuss
- MM (MCY) points out the challenges of accessible seating and inconsistencies between stadiums and urges the APL to attempt to drive clubs and venues to provide solutions. Also suggests that packaging ticket & parking is a good way forward.
- KC (MCY) suggests bringing some of the people who go through these accessibility experiences to be heard - given a platform to be heard.
- KL (Two Circles) provides an update on the strategic projects underway with the APL and clubs:
  - Working with APL on understanding trends on ticketing and memberships to help build better products across the league.

# LEAGUES

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- Process and streamlining automated journeys for clubs including better fan communications pre and post match to encourage attendance at that weekend's game and repeat attendance beyond

## **APL Agenda Item 1: Unite Round**

- HL (APL) takes the group through initial fan feedback and learnings from the event, stating that it was vastly improved from the first iteration, with thanks to the inclusion of a FanZone, the Unite Cup and scheduling changes, but there is room for improvement.
- CS (APL) acknowledges that first conversations on continuation of the event will sit with Destination NSW as the current host city and takes the group through considerations and options for exploration on improving the proposition for future years and government appeal.
- DM (MFC) congratulates the APL for putting on a great event that was really well executed, Saturday night in particular. DM's only negative is that the Fan Experience should be consistent across all 3 days, as Sunday was definitely lacking. Otherwise well done and hopes Unite Round happens again.
- In lieu of time, APL encourages the FRG group to share their feedback during February via a document link to allow each member to capture and report feedback from each club's FRG group.

## **APL Agenda Item 2: 2030 Strategy**

- NG (APL) takes the group through the latest 2030 strategic framework, and the five key identified areas of growth. Confirms that there is now support from clubs and the APL board to consult with fans and other game stakeholders, and confirms intent to schedule a specific call with those interested FRG members in February to seek deeper feedback on each key focus areas and open discussion on big decisions the league needs to assess over the next few years to unleash the growth potential.
- NG (APL) confirms reading materials will be sent prior to the meeting and a meeting invitation will follow.



# LEAGUES

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## AOB

- The process of appointing a Canberra United FRG Chair was raised by MB (MVC). HL (APL) confirmed there has been limited movement on the club having capacity to stand up their own FRG and appoint a chair. MB (MVC) and HL (APL) agree that a discussion should be had on how we can fairly and transparently appoint a representative that can adequately contribute to this group outside of the stadium democratic process. They agree to discuss offline.
- An update on the progress of Canberra Expansion was requested and NG (APL) shares that there is no shortage of interest in the franchise, but with the process now extending beyond 18 months, there is an impending deadline ahead on if there is no serious bidder available APL will need to consider its options.
- KH (MCY) requests an update on the status of the FA Security Taskforce. HL (APL) confirms a kick off session was held between FA and APL pre-Christmas, but no timelines or next steps have been provided by FA on the formal commencement.
- DM (MFC) asks about APL's financial situation. NG (APL) confirms the APL is in a steady financial position and continuing to work towards a financially sustainable future where club grants can increase again. NG (APL) comments that key metrics across the ALM competition are also showing positive signs of growth, and whilst ALW metrics have dropped from the heights of the post- 2023 FWWC bubble, it was anticipated and is still performing better than the year prior. NG (APL) also confirms that APL is working on the next Australian domestic broadcast deal which will help set up this financially sustainable future.
- MB (MVC) queries if there are any other APL updates, NG (APL) advises the group that NN (former APL CCO and has engaged with this group previously) has departed in a full time capacity but remains an advisor for the APL.
- YH (SYD) queries the circumstances around a fan incident and removal of concession items that occurred at the recent MVC v SFC match in Melbourne who is involved in that process. APL confirms that the incident was assessed and implemented by the venue and local police authority on the night, and APL is currently investigating the incident. APL reinforces the complexity involved in each incident of this type and the difficulty in consistency across multiple stakeholders who hold different opinions and jurisdictions across different states. Believes the FA security taskforce is a pivotal project which will be led by the weight of the governing authority of our game and will bring the right parties across Aus & NZ together to discuss

# LEAGUES

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consistent, proactive measures and educational initiatives for the future so that people better understand how active support should be celebrated and adds value to our game.

NG (APL) closes the meeting reminding the group APL will send follow up items as discussed, a meeting invitation for a 2030 strategy discussion and that the next FRG meeting will be held on Tuesday 25 March, 2025.

Meeting ends at 8:22 PM (AEDT)