

# A-LEAGUES FRG #10

## [KEY MEETING INFORMATION]

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

## [ATTENDEE LIST / RESPONSIBILITY]

ATTENDEES REQUESTED	ATTENDANCE	ROLE	REPRESENTATION
Hannah Lidster	TBC ▾	Meeting Chair ▾	APL
Chris Botherway	TBC ▾	APL Representative ▾ Minutes ▾	APL
Danielle Lowry	TBC ▾	APL Representative ▾	APL
Tony Henderson	TBC ▾	APL Representative ▾	APL
Emilia Skopal	TBC ▾	APL Representative ▾	APL
Joe Aylward	TBC ▾	Club Representative ▾	Adelaide United FRG
David Morgan	TBC ▾	Club Representative ▾	Macarthur Bulls FRG
Susan Baikie Ethan Fransen (new Chair)	Apologies ▾	Club Representative ▾	Wellington Phoenix FRG

# LEAGUES

Emma Beletich	TBC ▾	Club Representative ▾	Newcastle Jets FRG
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 Josh Inns (Stand-In)	Apologies ▾	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 Kelly	TBC ▾	Club Representative ▾	Brisbane Roar FRG
Tim Adams	TBC ▾	Club Representative ▾	Auckland FC FRG

## [AGENDA]

### Introduction & Welcome

- HL (APL) opens meeting by welcoming two new FRG Chairs to the group: Chris Kelly replacing the former chair of Brisbane Roar (Chris May) and Ethan Fransen (replacing Susan Baikie).
- CK (BRI) introduces himself: Long-time involvement in football, currently playing Over 35s, Treasurer of a grassroots club. Previously with Roar Supporters Federation and now Brisbane Roar FRG.
- EF (WEL) introduces himself: Wellington Phoenix supporter, shirt collector, and Fan Group member since inception. Connected with Yellow Fever, active in ALM and ALW fan groups.

### FRG Agenda Item 1: Ninja A-League Women

- HL (APL) opens the floor for the FRG to raise questions in relation to Ninja A-League Women Competition
- TA (AKL) explains there has been discussion amongst the Chairs, particularly off the back of departing Matilda's coach media comments about the investment in the women's competition and what standards APL expects of its clubs.
- The group opens conversation about the professionalism of the league and notes that they would all like to see professionalism and 12 month contracts.
- MM (MCY) noted disparity with new Canadian league's professionalism and salary cap.
- KC (MCY) also queries what implications there currently are in cross-over between NPL and national leagues.
- HL (APL) introduced ES (APL) to the group, Manager of Women's Professional Game to provide some context to past investment to this point.
- ES (APL) outlined progress made over the past few season using the original capital investment from Silverlake which includes an extended season, increased retainers per players, expanded finals series, investment into WWC marketing and marquee player funds. ES says that no doubt a focus of the next CBA (in 12 months time) will need to address longer contracts. Noted FIFA's

# LEAGUES

professional wage benchmark (\$120/week), which the APL meets but is not the ongoing benchmark to grow the league and remain competitive with the best overseas leagues.

- KC (MCY) cited that it must also be unhelpful in unrealistic expectations from NPL player payments.
- ES (APL) agreed and summarised initiatives with Sydney academies playing in NPL and substitution rule changes which have been challenging to navigate in the short term.
- ES (APL) completes the remainder of the questions by explaining some of the standards that are set for clubs for training facilities, player medical treatment as part of the CBA negotiations with the PFA and these are mandated to clubs to adhere to.
- TA (AKL) enquired about the status of Auckland's ALW team's entry.
- HL (APL) states that discussions are ongoing between the league and club assessing the appropriate time for entry based on season structure and upcoming competitions (WAC 2026 and AFCW competitions).
- TA (AKL) and MM (MCY) outlines that MB (MVC - absent from call) raised a further point of discussion about Ninja A-League Women in relation to the naming convention of the league and how it affects marketing & promotion. Concerns were raised about the fact neither league references if its the men's or women's competition, and the added confusion from dropping 'W-League' branding, whilst continuing with 'Dubzone' as a broadcast show and social media channel. It was noted that as part of the recent Dolan Warren Awards broadcast it became hard to follow which league was being discussed at any given time.
- CK (BRI) agreed and called for a more recognisable, independent identity for women's football.
- EM (CCM) & KH (PER) suggested consulting wider FRG groups. Erin later confirmed via polling his FRG were an even split on the naming convention.

**Action:** FRG Chairs to discuss women's competition naming convention with Fans and provide feedback.

## FRG Agenda Item 2: Grand Final Policing

- KC (MCY) declared conflict of interest on Grand Final debrief matters due to employment and steps away from this conversation.
- MM (MCY) suggested parking the discussion as state-by-state experiences vary — better suited to a national conversation.

# LEAGUES

- KH (PER) stressed the importance as a national issue affecting the game's reputation. Questioned APL's public silence on policing tactics. Suggested confirming Vic Police meetings publicly to protect league reputation.
- HL (APL) outlined that a formal debriefing process was underway following the ALM GF in particular outlined as per previous meetings that it is challenging for APL to come out incident by incident to address specific problems without placing undue pressure on relations for the future in that state or others, and that APL did not believe addressing all matters in public will help solve the problem or further perpetuate it. HL confirms that a focus of the off-season will be to bring together national stakeholders for a series of meetings to start to address the fan issues of the past year and identify proactive strategies.
- EF (WEL) cited over-policing issues persisting for 20 years and although new to the group keen to understand the complexities involved and why it has hardly progressed.
- HL (APL) confirms that it is an extremely complex political, public and private sector balance in working with multiple stakeholders across multiple states, countries and jurisdictions and a one-size fits all model doesn't work. It will need constant management over a long period of time to change perceptions, educate changeover of people unfamiliar with our game and set ourselves up for success and it cannot change over night.
- HL (APL) re-confirms that APL's policy (as voiced to Police, Stadiums and other key stakeholders) has been for some time and continues to be centred around finding individuals who are responsible for poor behaviour, and not punishing the collective. APL does not support tactics that punish the collective active or broader supporter bases of its clubs. APL supports this policy not through collective punishments but through a revamped banning policy, ensuring that individuals found guilty of putting other fans at risk of injury or acting inappropriately are dealt punishment as individuals. It is also noted that the APL policy only issues bans in cases where the evidence threshold is exceptionally high ie. persons caught in the act, arrested, or clearly identified via footage.
- KC (MCY) re-joins conversation and shared link to Major Event Planning standards — noting differences across states and countries and how fans need to understand the challenges and pressures associated with this topic.

## APL Agenda Item 1: Dolan Warren Awards Review

- TH (APL) opens to the group to gain feedback on the revised format of the DWA's for Season 2025/26
- Matt (MCFC): Suggested more fans can be added in to create a more vibrant atmosphere.
- EM (CCM) Surprised by recorded approach, but ultimately having seen it delivered, now supports it. Noted winner absences as a drawback.

# LEAGUES

- TH (APL) explains each scheduling conflicts with players missing and not sure how to fully mitigate this for future.
- HL (APL) Asked for preferences on future timing. Group discussion ensues on pre or post Grand Final. Group ultimately thinks current timing works best as lead in and building hype to GF.
- KC (MCY) queried if there were some missing awards (e.g. Golden Boot).
- TH (APL) Not all awards included due to broadcast timing — especially where winners were already confirmed and known.
- Overall group believes its an improvement on year prior and minor adjustments can continue to be made but its a step in the right direction.

**Action:** FRG Chairs to collate and provide any additional feedback from FRG members and fans and send through.

## APL Agenda Item 2: Website & App User Functionality Updates

- DL (APL) walks the group through the proposed off-season developments for the A-League and Clubs websites and app.
- Website will de-prioritise publisher mode and prioritizing a more fan-centric design with quicker access to fixtures, real-time match information, data-driven engagement tools, and quick links to tickets —placing clubs, competitions, and supporters at the heart of the platform.
  - App will focus on a user redesign so that some of the great features hidden behind complex menus and multiple-clicks are better streamlined.
  - The group discusses and agrees that the stats and player comparison tools and improvements look exciting.
- JI (WSW) asks about the return of a fantasy product, with DH (WUN) backing this question. DL states that there isn't a plan for fantasy to return next season due to lack of engagement in former product, however some of the new player comparison tools and stat sections may bring in some fun tools that work as substitutes.
- KC (MCY) asks if DL will consider adding a button where users can report 'bugs/issues/broken links'. DL confirms she will work on a solution.
- MM (MCY) queries the role of the club and league in player profile updates, inconsistency of data and broken links.
- DL A(PL): Will look into removing some of the empty fields identified and rec-connect with clubs their role and league role in ensuring management of automated and populated parts of player profiles ongoing.

# LEAGUES

- EB (NEW) raises an issue she had with inconsistent match notifications for Jets games.
- DL (APL) states issue addressed late-season and should be fixed now — ongoing monitoring.

## **APL Agenda Item 3: FRG Next Season Planning**

- HL (APL) wants to outline the planning process for next season's FRG, and starts by thanking the outgoing FRG members.
- HL confirms as per last meeting that this is the last meeting of the season and it's likely that some clubs will choose to rotate their FRG chair representative during the off-season. This is at the club's discretion (refer to March 2025 notes). As such, she welcomes both current and new members to join the first meeting of next season to ensure continuity in changeover.
- EM (CCM) seeks to understand before changeover discussions are had at a club level during the off-season if APL is open to splitting Chair role to manage League vs Club duties and time commitments.
- HL: Open to Co-Chairs (maximum 2), but ideally only one club representative attendees per APL meeting to ensure all clubs have adequate chances to contribute.
- HL confirms that APL will also be creating an FRG refresher pack for club staff given the Club and League FRG model has now been in place for two years and acknowledges changeover in that time and lost understanding of the role of each party. The group endorses this to help with club conversations.
- HL (APL) confirms proposed 2025/26 meeting schedule:
  - September 2025 - First Monday of month
  - November 2025 - First Tuesday of month
  - March 2026 - First Wednesday of month
  - June 2026 - First Thursday of month

## **Any Other Business**

- None

## **Close**

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- Grand Finals Review Meeting set for Tuesday 17 June - CCM, MVC & MCY invited. Others to advise if they want to be involved.
- Meetings for 2025/26 to be set by Chris Botherway (APL), who will take on administration duties for FRG next season from APL.