

OVERVIEW

Following two years of the Canberra United Academy (**CUA**) supplementing the development opportunities provided by National Premier League (**NPL**) clubs, underpinning the talent identification process that informs selection of our State Teams, Capital Football has decided to engage the football community in a review of the development programs offered to our young players.

The aim of the review is to analyse development programs delivered nationally, model alternate development structures, measure those models against local football needs and Football Federation Australia (**FFA**) objectives, and engage with the football community to gather feedback.

The review focuses on youth development, with programs considered from U9 through to U17 age grades.

GOALS

The goals and outcome we seek via this review are to;

- Establish a youth development pathway that makes it clear for aspiring players the opportunities available to them to reach their potential
- Establish a structure and suite of programs that gives players the best chance possible of becoming professional players if that is their ambition
- Establish youth development pathways that accommodate players at all levels, enabling anyone to access an opportunity to improve
- Engage the football community in the establishment of the youth development pathways to ensure they support a relevant and meaningful relationship between Capital Football and the Clubs

The fundamental core of the review is that everyone engaged in the discussion has a player centred mindset. Capital Football, Clubs and Parents are collectively the custodians of the game, and it is our responsibility to establish the best environment and opportunities for the players.

It is unavoidable that individuals will hold different opinions, and we believe debate is both necessary and productive. We ask that everyone enters this conversation focused on what is best for the players.

FFA TALENTED PLAYER DEVELOPMENT ECOSYSTEM

FFA are themselves reviewing the Talent Identification Pathways nationally, recognising that local solutions need to be developed in each Member Federation jurisdiction given the vastly different size of the States and Territories.

FFA talk to a “Football Development Ecosystem” comprised of three tiers, being the Foundation (National Curriculum, Coach Development and Talent Identification), Support Programs (SAP, Supplementary Training and High Performance Football Schools), and Competitions (MiniRoos, HAL Academies, NPL, National Teams).

The challenge for football in the ACT and surrounding region is the absence of a HAL team and the effect this has on the understanding of pathways for male players. In most jurisdictions, the HAL Academies play in the NPL for Men and Boys, and in some the same is true of the WWL Academies playing in the NPL for Women and Girls. We have a unique environment where the WWL teams exists on its own, influencing the pathway for girls, with the boy’s program seeking to leverage its presence to promote a pathway locally.

We now have an NPL competition for Male and Female players, with Clubs providing development and competition opportunities to players from U13 to open age.

It is vital that the established pathway consider each of the tiers. It needs to have a sound foundation built on community engagement and clear documentation, a range of training opportunities for players to access, and a competition that not only enables participation but provides for the best players to be challenged on a regular basis to improve.

DATA ANALYSIS

Historic analysis of the CUA from a participant survey in 2016 revealed that;

- 92% of respondents were satisfied with the program they participated in
- 86% of respondents were satisfied with their coach
- 85% of respondents felt they / their child had developed as a player and person over their time in the CUA
- 84% of respondents felt that CUA playing squads provided an effective development pathway
- 82% of respondents would recommend the CUA to others
- 55% of respondents felt the talented player pathway was clearly communicated

With that in mind, we now seek broader feedback on the development framework.

To facilitate the review, we have produced a document that outlines the development framework at the State and Territory Football Associations across Australia. To help provide context, we have included total participant summaries that enable a comparison of programs against the size of the football footprint in each jurisdiction.

MODELS FOR DISCUSSION

To facilitate discussion of ways the youth development pathway could be structured we have developed a number of models available in the “Youth Development Pathway Review – Models to Facilitate Discussion” document.

The models include;

Model 1 – Status Quo

Model 2 – Talented Player Programs

Model 3 – CUA for Girls / Talented Player Programs for Boys

Model 4 – CUA in National Training Centre Age Grades

The models are presented to facilitate discussion regarding the optimal structure, and have been purposefully designed to illustrate a number of varied approaches.

It is important to note that they are not provided as a solution. The idea is not to select one of the options for implementation, rather seek feedback to the concepts these models communicate.

TIMELINE FOR CONSULTATION AND REVIEW

Capital Football have released a survey through which we aim to collate information on a range of questions including participant experience, response to the model development structures, and specific questions relating to aspects of those structures individually.

Capital Football will review the feedback and schedule town hall meetings with the football community to workshop identified challenges and possible outcomes. It is intended the town hall meetings will be conducted in May and June, with a final youth development pathway structure released by 31 June 2017.