

National Competition Review

Summary of Outcomes

May 2012

Background

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In 2011, FFA released its 4-year Strategic Plan which identified four key strategic pillars.

These pillars are interconnected. For example, the Football Community which comprises amateur and semi-professional clubs, officials, coaches, players and volunteers provides an important introduction to the game from which talented players subsequently emerge for further development through FFA's Elite Player Development programs. These players will eventually go on to represent Australia at Youth International level. Similarly, it is essential that FFA create value for the Football Community by, among many other things, assisting in club development, providing guidance in youth development and creating a stronger link between the Football Community and Elite Player Development programs.

Whilst FFA has in recent years made good progress in football development through the introduction of the National Football Development Plan, National Curriculum, revision of coaching courses and strengthening of elite player development pathways, continued reform is required to address key gaps in the Elite Player Pathway, ensure the sustainability of league competitions nationally and improve the quality of youth development by football clubs of all levels.

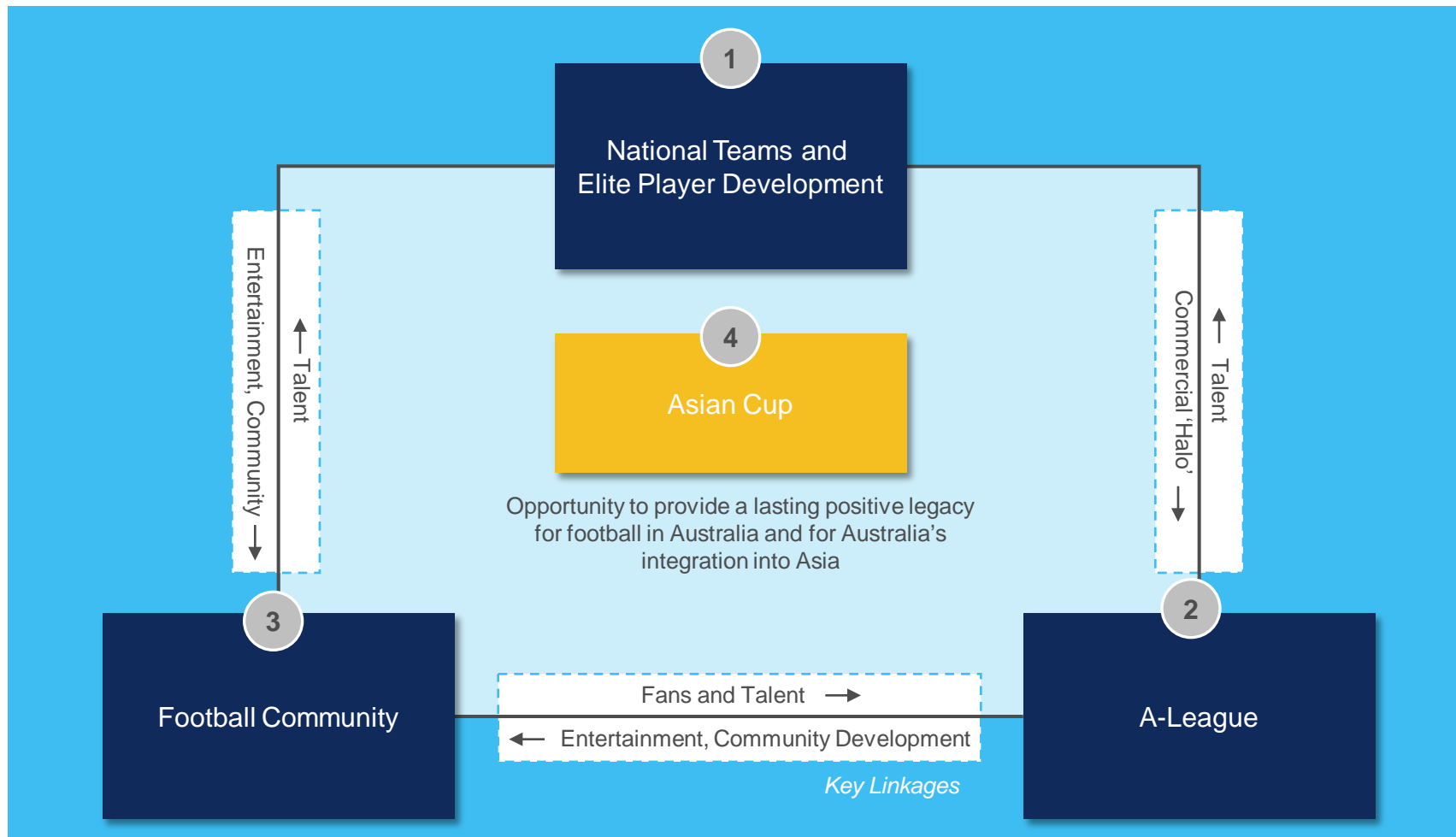
The National Competition Review, explained in the following pages, is an important piece of football reform which, consistent with the FFA Strategic Plan, is designed to create value for and connect more deeply with the Football Community whilst also strengthening Elite Player Development.

FFA Strategic Pillars



Vision: Make Australia a **world-class football nation**

Mission: **Create value** for the football community and **convert** mass participation and interest into **active support** for the A-League and National Teams





National Competition Review

Terms of Reference



National Competition Review (NCR) Terms of Reference

The following terms of reference were adopted at the November 2010 Member Federation (MF) CEO's Forum

1. Review current MF competition structures from top State Leagues to Under 12s
2. Review proposals of preferred models from MFs covering competition, development, financial aspects, to seek the best option for a second tier national competition (underpinning the A-League), and include criteria for leagues to adopt.
3. Financial analysis of models.
4. Present a report with recommendations to FFA and MFs for discussion at MFs meeting for subsequent submission to the FFA Board".
5. Consideration of statutory steps necessary to mandate national competition framework.

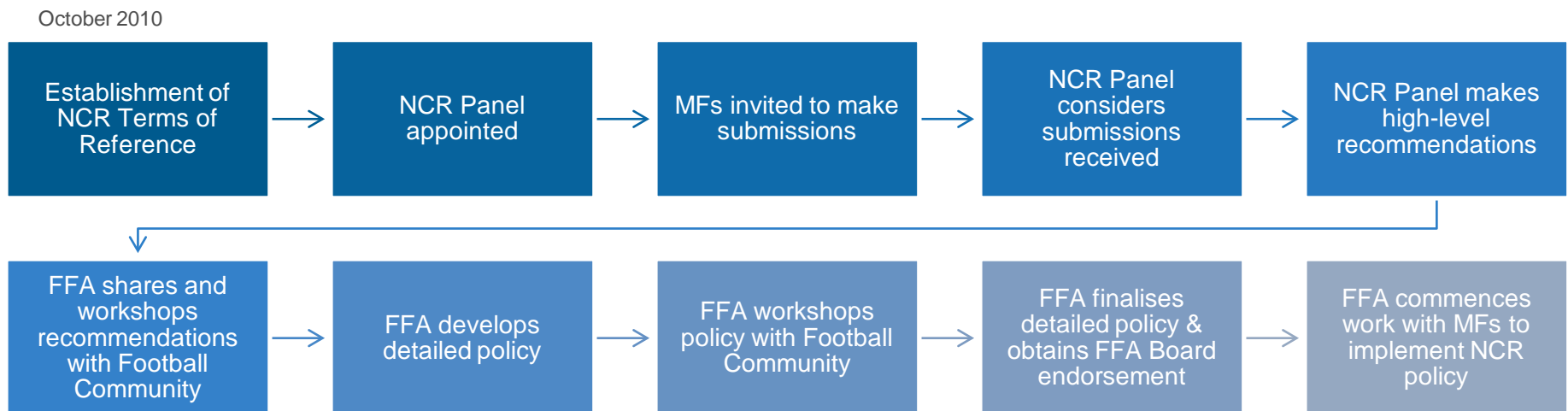
NCR Process



The NCR process has involved extensive consultation with the Football Community over 18 months.

Following establishment of Terms of Reference, an NCR Panel comprising of FFA, Member Federation and club representatives from around the country met to consider submissions received from each State and Territory. Submissions identified various issues and opportunities for competition and club improvement. A series of high-level recommendations were made by the NCR Panel for FFA to subsequently develop into detailed policy.

A summary and timeline of the NCR process is provided below:



Issues Identified



As part of the NCR submissions process, a number of issues were repeatedly raised.

These issues are the focus of the key outcomes of the NCR:

1. Many clubs do not presently feel part of the development pathway
2. As clubs are resourced to varying degrees nationally, they do not presently have the capability to deliver youth development programs to a nationally consistent high level of quality
3. Clubs are paying unsustainably high wages to players at the expense of player development and often rely on wealthy and philanthropic benefactors for financial survival
4. Some clubs are preferring to acquire talented players (either locally or from abroad), rather than invest in youth development
5. Clubs feel like their players are 'taken away' from them for inclusion in pathway programs (such as AIS or NTC programs) for the benefit of FFA or A-League clubs without adequate compensation
6. Many clubs are charging high fees to junior and youth players, often in order to subsidise senior player wages
7. There are inconsistencies in the structure of second tier leagues across each state (including youth team obligations, coaching accreditation and season window)
8. Some clubs are precluded from forging productive relationships with amateur clubs or zones/associations
9. Some clubs have arrangements in place with either Player Agents or Private Academies which confuse the pathway and/or mislead players and their parents when making important decisions about their child's football career or prospects.

Key Outcomes



There are 5 core outcomes from the NCR:

1

Evolution of the Elite Player Pathway to:

- recognise the important contribution of state-based elite clubs
- address gaps in the Talented Player Pathway

2

Definition of competition windows and participation requirements to:

- extend the duration of the season in critical stages of player development

3

Introduction of an Elite Club Licensing program to:

- increase the quality of youth development practices
- develop better coaches
- require clubs to explain their fee structure and ensure that fees are reasonable and not excessive
- regulate the role of player agents and private academies
- improve club governance and financial reporting

4

Introduction of a Player Points System to:

- correct unsustainable player payments in State League competitions
- promote local youth development within the club team structure

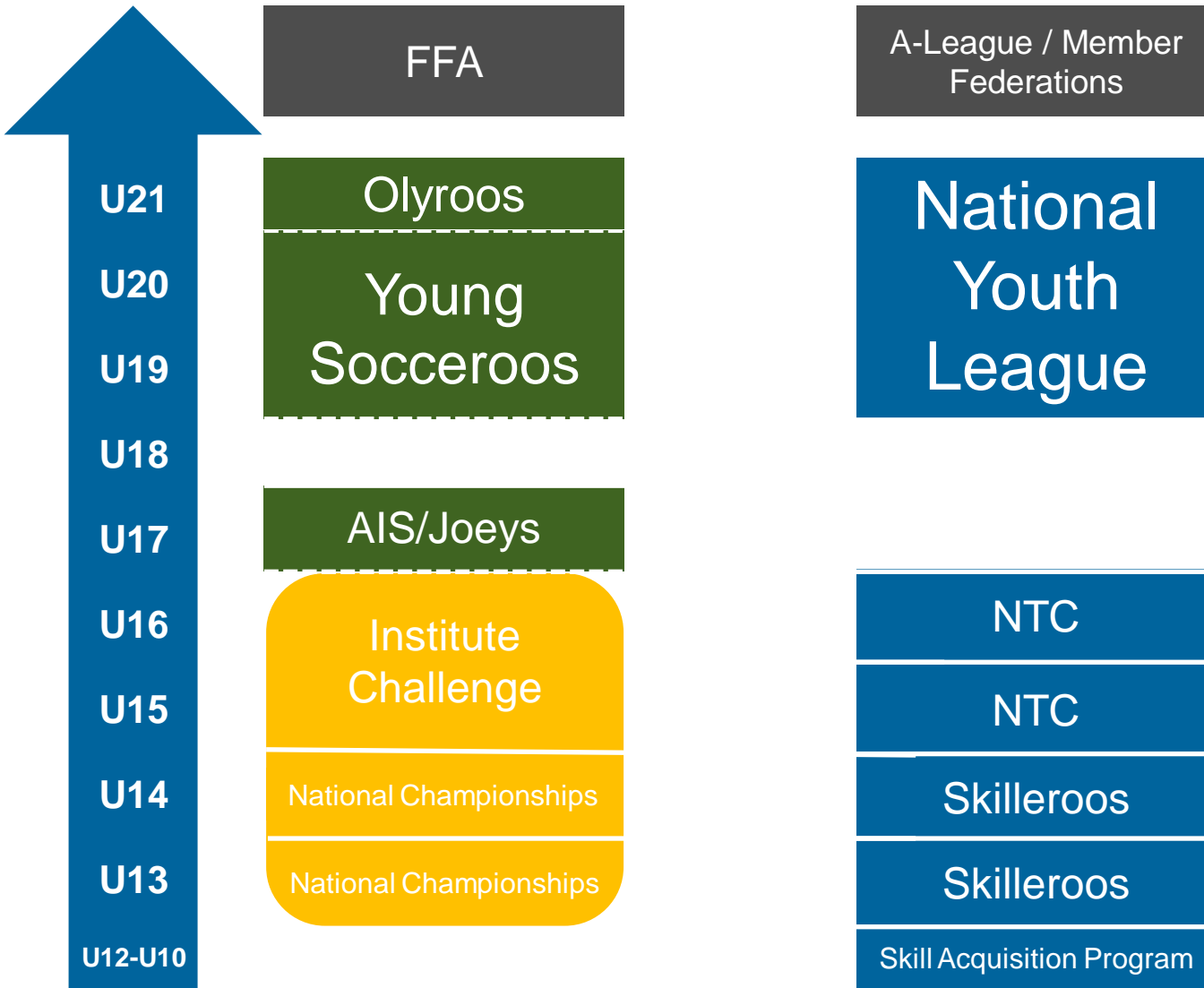
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Revision of Training Compensation regulations to:

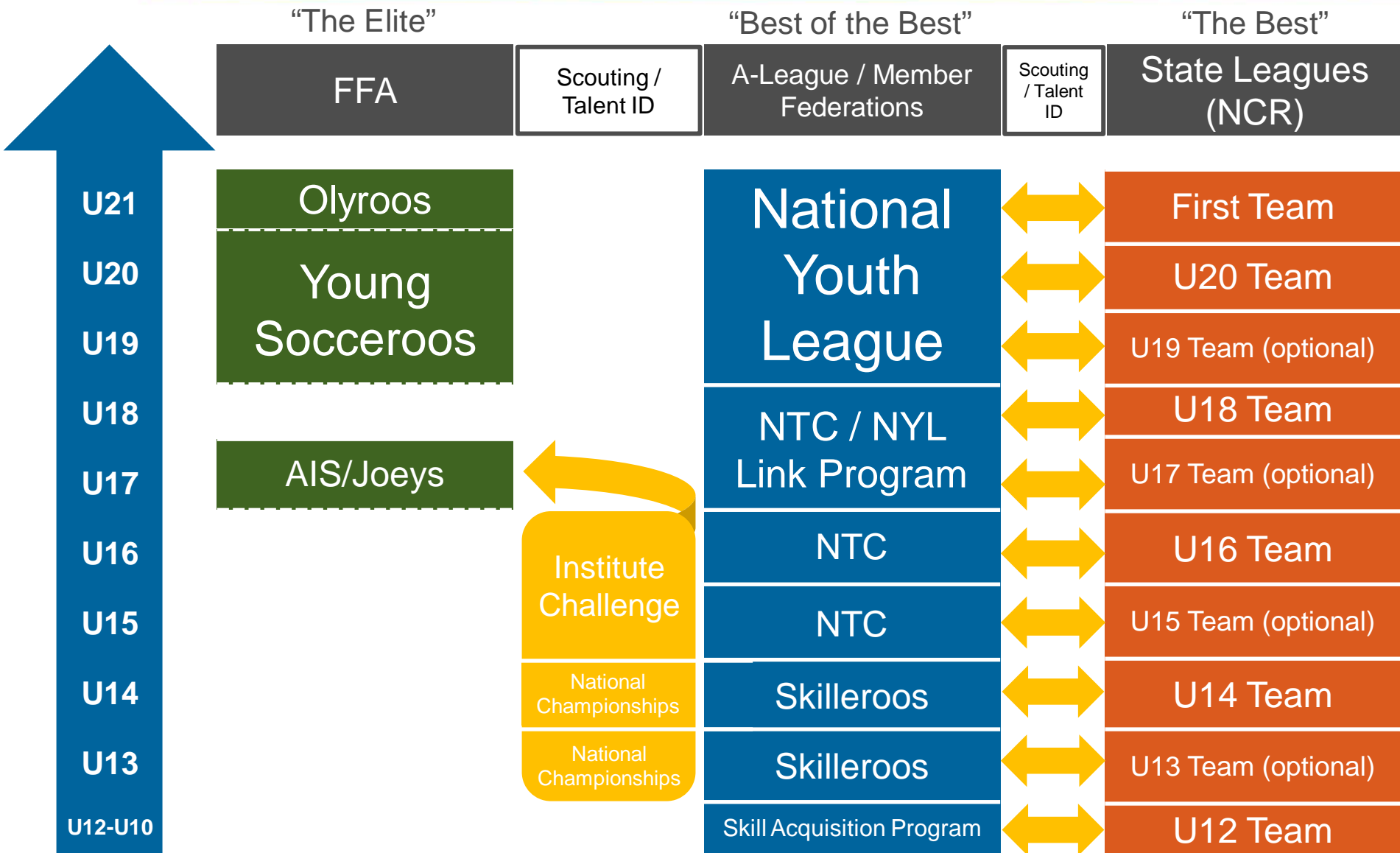
- reward clubs which achieve accreditation
- increase the flow of revenue to elite state league clubs

Evolution of Elite Player Pathway

Today's Elite Player Pathway



Evolution of Elite Player Pathway



Proposed Competitions Calendar



Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
HAL									HAL		
NYL			Accredited First Divisions							NYL	
Accredited Youth Competitions											
Community Competitions											

HAL

- Australia's premier football league

NYL

- Development league for HAL
- Critical component of elite player pathway
- NYL/NTC teams also participate in highest level state competition (subject to ongoing discussion)

Accredited 1st Division

- Involves First Team of accredited elite clubs
- Winter timing deemed critical to fast-track talent into HAL or NYL

Accredited Youth Competitions

- Accredited clubs must field U20, U18, U16, U14 and U12 sides at a minimum
- Duration extended to 10 months to provide necessary length of competition

Community Competitions

- No substantive change

Commentary



FFA recognises that State-based clubs have long played an important role in developing talented young players, and that they will play an increasingly important role in youth development in the future.

Assessing current Socceroos and A-League club squads, the vast majority of players are known to have risen through State-based clubs. With the implementation of the Elite Club Licensing program, which will raise the standard of youth development across the country, it is expected that many more young players of an even higher technical quality will be produced by the State-based club system. For this reason, FFA will officially recognise accredited elite state-based clubs as part of the Elite Player Pathway.

Under the new Pathway, the “best of the best” will continue to be selected for State/Territory or National programs (eg, Skillaroots, NTC, AIS) where players will be subject to year-round football in an elite or professional environment at no cost. This is a key measure FFA has implemented to address a “technical gap” identified when the NFDP was developed. As state-based and A-League Clubs continue to develop in the long-term, then it is envisaged that this responsibility will begin to shift back from FFA and Member Federations to state-based and A-League clubs.

The Winter timing of state-based competitions is preferred at this time as, when combined with the Summer-based National Youth League (NYL) season, it provides an important mechanism for year-round elite football. It is critical to developing players of a high technical standard that they be provided an opportunity to play football all year-round in a professional environment. The only way to achieve this outcome today remains through the participation of NYL sides in elite state-based competitions. However, FFA recognises that this solution creates additional cost (through the lengthening of seasons) and complicates the organisation of elite state-based league competitions. For this reason FFA will continue to work with MFs and A-League clubs to find the most appropriate solutions.

Importantly, the gradual extension of the youth season to 10 months (including competitions and training) will bring Australia into line with world’s best practice. However, access to facilities outside of the Winter period will be an obstacle. FFA is currently working with MFs to establish football facility strategies which will provide greater access to facilities.

Elite Club Licensing

Elite Club Licensing Criteria



Elite Club Licensing (ECL) criteria designed to raise the standard of elite state league football has been developed

The ECL criteria covers the following broad areas:



Due to the differing characteristics of each state league, the ECL criteria has been developed in a way that enables Member Federations to adjust certain criteria to fit local conditions or characteristics. However, FFA has also identified certain criteria which are considered fundamental and show be applied in a nationally consistent manner.

FFA recognises that Member Federations and clubs will need time to adjust to the new criteria, and so the system is planned to be phased in over a 4 year period commencing in 2013, with criteria increasing in complexity each year until the 2016 season.

Teams



Clubs will be required to field team from the Senior First Team down to U12s to provide a pathway for players from the moment they progress from Small Sided Football.

In addition, the Team criteria addresses the following other areas:

- affiliation with junior clubs
- Releasing of players selected for pathway programs including Skillaroos, NTC or AIS
- Compliance with the Player Points System
- Creation of a Football Plan which defines the Club's football vision an philosophy

Youth Development



There will be increased focus on youth development through the preparing of Youth Training Plans and gradual extension of youth league seasons to 10 months

The extension of the competitive playing season is critical in order to match world best practice but will require Member Federation facility strategies to address issues of facility access and capacity outside of the Winter season.

In addition, the Youth Development criteria addresses the following other areas:

- Collaboration with amateur clubs and zones/regional associations
- Liaison with the State Technical Director
- Application of the National Curriculum

Coaching

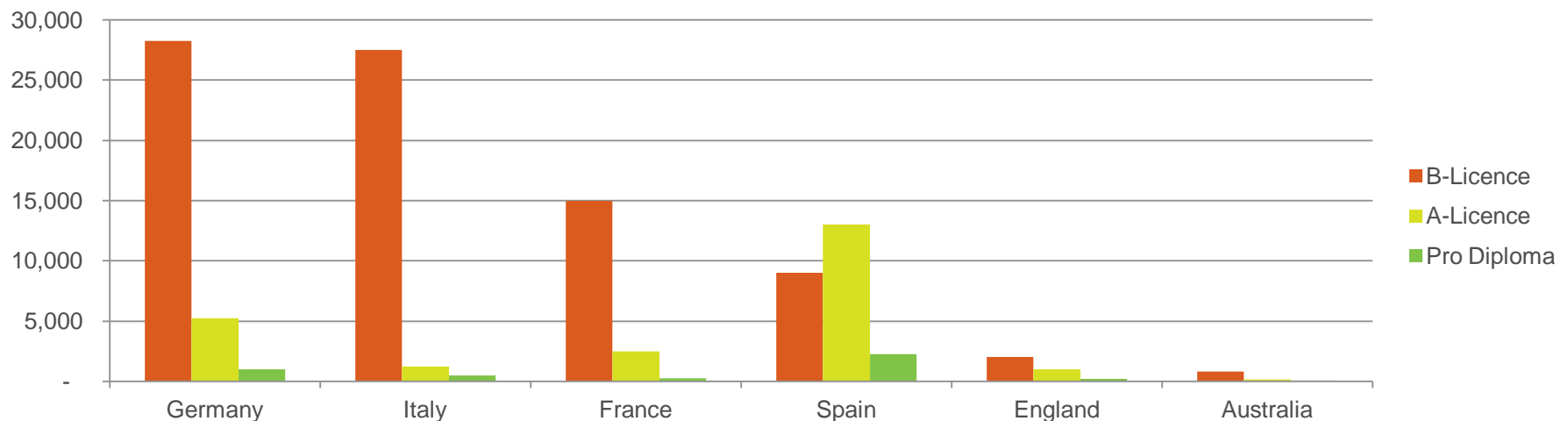


Australia lags behind leading football nations in the area of coach education. The criteria will define and raise coaching standards across all clubs from the First Team to the U12s.

Importantly, the Coaching criteria will require the appointment of a Technical Director to oversee coaching and youth development across the club.

FFA is currently reviewing the cost of elite coaching courses with the objective of reducing the cost and making courses more accessible to coaches within state-based leagues.

For youth team coaches there will be an initial focus on completing community coaching courses which are provided at no cost.



Governance



Clubs will be required to break-down fees charged to youth players to inform parents and players of the costs incurred in providing an elite training environment and to ensure that fees are not being excessively charged. In addition, clubs will declare any financial, contractual or other relationship with Private Academies or Player Agents.

Member Federations and FFA may seek explanations from clubs in the event that reasonable fees are not being charged.

The disclosure regarding agents and academies is intended to address an area of concern identified during the review that some clubs may not be acting in the best interests of the player's development but rather seeking to provide players to foreign clubs without regard for the elite player pathway in Australia.

The Governance criteria also covers the following broad areas:

- Membership
- Documentation of a Business Plan
- Annual General Meetings
- Hosting of Public Forums to enhance communication between clubs and their stakeholders

Finance



Clubs will prepare annual financial statements which will be subject to independent external audit.

In addition, clubs will be required to maintain the appropriate accounting systems and financial records.

Facilities



Clubs will continue to comply with facility requirements, both for stadium and training sites, as set out by their Member Federations.

In addition, clubs will prepare facility plans which will align with the Member Federation's overall facilities strategy for the state or territory.

Organisational Structure



Clubs will document their management structure so that key roles are allocated to individuals within the club's management or committee.

Membership Protection



Clubs will be required to comply with FFA's Member Protection Policy.

In addition, clubs must comply with the relevant Child Protection legislation in their jurisdiction.

Medical



The criteria will specify the necessary medical facilities or expertise which would be readily accessible.

Varying levels of accredited sports trainers and first aiders will be required depending on the team.

In addition, the Medical criteria covers the following broad areas:

- Supplies (strapping and other first aid supplies)
- Facilities (e.g. Treatment tables)
- Strategy (access to doctors and physiotherapists)

Reporting



The ECL criteria will specify some areas of reporting from clubs to Member Federations. This will include a report from the Club Technical Director to the State Technical Director describing progress of youth teams.

FFA will prepare template reports to assist clubs in the reporting process.

The Reporting criteria will also cover the following broad areas:

- Annual Report
- Financial Report
- Player Points System Report
- Player Fee Schedule (as earlier described)

Player Points Cap

Objectives



Two fundamental issues were identified during the recently conducted National Competitions Review (NCR): inadequate focus on youth development and unsustainable player wages.

A key outcome of the NCR was the introduction of a new Player Points System (PPS) to complement a Club Licensing framework.

The PPS provides an opportunity to incentivise youth development, curb excessive player payments and limit the time and effort required to monitor and evaluate compliance by clubs.

The PPS was preferred over a salary based cap system due to the high compliance costs such a framework would impose on Member Federations and an inability to simultaneously bring focus to player development.

The PPS is currently being tested by all Member Federations and may require some further adjustment.

Player Categorization



In order to ensure that squads are constructed so as to favor youth development and reduce cost, it is essential to determine what type of player is 'prioritised' over another.

This player prioritisation may be depicted as follows:



Player Points System



The PPS assumes a mandatory squad size of 20 players for the First Team.

Each player is initially worth 10 points and the absolute point limit is 200 points per squad.

Player values are then discounted, or inflated, depending on the characteristics of the player and whether this characteristics have been prioritised. The adjusted values, which would be cumulative, are as follows:

Category Name	Category Description	Points Adjustment	Commentary
Standard Player	All players in the First Team squad	+1	+1 for each year the player is over the age of 25
Visa Player	Player holding an international visa selected in the First Team squad	+10	Maximum of 2 visa players per squad
Home-grown Player	Player who has risen through the youth development system within the licensed club to be selected in the First Team squad	-1	-1 for each youth team the player has played >15 matches for in a season (max of 5)
Pathway Players	Players who have participated in an elite 'pathway team', such as the A-League, NYL, AIS or NTC but have returned to the licensed club and are members of the First Team squad	0	No penalty for players who have left a club, joined a pathway team and subsequently returned to the club
Rising Stars	Highly talented young player, under 18, who has been selected for the First Team squad	-3	Discount if U18 player promoted to First Team within same club
Switching Player	Players who have switched clubs from the preceding season and are in the First Team squad	+8	Added points if a player switches clubs

Example



The following is an example of how the PPS would be applied:

Squad Number	Base Points	Category	Age	Adjustment	Adjusted Points	Explanation
1	10	Visa Player	27	12	22	10 points for visa player status + 2 points for age factor
2	10	Visa Player	23	10	20	10 points for visa player status
3	10	Switching Player	28	11	21	8 points for switching player + 3 points for age factor
4	10	Switching Player	24	8	18	8 points for switching player
5	10	Switching Player	23	8	18	8 points for switching player
6	10	Switching Player (played 12s, 14s for the same club)	29	10	20	8 points for switching player + 4 points for age factor - 2 points for youth experience
7	10	Standard Player (played for 12s, 14s, 16s, 18s, 20s)	25	-5	5	-5 points for playing for 5 youth teams
8	10	Standard Player (played for 12s, 14s, 16s, 18s, 20s)	24	-5	5	-5 points for playing for 5 youth teams
9	10	Standard Player (played for 12s, 14s, 16s, 18s, 20s)	24	-5	5	-5 points for playing for 5 youth teams
10	10	Standard Player (played for 12s, 14s, 16s, 18s, 20s)	26	-4	6	-5 points for playing for 5 youth teams + 1 point for age factor
11	10	Standard Player (played for 12s, 14s, 16s, 18s, 20s)	27	-3	7	-5 points for playing for 5 youth teams + 2 points for age factor
12	10	Standard Player (played for 12s, 14s, 16s, 18s, 20s)	22	-5	5	-5 points for playing for 5 youth teams
13	10	Standard Player (played for 12s, 14s, 16s, 18s, 20s)	21	-5	5	-5 points for playing for 5 youth teams
14	10	Standard Player (played for 16s, 18s, 20s)	25	-3	7	-3 points for playing for 3 youth teams
15	10	Standard Player (played for 16s, 18s, 20s)	24	-3	7	-3 points for playing for 3 youth teams
16	10	Standard Player (played for 16s, 18s, 20s)	23	-3	7	-3 points for playing for 3 youth teams
17	10	Standard Player (played for 16s, 18s, 20s)	20	-3	7	-3 points for playing for 3 youth teams
18	10	Rising Star (played 12s, 14s, 16s)	17	-6	4	-3 points for being a rising star - 3 for playing for 3 youth teams
19	10	Rising Star (played 12s, 14s, 16s)	17	-6	4	-3 points for being a rising star - 3 for playing for 3 youth teams
20	10	Pathway Player (played 12s, 14s, 16s went to AIS and has come back)	18	-3	7	- 3 for playing for 3 youth teams + no penalty for returning from AIS
	200			0	200	

U20 Team Squad



PPS would only be applied to the First Team squad

No PPS would be applied to the U20, U18, U16, U14 or U12 teams within a licensed club's structure.

However, it should be noted that the U20 team would double up as a reserves team and would allow for up to 4 (including a Goal Keeper) overage players from the First Team squad to play on a weekly basis.

Training Compensation

Training Compensation



Adjusting the Training Compensation regime is fundamental to increasing elite club revenues and to incentivise accreditation

The principles in amending the current system are as follows:

- The key objective is to appropriately allocate funds received for Training Compensation
- FFA should continue to allocate funds in a way that provides greater assistance to football development than is provided for in the FIFA Regulations
- There should be different levels of eligibility for clubs to receive funds, reflecting the quality of training a club has provided to a talented young player
- It is important that clubs are rewarded for investing in professional training environments
- Elite Club Accreditation will be used to determine the level of a club's eligibility
- It is not appropriate that state/national bodies such as the AIS receive funds for Training Compensation
- Rather, the junior club from which the player has come should continue to be recognised for Training Compensation purposes during the time he is at an Institute, NTC etc
- This should incentivise clubs to facilitate the movement of their players into NTCs, SAPs, etc

Accredited elite clubs will receive a greater share of training compensation.



thank you

For further information please email info@footballaustralia.com.au with the subject header of "NCR".