



9 June 2006

Senator Kate Lundy  
Shadow Minister for Sport and Recreation  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

**By email: [senator.lundy@aph.gov.au](mailto:senator.lundy@aph.gov.au)**

Dear Senator,

**Re: Senate inquiry into women in sport and recreation in Australia**

We refer to your letter of 3 April 2006 addressed to John Boulton.

Football Federation Australia welcomes the opportunity to provide submissions to the Senate's inquiry into women's sport, recreation and physical activity. The inquiry is timely from football's perspective given women's football is experiencing massive growth, with the increase in female player numbers being 75% in the 3 years to 2004.

FFA itself conducted a review in 2005 on the structure, administration and promotion of the national women's club competition (then known as the Women's National Soccer League or the WNSL), with particular emphasis on the role it played in the elite player pathways of female football players in Australia. Given this was the first time a review of women's football had been conducted, we endeavoured to make the Terms of Reference as broad as possible to ensure an extensive and comprehensive review.

The Terms of Reference were:

- (i) current status and structure of female teams, leagues or competitions within Australia, including at the national, state and district level;
- (ii) investment costs in women's football in Australia, including costs of FFA, the State and Territory Federations and Institutes and Academies;
- (iii) strategic objectives and priorities of FFA;
- (iv) national competition considerations, including venues, match schedules and logistics, management and operational issues;
- (v) commercial value and opportunities, including potential revenue from broadcast, spectators, sponsorship and merchandise and licensing and media interest;
- (vi) player career and welfare issues, including impact on non-football career and education, time and monetary commitment and aspirational and enjoyment considerations;
- (vii) development pathway for elite female players, coaches, referees and team support staff;
- (viii) current status and structure of female teams, leagues or competitions outside of Australia;
- (ix) standard and competitive results of Australia's female teams at international level; and

- (x) status of the women's game within FIFA and its Confederations and member associations.

You will see from those reference points, that the review conducted is relevant to the Senate inquiry. Accordingly, we **attach** a copy of the Women's Football Review Report for the Senate Committee's reference. FFA relies on the content of that Report as its submission to the Senate Committee. We would, however, like to emphasise two key points of investment costs and commercial opportunities.

Essentially, the grass roots and community football is the domain of our Member Federations and their districts or associations with FFA having a key role in setting national policies, including in relation to coaching and development. Our submissions relate not to the grass roots, but to a national league.

From a national sports governing body perspective, we think it is important that we conduct a national domestic league for the following 4 reasons:

- (a) it forms part of the national team selection process;
- (b) to provide regular, high level competition for elite players;
- (c) to enable players to test themselves against the best players; and
- (d) to develop women's football generally by showcasing the best players.

The difficulties we face in actually staging such a national league are essentially that the requisite investment costs are too high in relation to the revenue generation opportunities available. The sheer geographical size of Australia means home and away competitions are very expensive to stage, with airfares being the largest expense item. For example, in the men's national league (known as the Hyundai A-League), when Perth Glory FC travels to Auckland to face the NZ Knights FC it is currently the world's longest road trip in a domestic football competition. Almost 5400 kilometres separates Perth from Auckland, meaning a flight of over 8 hours and a time difference of 4 hours for the travelling team.

On the revenue generation side, the commercial opportunities for female sport are more limited. In our view, this is partly caused by limited media coverage, whether this be television or print. Limited media coverage makes it more difficult to attract sponsors, which means limited revenue with which to conduct a compelling national league. The cycle continues.

As a final point, while we are certainly appreciative of the Senate taking this interest in women's sport, government and sport have been discussing equity for women in sport for at least 20 years. We hope that this Senate Committee will make affirmative action recommendations to ensure the discussion becomes reality, particularly in relation to minimum female sports content in the media.

We would be happy to discuss any aspect of this submission and the report.

Yours sincerely,



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