



## Sydney FC's Fan Representative Group Meeting Minutes

### Meeting Details:

January 23rd 2024; 6pm, Sky Park, Macquarie University Sports Field & Teams

### Attendees:

- David Shaw
- John Apotsis
- Michelle Morris
- Gavin O'Farrell
- Yousef Hussain
- Michelle Prasad
- Winston Gentry
- Jeremy Butler [Sydney FC]

### Apologies:

- Rio Alexander

### Agenda Item 1: Introduction to CEO Mark Aubery

Sydney FC's CEO Mark Aubery introduced himself to the group with a summary of his previous roles and then took questions.

As part of the question and answer session, Mark outlined his immediate priorities and confirmed that football will be the tip of the spear in the future strategy of the club and talked through plans to utilise the Academy help achieve sustainability for the business.

Mark also confirmed recent strategic changes at the APL do not constitute a risk to Sydney FC and felt Sydney FC are in a positive position to help lift the league. He further indicated he did not see a situation where the FA will take over running the APL and pointed to the purchase of the Auckland franchise by a leading sports owner and the increased crowds at Melbourne Victory as positive signs for the league.

Michelle Morris raised a question around the future of the A-League Women's partnership with Liberty, with Mark answering he believed talks were on-going amid additional interest in the opportunity from blue chip companies.

## **Agenda Item 2: Changes at the APL**

The group requested an update on the changes at the APL that has seen significant redundancies. Jeremy Butler informed the group that Sydney FC were aware of the changes and were waiting for an update from the APL on the changes to the organisational structure and the impact this will have on APL clubs.

## **Agenda Item 3: Unite Round**

The FRG were asked for feedback on the recently held Unite Round in Sydney.

Gavin O'Farrell had attended games at Commbank Stadium and Allianz Stadium and noted there were no activities outside of the ground that made the Round feel like a big event. He was also disappointed at the in-stadia entertainment. He felt supporters did not arrive early or stay later to view both matches at the stadia. Gavin did feel the concept was worth pursuing but at a different date – preferably in November.

Michelle Morris felt the Round was underwhelming with the scheduling of matches making it difficult for ALW supporters to attend more games. She was disappointed by the lack of travelling support and suggested more flight and hotel offers should be made available. Michelle suggested that future rounds could be held in international breaks, with the Women's games played during a Men's international break and vice-versa. She also raised the concept of having stand-alone ALW & ALM Unite Rounds taking place in different cities on different dates.

Michelle Prasad enjoyed the opportunity to catch up with supporter groups at matches. She praised the in-stadia activations and suggested the APL create a map or flyer to promote these to the attendees. Michelle also suggested meet & greet sessions with the players in between the games for adults.

## **Agenda Item 3: AOB**

Michelle Morris stated she felt the standard of refereeing in the ALW competition had dipped this season. John Apotsis believes there is further investment required in training and providing mentorships for young referees. He raised the concept of an exchange of referees with Japan as way of helping Australian referees gain a broader experience and increase their knowledge base.

Michelle Morris would like the APL to investigate working with clubs to create away bays for ALW matches with the objective of creating a greater sense of community among away supporters at matches. She also requested looking at ways for clubs and the APL to support ALW active groups.

Winston called for all supporters to travel to Auckland when the new club starts playing games next season and wondered if the APL could assist in promoting the matches to travelling fans. He also questioned how clubs and the APL could increase the leagues visibility among grass root players through a strong marketing campaign.

The Group also requested information from the APL around the future plans for the Leagues with these plans being delivered before projects are initiated to allow the FRG to provide feedback. There was also a request for the minutes of the APL run FRG to be more visible on the APL website as members of the group have had difficulty locating the minutes from previous meetings.

**With no further items to attend to, the meeting closed at 7:30pm.**