FINAL REPORT

Review into private academies and external providers
“In sunny Sydney, parents of football daft kids are spoiled for choice when it comes to academies. Much like the unseemly scramble for coveted spots at overpriced private schools, football academies in Sydney vie for the affluent and deluded dollar, fluttering their eyelashes and promising all kinds of untold riches, virtually mapping out the yellow brick road to soccer related success.

All of which of course is complete and utter bollocks.

Unlike elsewhere in the world the word ‘Academy’ means nothing here: it's a marketing label, with connotations that suggest elitism (true in the dollar sense, but nothing else), conjuring up images of well drilled kids starting off on the road to professional footballing careers. However unlike in the UK and elsewhere there are no scouts, no trials, no obstacles for entry into these elite training schools on silly things like actual footballing talent … no obstacles at all ….. except (kerching!) the entry fee!”

_Craig Allan, “That’s not an Academy…. This is an Academy!”_  
www.sunburntsooccer.com
Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank the following who contributed to this Review:

- The Board and Staff of Football NSW
- Staff of Football Federation Australia and its Member Federations
- Member Associations and their General Managers
- Professional Footballers Australia, Chief Executive Officer, John Didulica
- Football Coaches Australia Chief Executive Officer, Glen Warry
- Private academies and other external providers who contributed submissions and/or participated in meetings
- Parents and all other contributors
- Stefan Kamasz, former CEO of Football NSW
- Natasha Prior, Sports Administration student, Westfield W-League player and Young Matilda, who acted as ‘research analyst’ as part of her University Internship with Football NSW

Limitations

Throughout the Review, gender-specific terms may have been used to either ease the flow of text or as part of a direct quote from a contribution. Whenever a gender-specific term is used, it should be understood as referring to both genders unless explicitly stated. The author fully recognises the popularity of women’s and girls’ football and that there are many female coaches, players and volunteers all making a wonderful and significant contribution to our sport.

Further it is acknowledged that most information contained in this Report is ‘Sydney centric’. Again, no disrespect is meant to our Regional Branches, Associations, clubs and players, and is instead a reflection of both the low incidence of private academies and external providers in the regional/country areas and the fact that no submissions were received from these areas. Many of the recommendations contained in this Review apply equally in these areas and in the event that similar challenges begin to emerge and are required to be addressed.

This Review focuses primarily around private academies and external providers at the grassroots and community football level of the game. Being limited in time, and conscious that there are a number of other reviews currently underway with regard to Football NSW Youth Competitions and the SAP structure, there has not been a detailed analysis of the NPL nor HAL Academy space.
No other aspect of society would allow this to happen!

Several hundred individuals - coaches, technicians, educators, teachers – trained and certified by the national governing body and therefore, effectively given credence, all working with our children and youth, in the country’s most popular participant sport, yet doing so in a totally unregulated environment!

A multimillion-dollar industry sitting completely outside all formal football structures and governance with no registration, monitoring, regulation or compliance checks.

They do what they want and how they want! They say what they want and are completely unanswerable to anyone but their customers - of which there are thousands.

They sell the dream and the promise to future glory and parents lap it up.

Some are engaged by clubs to assist them in their youth development programs when struggling to find sufficient volunteers (usually mums and dads) with the requisite technical expertise.

Others have their websites and kits emblazoned with the colours, badges and names of some of the biggest clubs in the world suggesting directly or implicitly that by registering with their programs, your child will also play at that club.

Most say they just want to be their own boss, work in the football industry, earn an honest day’s pay and contribute something back to the sport they love. They argue that they should be rewarded financially for their entrepreneurial efforts, having risked their personal funds, and invested in their own professional development.

Governing bodies, who should be showing leadership, direction and oversight, have done little or nothing to date.

And this will only get bigger and worse.

Peter Hugg
Head of Football, Football NSW
29 August 2018
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SECTION ONE
1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In attempting to pare this Review down and strip back the myriad of multi-layered topics contained in the pages that follow, the issue seems to be not so much private academies and external providers per se, but rather the quality of football coaching and youth development that our young Australian players are exposed to in their daily training environment.

Whilst the problem may manifest itself in the proliferation of private academies and external providers, the question seems to be one of options and the choices that parents make - as consumers - as to how their child interacts and ‘engages’ with this most popular but increasingly costly sport, particularly with regard to learning the game and developing the skills to play at a reasonable level.

Multiply this by the many tens of thousands of young players in the state of New South Wales and across the country, our national youth development programs are clearly the focus. It is perhaps worth considering whether there is any correlation and/or a cause and effect relationship between the proliferation of private academies and external providers, and the supposed decline in the youth development system and structures within football in Australia.

This has been acknowledged by Football Federation Australia (FFA) when it states:

“youth development in Australia is presently inconsistent in both quality and approach due to factors such as the diversity and self-interest of clubs; coaches; agents; private academies; schools; etc. The quality of youth coaching is generally still very poor, and the competition structures are of insufficient duration and quality. If we are serious about one day challenging the best of the world, we have to make considerable changes and improvements in our approach to youth development.”

It was further reinforced by the FFA in its recent announcement that it has:

“... identified the need to take a more holistic approach to youth development to build upon the foundations in place ..... regarding the state of play at youth level, including coaching, the affordability of the game, and the pathway from grassroots to higher levels of the sport as part of a national youth development review .... this process will complement an analysis of international youth football trends and standards, which will help Australia to benchmark itself against its competitors globally and better understand where key improvements need to be made for the game to continue to develop.”

Almost every parent who contributed to this Review was of the strong view – perceived or otherwise – that the quality and intensity of training sessions, skill development, the discipline on offer and the overall football benefit was higher in the private academy setting that they had enrolled their child in than at their local community club.

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2 FFA Press Release, 26 July 2018. FFA to conduct youth development review as Eric Abrams departs National Technical Director role
3 This could be the result of a certain element of ‘self-justification’ given their payment of fees and due to assessment being more on ‘non-crucial’ components of a youth development program eg. famous club names, logos, equipment branding and other extraneous aspects
Whether these views are fair or unreasonable, properly informed or otherwise, this is the strong and overriding emotion that drives parents to invest their time, money and energies in to private academies and external providers.

In its Discussion Paper ‘Teaching Sport to Children’⁴, and citing its own research, the Australian Sports Commission claims:

‘a large proportion of the community sports workforce (who are generally unpaid volunteers) are not interested in formal training or accreditation. This is not surprising given the voluntary nature of the work they do. This is also true for many teaching sports to children who are most likely parents or drawn from school and community networks with varying capability, motivation and commitment to sport, and to their role as a sport deliverer.’⁵

There is, without a doubt, a general perception by all users (effectively the parents as decision makers), that local community clubs do not currently deliver the ‘quality’ of development that they require, desire and demand! As one contributor (a parent), succinctly stated:

“I register my child with a club so that he can play games on the weekend, but I enrol him in an academy for him to get better”.

Cost wise, this essentially means paying twice – the normal club registration fee and the additional cost of supplementary sessions for what is considered ‘more professional’ training. Several community clubs acknowledge this issue and engage external providers to cater for the lack of suitably qualified volunteers (usually parents).

Former Socceroo and now TV commentator, Craig Foster wrote in 2014:

“Every time a child picks up a ball, bat or racquet, the cheque book comes out, but football is rapidly becoming the worst. If we don’t arrest the slide now, and if Football Federation Australia doesn’t act to stabilise and support the grassroots clubs and schools, this sport will be even more prohibitively expensive, to our great detriment. Parents are encouraged to pay exorbitant fees for a service that is, very often, big on sales and blather and shockingly short on quality, expertise and ethics. Every child is encouraged, sometimes forced, to pay for additional sessions that are not provided within the club environment, and everyone wins commercially, except the two parties that matter the most - the child and the parent.”⁶

With Australian football experiencing somewhat of a boom period with participation rates, popularity and rewards at an all-time high, the football ‘economy’ has never been more buoyant or fiscally rewarding. There has never been more people – coaches, technical directors, development officers, administrators and so on – employed in the game. There has never been more football on TV (free to air or subscription), nor column inches, websites or social media forums devoted to the world game.

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⁴ Teaching Sport to Children, Australian Sports Commission, August 2017
⁶ Craig Foster, Sydney Morning Herald, 2 March 2014 ‘Paying a high price for an unstructured academy system in football’
As former FFA Chairman Sir Frank Lowy stated in the Foreword of the FFA’s Whole of Football Plan:

“Football in Australia is in more households, more local parks and more hearts and minds than ever before. The game is now part of the mainstream of our society in a way that is tangible and permanent.”

The rewards of a possible A-League contract, national team selection, international travel and overseas contract opportunities have never seemed more attainable. With increased possibilities come an increased desire and in turn, a willingness to invest in self-development.

Whilst we have well developed coach, referee and (increasingly better) administrator education programs, there is no similar support or education framework for parents. There is no helpline or support mechanism for parents who desire answers to crucial questions and, in some instances, life changing decisions. Unfortunately, this lack of information or guidance for parents leads to naivety, ignorance and gullibility and, too often, parents falling prey to misleading claims and practices or their high expectations that do not match reality.

That said, not all private academy participants have stars in their eyes or a desire to progress through the elite pathway. Most contributors to this Review indicated they merely wanted their child to improve, have a better football experience and enjoy the game. Parental love, coupled with limited time and increased disposable income lead parents to look for the option that will deliver the best possible return. As suggested by one parent, this is no different to music, language or dance lessons, or other extra-curricular activities where money is paid for an additional education over and above normal schooling. In many ways, this reflects more societal and cultural trends rather than anything specific to football or sport.

Some would suggest that we have taken the world’s most popular, cheapest and universal sport, and ‘taxed’ participants to the point where it is no longer a ‘game for all’. There is the very real risk that our very best young players are either being forced out or are not identified because of the cost of playing football. No longer is talent the sole determinant of access to the best pathways and for the ‘cream to rise to the top’. In examining the cost of playing the game, one local football journalist quipped, ‘we don’t have enough favelas to fuel a production line of talent.’

Some community clubs, recognising the dearth of technically qualified and skilled volunteer coaches, have turned to external sources for turnkey coaching solutions. In some instances, these clubs have fallen afoul of what they argue are onerous competition regulations, which although well intentioned to the extent they intend to maintain a ‘level playing field’, have in some cases, restricted their use of suitably qualified coaches for their junior teams.

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7 p5, FFA Whole of Football Plan
8 One contributor expressed the view that this ongoing ‘public v private’ debate was no different to that experienced with schooling, health insurance/care and transport
1.1 Better Coaches, Better Football

Several years ago, the FFA adopted and promoted the mantra ‘Better Coaches, Better Football’. Assuming the validity of this claim, the greatest investment that governments and the game’s governing bodies, associations, clubs and all other stakeholders can make is in the area of coaching. Cheaper and greater accessibility to coach education courses, improved coaching knowledge through mentoring and broader discussions, and the overall development of coaching as a legitimate and well recognised and respected career will reap untold returns and will have significant and positive impacts on the game. The proposed reboot of the FFA’s Coach Development Framework, although very much in its infancy, will in many ways address these matters.

By any rough estimation, there are 2-3 times as many full time ‘professional’ coaches outside the formal football structure as inside it - be they working in private academies, external providers, schools (private or otherwise) or other unaffiliated organisations. Arguably, there needs to be a means whereby these coaches and advocates of the game are recognised and bought in to and adopted by the formal system.

Acknowledging that there are many good (and some ‘not so good’) private academies and external providers, further work needs to be done to recognise and ‘endorse’ those that are appropriately skilled and are of some real value to the game. The FFA has identified that in the future there will need to be 100,000 recognised coaches who display the essential behaviours and football acumen necessary to coach our players – there are currently just 24,000!10 No longer can we continue to have some of our best coaches effectively ostracised and working ‘outside the tent’!

Private academies and external providers remain one of the few industries in society that has no formal licencing, accreditation or regulatory system. Whilst this remains the case, service levels will vary, the game and its participants will suffer, parents will continue to pay more, talented players may fail to be identified, and external suppliers of coaching services will continue to proliferate. Again, Foster states:

“If this was a school environment, we would be last in academic standards in the world and, by extension, we are producing illiterate footballers through high charges and zero regulation.”11

Unfortunately, there currently seems to be no appetite by governing bodies to implement any form of licencing or accreditation system for private academies or external providers. Whilst there are numerous models that could be implemented, any such model requires broad ‘buy-in’ and must be able to be applied nationally and consistently across the country and must be adequately resourced in order to ensure ongoing monitoring and compliance.

There is the very high risk of ‘rebel’ competitions and leagues being formed (not too dissimilar to what has occurred in Futsal) and this is clearly demonstrated with the recent announcement of the Premier Academy League – currently involving nine private academies over the summer. 12

10 p37, FFA Whole of Football Plan
11 Craig Foster, Sydney Morning Herald, 2 March 2014 ‘Paying a high price for an unstructured academy system in football’
12 www.premieracademyleague.com/
There are also certain parallels here with player agents, once completely unregulated and unlicensed, but who are now accredited and registered, and have their own professional body - the Australian Football Agents Association\textsuperscript{13} - with a code of ethics and other regulatory mechanisms. Similarly, at a broader level and led by the Federal Government, Australian sport has recently reaffirmed the model and role of Exercise and Sports Science Australia\textsuperscript{14} (ESSA) aimed at developing professional standards and minimum required levels of knowledge and skills for sports science and exercise practitioners. ESSA and other similar organisations may serve as models for football to learn from and follow when developing any qualifications and standards framework.

The newly constituted Football Coaches Australia (FCA)\textsuperscript{15} provides a very real opportunity for its stakeholders – coaches at all levels - to take a proactive and lead role in developing some key principles code of conduct/ethics and possibly some form of regulatory framework for private academies and external providers. Further it is believed that it is in the best interests of the FCA’s membership that the profession of football coaching is appropriately recognised and remunerated and professionally managed.

In recent years, the game has seen increased fees and levies being charged in order to play the game. Despite the introduction of initiatives such as the National Premier League Youth competitions and SAP licences, and a desire to ‘professionalise’ and raise the standard of the football environment, there does not appear to have been a concerted and concurrent increase in investment by clubs in the professionalisation of coaches, youth development ‘technicians’ and technical directors.

It would appear that some elements of the game are willing to receive players’ substantial registration fees (all set at the same level despite differing standards of service and benefits offered\textsuperscript{16}) but seem reluctant to spend those funds on paying appropriate remuneration to coaches and Club Technical Directors and question the efficacy of investing in greater coach education and overall youth development. Again, the FCA can serve a valuable role here in formulating minimum standards and best practice. No doubt, the previously mentioned FFA Review will also look to address such concerns.

Despite well-established criteria, it is suggested that failure to adequately monitor and ensure compliance leaves room for abuse and neglect. The FFA’s proposed 1-Star Club Academy Accreditation System (supposedly being rolled out for season 2019 to underpin the previously announced 2-Star system – refer to Annexure IV) has the potential to make significant inroads in this area, however any such framework is only as good as both the compliance and monitoring system in place. Additional resources, in the form of Compliance Officers and regular audits, are required but, even more essential, is the need for increased investment in supporting Member Associations and Clubs.

\textsuperscript{13} \url{www.australianfootballagents.com}
\textsuperscript{14} \url{www.essa.org.au}
\textsuperscript{15} \url{www.footballcoachesaus.org.au}
\textsuperscript{16} The capped fees charged by NPL and SAP clubs have effectively become the ‘recommended retail price’ rather than be related to the budgets and quality of club offering. That is, the ‘best’ program offering the best value and benefits charges the same as the ‘lowest’ quality program with the least benefits.
2. OBSERVATIONS

a) Private academies and external providers are a growing, omnipresent and, in some ways, a polarising sector of the football industry. On the whole, they sit outside the formal football structures and are not recognised, communicated or engaged with by football’s governing bodies. From a footballing perspective, they remain unaccountable and unregulated.

b) By their very nature, private academies and external providers are commercial and entrepreneurial small to medium enterprises in a growing sport and, as such, are subject to the same market forces as other sectors of the economy. Quality businesses and programs that meet customer satisfaction levels thrive, whilst those that are adjudged as ‘poor’, suffer and no doubt eventually fail, causing reputational damage, ill will and distrust for the industry. Some benefit from a continual flow of new and possibly unsuspecting and uneducated customers.

c) Football’s governing bodies, at the national, state and local levels, have remained silent and, to date, have not provided adequate leadership, governance and oversight in this area. Many have a particular view on the role of private academies and external providers, but few have done anything about to address this area.

d) As the ultimate consumer of private academies and external providers, parents have not been provided with sufficient information, guidance and education to assist them to make informed decisions about what is best for their child’s football development. Further, there are no means by which they can complain or seek redress for poor service or unscrupulous practices (other than via the relevant government regulator or civil action). Parents have essentially been left to make these decisions and deal with any issues on their own. It is very much a case of ‘caveat emptor’ – buyer beware!

e) As many of the technicians and practitioners in the private academy landscape are part-time or full-time professionals who coach and derive an income for their services, the quality of service is generally (but not always) better than that provided by well-meaning volunteer mums and dads at the community club level.

f) In order to make a ‘career’ out of football coaching, these coaches will often derive their footballing income from a variety of sources. For example, they may do some work with a private academy, additional work with a high school, coach at a club, or act as a club’s technical director17 18. In some cases, this leads to claims of conflict of interest as the coaches spread themselves across several different groups of players. For example, a club coach who also works for a private academy may be accused of selecting or favouring players at the club who are also customers of their private academy.

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17 One well known coach took to driving for Uber in between sessions and various coaching positions to make a living
18 Several staff members of the FFA’s various National Teams are involved in their own eponymous academies
g) Most of the principals and staff in the private academy and external provider workforce are graduates of FFA Coaching Courses who, on completion of said courses, set up their own business in order to derive an income from the game. While successful completion of relevant FFA Coaching Courses should be a mandatory and a minimum requirement for anyone coaching football, the fact that coaches with private academies and external providers hold such qualifications can be interpreted by some consumers as tacit endorsement by FFA of the private academy or external provider. The same can be said for professional players who, upon retirement from playing, transition into coaching. By referring to themselves as a ‘Former Socceroo’ or ‘Former A-League player’ with an FFA A License, a consumer could be easily misled (intentionally or otherwise) in to believing that player’s academy is endorsed by the national governing body.

h) The increased quality of coaching and the offering of a high intensity and individualised training program vis-à-vis what is offered by a community club, are the main reasons parents cite for enrolling their child in a private academy or with an external provider.

i) That said, it must be acknowledged that private academies do not have the added burden of administering a club, preparing players to participate in (and win) competitive games of football, nor do they have to ensure adequate playing numbers and weekend formations, game strategies and the like. As such, most private academies solely dedicate their time and sessions exclusively to skills training and individual talent development in an environment of a compliant and for the most part well-behaved cohort of high paying participants, usually with parents present and observing.

j) In addition to the quality of training, there is the misguided perception among many parents that, if two sessions are good, three sessions are better and four (or more) sessions are ideal. These parents believe that the best way for their child to get an advantage over other peers is by paying for and attending extra training sessions (in educational terms, extra study and tuition). When combined with club and, in some instances, school football, futsal and/or other sporting commitments, little to no regard is given to the total number of training hours/sessions per week that the child is undertaking. This gives rise to the risk of the child suffering overuse injuries at what is a crucial developmental age and growth phase. Several submissions from parents referred to their child experiencing Sever’s and Osgood-Schlatter’s issues. Whilst a medical practitioner may be able to assist with a child’s recovery from such injuries, due to the number of different programs the child is participating in, no one seemingly takes responsibility to ensure these injuries do not occur in the first place.

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19 Some of the more well-known and popular private academies are run by former National Team, NSL/A-League and NPL players
k) In the main, participation in private academies is generally dominated by young male players and, although there are some female participants, there are very few, ‘girls only’ academies (although one was recently set up in Melbourne\(^{22}\)). It is envisaged that this will change with greater emphasis on and promotion of girls’ football, the increased popularity and continued success of the Matildas and the Westfield W-League and Australia’s bid for the 2023 FIFA Women’s World Cup.

l) Schools – both public and private – are increasingly becoming active as ‘external providers’ and are looking to recruit and offer scholarships to young talented players. There are seven sports high schools in the Sydney Metropolitan area – all with football programs – and one, Westfield Sports High, has been officially endorsed and accredited by the FFA as a ‘High Performance School’.\(^ {23}\)

Like many other private academies and external providers, these schools ‘fall outside’ the formal structure of the game and run their programs parallel to Member Associations and Clubs – sometimes competing with training sessions and game day times. Private schools implement some of the best funded football programs with coaches, equipment, facilities, camps and tours that would be the envy of many professional clubs.

m) Programs offered by private academies and external providers range from weekly training sessions over an extended period (for example, a term and several terms per annum), to one on one or small group ad-hoc training, specialist position coaching (especially for goalkeepers) or more ‘left of centre’ offerings such as strength and conditioning sessions or access to specialist equipment and facilities. Some are now using ‘search’ technology to offer an employment service for coaches (such as job boards).

n) Beyond training, some private academies are beginning to seek (and create) opportunities to play games and effectively ‘compete’ against each other. Several mini-tournaments already exist during school holidays and the recently announced Premier Academy League\(^ {24}\) will commence in October 2018 with a summer season and most likely more activities to follow.

o) In some cases, the line between community club and private academy (or external provider) is increasingly blurred. Some clubs are subcontracting directly with individual coaches to make up for a shortage of suitably qualified volunteers, and due to parental demand and a concurrent willingness to pay for a higher standard of coaching. Other clubs (for similar reasons) are completely outsourcing their coaching needs to external providers who provide turnkey solutions, whilst some clubs are forming relationships with private academies such that players must be customers of the private academy in order to gain selection for the club’s Division 1 team (in the relevant age grade). Some private academies are beginning to ‘morph’ into clubs so as to play in local leagues.


\(^{24}\) [www.premieracademyleague.com](http://www.premieracademyleague.com)
p) There is, unfortunately, evidence of improper and unacceptable behaviors by operators of private academies and external providers, mainly related to (a) making false promises in relation to overseas trials and preying on gullible and naive parents and (b) compulsory attendance at (and thus extra fees) for private academy programs and linking these to the trial process for gaining selection in to a specific team.25

i. It is considered that anything that is compulsory and forced upon players/parents is inappropriate especially when it relates to tying first division football with participation in a private academy program. No player should be required to pay additional private academy fees to play first team football. All efforts should be made to regulate against such practices, to the extent it is legally permissible to do so, and regardless, community clubs should be strongly discouraged from carrying out such practices. Talent alone, and not the capacity to pay, should be the principle determinant in team selection.

ii. Several private academies have linkages with overseas professional clubs for branding and promotional purposes. Although these private academies will argue otherwise, there is no real altruistic desire for overseas clubs to make Australian football stronger and to make our young players, and in turn, our national teams, better. Most marketing by these overseas clubs focuses on ‘playing the [club] way’, rather than ensuring the FFA National Curriculum is adhered to. Whilst it may seem appealing to a parent/player to learn to play ‘tiki-taka’ football like Barcelona, considering the team nature of the game, this is both unreasonable and idealistic. The efficacy of such an approach is questionable and has the potential to create confusion when the ‘philosophy’ or approach of such a private academy conflicts with the FFA National Curriculum.

iii. A number of overseas clubs (or their ‘agents’) and external providers conduct supposed ‘trials’ for young players, luring parents into funding attendance on the premise the trial is part of a formal talent identification process. These trials are attended in the usually naive and misplaced hope of securing an overseas trial with a ‘big name’ professional club and, ultimately, a professional contract with such a club. In reality, if a young player is sufficiently talented, they will usually already be well known (be ‘on the radar’ so to speak) and will already be part of the FFA’s Talented Player Pathway.

Furthermore, one shouldn’t have to pay to be ‘spotted’. The talent identification process is not (and should not be) provided at a cost to the player and should not be a revenue source for clubs or private academies. Further, and most importantly, there are strict FIFA regulations in place concerning the transfer of minors between National Federations which will often prohibit such opportunities in any event.26 All necessary and legal steps should be taken to prohibit such trials by overseas clubs – especially when parents must pay for the ‘privilege’.

25 Worse still is the allegation of coaches asking for/receiving cash payments from parents for their child to be chosen for NPL teams
26 Article 19 of the FIFA Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players
iv. A key offering of many private academies is overseas tours. Typically, these are to Europe (mainly England, Italy and Spain) although increasingly the USA, Asia and South America are becoming options. These tours need to be recognised for what they are, that is, they are akin to a school excursion, possibly a ‘once in a lifetime’ experience and an opportunity to see the world via football, rather than for any elite or trial purposes. Whilst such tours may provide participants with games against the youth teams of EPL or other professional clubs, their value as a means of ‘talent identification’ and being placed in front of scouts is questionable.

q) The Competition Regulations of two Football NSW competitions – namely the Champion of Champions Tournament and the State Cup – are increasingly perceived as overly onerous on clubs and difficult to administer and police. Also, to some extent, the Competition Regulations are inconsistent with the regulations of Member Associations with respect to private academies and external providers such that there have been situations in which Member Associations have expected Football NSW to reject clubs for entry into the abovementioned competitions on the basis of their link with a private academy despite the Member Association allowing that club to participate in its own competitions.

r) Further, several submissions argue that the regulations are potentially counterproductive to what clubs are seeking to achieve in terms of raising coaching standards and their internal youth development program. That said, there is strong recognition that there does need to be a spirit of ‘fair play’ and a level playing field applied in the conduct of what are broadly ‘whole of community’ grassroots competitions and that certain socio-demographic areas should not benefit because of having an ability pay for additional professional coaching services.

s) Increasingly, Member Associations are beginning to establish their own ‘academy’ or inhouse youth development programs. This is being done with a desire to provide participants with alternative options while assuring participants that these programs meet certain standards, for example, in relation to coaching qualifications, insurance cover, Working with Children verification and adherence to the FFA National Curriculum, and that any surplus funds from these programs are reinvested in the game.

t) Community clubs are also looking to provide distinct ‘premium’ offerings (generally at additional cost) for those who desire additional services beyond the normal ‘base-level’ offering. One of the obvious potential risks here is that selection to play ‘First Division’ football will be linked to these ‘premium’ offerings.

u) It is only appropriate that both the FFA and Football NSW provide as much support, guidance and assistance as possible to its Member Associations and Clubs, including, if deemed appropriate, the development of a ‘best practice’ model to be adopted and applied, together with all necessary program structures, session outlines, job descriptions, marketing collateral and so on.
3. RECOMMENDATIONS

There are many findings and learnings from this Review. With the sport seemingly in a constant state of flux, there will always be means by which the sport can improve and aspects of it that we can do better. The recently announced Youth Development Review to be conducted by the FFA will no doubt introduce another series of changes and potentially a new approach to player development across the country.

No one could deny the potential that football can deliver to its players and the broader Australian community in terms of economic, social and health benefits. Inevitably, on occasion, this can be limited by resources, however, in the main, it will take a combination of strategic alignment and the concerted efforts of all stakeholders to achieve the FFA’s mission to become ‘the largest and most popular sport in Australia.’

Notwithstanding that we must ‘do more and do better’, the key recommendations from this Review can be divided in to four broad areas:

1. Regulatory Framework;
2. Competition Regulations;
3. Education and guidance; and
4. Support and assistance.

The recommendations should be considered as a holistic and total approach to dealing with the many challenges in this area.

No one recommendation is intended to work independently of the others and, in fact, some are intrinsically linked. For example, the recommendation that Member Associations and Clubs create their own ‘academy’ style program, with Football NSW working with them to do more in the youth development space (Recommendation 4), essentially presupposes that competition regulations will need to be reassessed and modified so as to remove the various restrictions (Recommendation 2) that currently restrict this from occurring. That is, it would not be reasonable to seek to regulate against private academies on one hand, yet actively promote similar programs merely because that are deemed ‘within the formal structure’ on the other.

In much the same way as utilising a set of fiscal levers to manage the economy, the recommendations below should be viewed as a series of tools to be pushed and pulled in the most appropriate manner to achieve the best possible outcome across the entire football ecosystem.

In short, it is anticipated that by providing greater assistance and support to Member Associations and Clubs, and by better educating and informing the consumer to demand a better service, no regulatory framework is required and competition regulations can be relaxed so as not to discourage those Clubs trying to improve the skills of their members, but rather incentivise all key stakeholders to deliver better services in the coaching and youth development space.

27 p6, David Gallop, Chief Executive Officer, FFA Whole of Football Plan
3.1 Regulatory Framework

While there are strong arguments in support of a regulatory framework that could include some form of accreditation and licencing program, at this point in time, it is not recommended that Football NSW proceed down that path. This position is based on the following:

a. There currently appears no appetite for Member Associations and the FFA to participate in such an exercise. For any regulatory framework to be adopted and successful, it needs broad support and ‘buy in’ from all sectors of the industry particularly those with the responsibility for governance, implementation and oversight. Until such a time as that exists, it will remain a folly that will not be sustainable and will quickly fail.

b. Further, any such framework needs to be national and applied consistently across the country and not just in one state (notwithstanding that the majority of participants reside in the Football NSW footprint). For example, it would be perverse and confusing for consumers if a private academy was to be rated as ‘poor’ by Football NSW but ‘excellent’ by another Member Federation. For such a framework to function properly and to be suitably robust, the FFA (in conjunction with all Member Federations) needs to be committed and should either take responsibility for the implementation and oversight of the framework or at least be a supporter and major contributor to its implementation. At this stage, the FFA advises it is not prepared to be involved in any capacity.

c. Pursuing such a framework requires a significant and continued investment in resources and energies. Such a framework would fail if it was not supported by an adequate budget and infrastructure to ensure ongoing monitoring and compliance. With a range of other issues confronting the sport at the present time, it is felt that there are more pressing priorities.

d. Notwithstanding all the above, there is also the option of other, more appropriate bodies taking on this opportunity and responsibility. The newly created Football Coaches Australia (FCA) – established to be the representative body for football coaches – could drive this work on behalf of its members (professional and volunteer coaches). Undertaken in conjunction with the FFA, the PFA and Member Federations, this would have far greater support and industry recognition. Alternatively, the private academies themselves could come together and establish their own representative body and create their own self-regulating model. By way of example, the Australian Football Agents Association is a model that private academies could look to adopt – establishing a management committee, best practice principles, a code of conduct for their members to abide by and so on. This would establish a peer evaluation model to be applied across the industry.

e. Consistent with the Review’s finding that ‘competitive market’ principles should apply, it is likely that these same market forces will act to ensure that, in the long run, only the better resourced and most competitively priced private academies will prosper.
f. Finally, it is also felt that the implementation of a number of the recommendations, including establishing and promulgating best practice principles within the private academy industry, educating parents so they become better informed and more discerning, and supporting Member Associations to develop their own Youth Development programs, will assist lifting overall standards across the industry.

3.2 Competition Regulations

After carefully considering the submissions received and in light of the other findings made as part of this Review, it is recommended that Football NSW removes the relevant clauses concerning private academies and external providers from the Football NSW regulations governing participation in the State Cup and the Champion of Champions.

The Review received a considerable amount of feedback from grassroots clubs to the effect that due to increasing shortages in available skilled volunteer coaches and increasing demands by parents for more highly skilled coaches, more and more they are being required to engage and pay for the services of professional or semi-professional coaches. With Football NSW wanting to encourage clubs to improve their Youth Development programs and provide their players with the best possible coaching and training environment, the Review recognised that the regulations may make it difficult for clubs to retain the services of highly experienced coaches who are deemed ‘external’ to the club, i.e. they are not volunteers or parents of players.

Football NSW separately recognises that there is a large number of skilled and well-trained coaches working in grassroots football who are (and deserve to be) paid for their services. Also, most, if not all, of these coaches have paid Football NSW and/or FFA to obtain a certain level of coaching qualification and accreditation. Football NSW believes these coaches should be entitled to develop their coaching careers in grassroots football and be paid for their services. Further, for the reasons identified above, grassroots clubs should be entitled to enlist the services of such coaches.

In all cases, and so as to develop a sense of a united and whole-of-club ‘culture’ and club branding across staff, players and volunteers, it is recommended that clubs be strongly encouraged to require any ‘external providers’ or private academy coaches to wear the club’s clothing at all training sessions and match days. Football NSW encourages clubs to grow and develop their own culture, loyalty and legacy and sees no reason why coaches – particularly those that are paid – should not be provided with a club uniform and be obliged to wear that uniform when working for the club.

Football NSW is also of the view that these regulations served their purpose in the past, but that since their inception in 2014, circumstances (and the overall football landscape) have changed significantly. The approach of Member Associations and clubs in relation to private academies and external providers now varies across the Football NSW footprint. Some Member Associations allow private academies and external providers to participate and be involved in their leagues, some use their services, while others promote them and receive sponsorship revenues from them. This inconsistency across Member Associations needs to be recognised. If competition regulations had the effect of limiting the ability of clubs to improve the level of coaching they can offer to participants on the basis it would maintain a ‘level playing field’ (either within or across Member Associations), they would likely only discourage the more progressive clubs from trying to do better. Football NSW is of the view that all
grassroots clubs should be working towards improving their respective training environments and increasing the benefits and overall experience of each player, team and club. Through the initiatives outlined in a later recommendation (Recommendation 3.4), Football NSW is confident these goals will be achieved.

Whilst administrative workload and the burden of implementation will never be the sole drivers of decisions and strategy, Football NSW’s ability to oversee, manage and successfully enforce these regulations in a timely and consistent manner – at a time of other conflicting priorities - is beyond capacity. Alleged breaches are usually brought to the attention of Football NSW by other clubs and investigating and successfully enforcing them is onerous and time consuming during what is a particularly busy time of year.

The Review has also taken into account concerns some of the clauses in the regulations may impose restraints that are not reasonable.

Finally, it is recommended that Football NSW writes to all Member Associations and their clubs to fully explain the reasoning behind the removal of the regulations and to encourage these stakeholders to work within a series of principles designed to ensure best practice when engaging and working with private academies and external providers.

While recognising the desire of some Member Associations to maintain the status quo, for these reasons set out above, along with the anticipated benefits from the other recommendations contained in this Review, it is felt that removing the regulations will ultimately be beneficial to all stakeholders.

3.3 Education and guidance

A recurring message in the submissions received from clubs and parents was the lack of available information to guide and support parents in making crucial decisions about their children’s participation in Youth Development in football. It is recommended that Football NSW undertakes significant measures to better educate the general public in this area.

Notwithstanding that there are a host of private academies, external providers and numerous websites, blogs and Facebook pages making certain claims, promises and statements, there is very little accurate and objective information provided by any of the governing bodies.

As such, it is recommended that:

a) A series of educational materials be developed (in the form of pamphlets, fact sheets and website stories) to guide parents and young players in relation to:

i. the Talent Player Pathway and the structure of youth football in the Football NSW footprint;
ii. the factors they should consider when choosing a private academy or external provider, what to look for and what questions to ask. A draft of such a document can be found in Annexure IV; and
b) Football NSW conduct ‘parent education/information’ evenings and forums as part of State Representative or Talent Support Program activities, with a view to broadening the audience in due course. The purpose of these events would be to better educate parents about Youth Development in football and also provide them with guidance in relation to the factors they should consider when choosing a private academy or external provider.

Ideally, all of this should be done with the collaboration of FFA (and possibly the PFA and FCA), such that identical information is rolled out nationally across all the Member Federations.

3.4 Support and assistance

Some of the strongest feedback received from Member Associations was their collective desire to create their own local Youth Development programs (in the form of an academy or similar) whereby they can both (i) control the quality and integrity of the coaching program and training environment and (ii) run it in a cost-effective manner thereby ensuring that any surplus funds generated remain in the game by reinvestment back in to their association.

Those Member Associations that provided this feedback were united in wanting Football NSW to support them to develop such programs.

As such, it is recommended that Football NSW provide increased assistance and support to Member Associations and clubs by:

a. Conducting a workshop/forum with all Member Associations to fully explore what their requirements and parameters are;

b. In accordance with the outcomes of the above workshop, creating and supporting the implementation of a ‘best practice’ model academy and user pay framework for an association/club-based Youth Development program covering such areas as:

   i. name, colours/logo and branding including marketing taglines and similar;
   ii. program structure, activities/curriculum and time tables;
   iii. financial and budgetary matters;
   iv. documentation including necessary forms, policies, duty statements; and
   v. marketing and promotion collateral.

c. Tasking a member of the Football NSW Technical Department with the specific responsibility for ‘academies’, including responsibility for assisting Member Associations and clubs in this area, with these responsibilities to be included in that employee’s position description.²⁸

²⁸ This has already been somewhat achieved with the employment of a Manager, Talented Player Pathways.
SECTION TWO
4. FOREWORD

The conduct of this Review straddled the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia.

The Socceroos’ failure to again win a game and progress through to the Second Round for the third consecutive World Cup\(^\text{29}\) again raised the ire of social media keyboard warriors, ex-Socceroo TV commentators, the general media, former coaches and many fans with an opinion.

However, these commentators failed to acknowledge the fact that this was Australia’s fourth consecutive qualification for the Men’s World Cup (after a dark period of not qualifying between the 1974 and 2006 events), in what is undoubtedly the biggest, most popular and highly contested single sporting event in the world. As one commentator stated, ‘qualification has almost been taken for granted’\(^\text{30}\), and many Australians ignorantly and naively expect us to win the World Cup as we have with rugby, cricket and numerous other sports. Another commentator argued that, for a nation of 24 million people and with three other dominant football codes accessing a limited talent pool, we are indeed ‘punching above our weight’.

Not surprisingly, the targets of criticism ranged from the FFA (its Chairman, the Board, the CEO and Management), the influence of Dutch/European technicians and their ‘system’ (not helped by the Netherlands’ failure to qualify), current Congress and governance issues, claims of too many visa players in the A-League (especially in key position of striker) thereby denying opportunities to local talent, and there being an insufficient number of teams competing in the A-League (again impacting on opportunities for youth players). Essentially, all the usual criticism proffered in the regular post-event bloodletting process.

The common thread running through much of the criticism has been the lamenting of a youth development system that is not producing quality players (particularly goal scorers) good enough to perform on the world stage. This combined with Australian National Youth teams either not qualifying for, or not progressing sufficiently in, World Youth Championships – when compared with the levels of achievement obtained in the ‘80s and 90’s – has given further ammunition to those who question whether the sport is progressing in terms of youth development.

A week after the Final of the World Cup, and in announcing the departure of its National Technical Director, Belgian Eric Abrams, the FFA announced an all-encompassing review in to Youth Development in Australia, stating that it:\(^\text{31}\)

‘... seeks to review and evolve its male and female youth development practices for the opportunities and challenges facing Australian football in the years ahead. As the game continues to grow in Australia, FFA has identified the need to take a more holistic approach to youth development to build upon the

\(^{29}\) To be more accurate, the Socceroos have not won a match at a World Cup since 2010 and they have only scored one goal from open play in their last five World Cup matches

\(^{30}\) www.theconversation.com/qualifying-is-never-easy-australias-world-cup-history-27508

foundations in place. FFA will engage with a wide variety of stakeholders with the intention of expanding the mix of local and international expertise at its fingertips.

This ongoing engagement will include the selection of a new National Technical Director with the assistance of a panel of external experts, as well as the establishment of a National Youth Development Panel to advise FFA and the new NTD on a continuous basis to enhance and guide Australia’s elite youth development pathways’.

At the time of the announcement and proclaiming that a collaborative approach is necessary, the FFA stated:

‘… the football community will be provided with the opportunity to voice their opinion regarding the state of play at youth level, including coaching, the affordability of the game, and the pathway from grassroots to higher levels of the sport. This process will complement an analysis of international youth football trends and standards, which will help Australia benchmark itself against its competitors globally and better understand where key improvements need to be made for the game to continue to develop.’

In closing, David Gallop, CEO of the FFA said:

‘… there are some significant challenges that must be resolved if we are to advance quickly as a football nation. At youth level we have identified the need to draw upon the knowledge of more Australians, while also continuing to recognise and respect the role that international football has on the sport… We feel that this is the right time to make a change and seek to unite Australia’s football community and stimulate discussion about innovative ways to build upon the foundations that exist from grassroots to professional clubs across the nation’.

In his own post-mortem article “Why be the biggest if you can’t be the best?”32, FoxSports football commentator, Adam Peacock, offered what he describes as his own simplistic stream of words as a possible solution:

“Pump as much time and resources as you can into junior coaching and structure > better coaches, and best kids playing against best kids as much as possible, a better quality of youth player is produced. Better quality of youth player produced > bigger chance our underage teams have of making international tournaments and those players getting exposed to opposition they’ll play on the big stages in years to come PLUS scouts from bigger clubs are there (as good as international scouting networks work these days; those tournaments are crawling with talent-spotting eyes from all around the football world). Youth player exposed to higher quality > better chance of breaking into A-League if he chooses to stay at home > A-League becomes a better product and has more interest commercially > player gets sold for more money overseas which strengthens the resources of his former club. Then at the end of it all > better standard of young Australia professional > better standard pushing to be a Socceroo! And when we get to a World Cup …”

The FFA’s mantra of ‘Better Coaches, Better Football’ is well intentioned and, in theory, applies to at all levels of the game but, even by its own admission:

‘Currently, Football focuses its education resources too strongly on coaches working with elite players. As a result, Football is failing to provide adequate support to grassroots coaches. This means too many coaches don’t enjoy their experience because they are ill-equipped for the task. Being unable to give players the experience they want produces frustration for coaches, participants and parents alike’. 33

‘The quality of youth coaching is generally still very poor, and the competition structures are of insufficient duration and quality. If we are serious about one day challenging the best of the world, we have to make considerable changes and improvements in our approach to youth development’34.

For many coaches (and would-be coaches) at the community level, coaching courses remain overly expensive, accreditation is still not compulsory and, for the main, junior and youth football is still coached by mums and dads (the so-called ‘Football Helpers’ – see Chapter 6) who, although well-meaning, are often well out of their depth technically. It would appear that greater investment in coaching, with a view to increasing the number of coaches, improving the quality of coaches and improving the overall coach education system could be one of the single most influential decisions to be made to improve the standard of play in Australia.

Coach education should not be seen as a revenue stream and profit centre but rather an investment in the game. The cost of attending courses should be reduced significantly, they should be more accessible, and they should be conducted more often and in more formats. They should be supplemented with videos, online resources (including apps) and other learning methods. The recently created Football Coaches Australia should be recognised, integrated and supported to assist the FFA in doing some of the ‘heavy lifting’.

Sadly, and such is the enormity of the task, even a tenfold increase in investment in the coach education and coach development area, would not be enough and would merely scratch the surface.

The paradox and unfortunate irony in all of this, particularly in respect of this Review, is that in private academies and external providers, football has a group of excellent coaches and technicians who, because they are ‘outside the system’, are often excluded by those ‘within the system’. As will be discussed in Chapter 11, in sports such as tennis, golf and swimming (recognising the individual nature of these sports), private coaches and the coaching profession as a whole, effectively are the sport and they provide the backbone of all youth and talent development. While recognising the completely different model that is AFL, it should be noted that several of its young, talented players are actually sent by the AFL, the state governing bodies and by professional clubs to private coaches for additional training.35

On the community football coaching continuum, at one end we have well-meaning but technically deficient volunteers who are doing their best under difficult circumstances, while at the other end, we have many professional coaches (a number of which are former Socceroos or

33 p35, Whole of Football Plan, Football Federation Australia
national league players) who have invested significantly in their own professional development and accreditation who merely wish to be gainfully employed in the football industry, yet are not engaged with, supported or recognised.

At the semi-professional level, the so-called sub-elite level of football (essentially the National Premier Leagues across the country), anecdotal evidence suggests many clubs either do not pay, or they do not adequately pay, their coaches and they do not invest sufficiently in to their Youth Development programs. Despite charging more than $2,400 per player per season ($1,500 for SAP), there appears to be significant room for improvement in terms of the quality of program that these clubs deliver for their young players at the SAP (9-13 years) and NPL (13-18 years) levels.
5. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The following formed the basis of an Information Paper presented to the Football NSW Board at its April 2018 meeting. That paper was the precursor and catalyst for the conduct of this Review.

To date, and in the absence of any definitive position from the key governing bodies, the role of private academies and external providers in the Australian football landscape has not been formally acknowledged.

The FFA has not enunciated its formal position. Football NSW has reflected its position in the Participation Agreements entered into with State League clubs and in certain Competition Regulations. Member Associations have varying attitudes towards these entities and they and clubs are increasingly looking for direction from their governing bodies. International clubs view Australia as an untapped market in their push for greater fan engagement and globalisation and this will only increase in the future – for the first time, a J-League club (from Japan) will be conducting holiday clinics in Sydney over the 2018 winter season.

At present, Football NSW does not endorse, accredit or recognise private academies and external providers. Further, as a policy, Football NSW does not allow any advertising by private providers on its own website, does not promote or list any of them on its social media channels and does not rent out facilities at Valentine Sports Park for such them (in an attempt to avoid the perception that Football NSW prefers one private academy over others).

With a desire to better understand the industry and its challenges, and explore any potential opportunities, Football NSW wished to conduct a detailed analysis of the football academy ‘industry’ in the state and develop a strategy as to how to best move forward.

The following Terms of Reference were proposed and the key deliverables to be presented at the conclusion of the Review were:

1. An analysis of the various academies that currently exist within the Football NSW landscape, covering such topics as:
   - corporate/organisational structure and their respective operating models;
   - financial costs and typical investment by participants;
   - program structures and offerings;
   - formal associations with clubs, associations or other football stakeholders;
   - key football and technical aspects – e.g. content, level of staffing, accreditation, curriculum followed and so on; and
   - other – insurance, selection policies, governance, working with children checks;

2. A summary of the national landscape with specific reference to policies and approaches by other Member Federations;

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36 Refer to Chapter 12 for a more detailed summary of Football NSW’s position in this regard.
3. A summary of the situation in other sports, whether they face similar issues and how they approach them;
4. Discussion with FFA to understand its formal position;
5. Discussions with Member Associations and some NPL/State League Clubs to understand their challenges and views;
6. Development of a model for an ‘Association based’ Academy that could potentially be set up by Member Associations for the benefit of players in their respective footprints;
7. A basic risk assessment analysis and the implications or cost of ‘doing nothing’;
8. A proposed model for an ‘accreditation’ system under which Football NSW would issue licences which would act as a form of endorsement (incorporating potential fees to be charged and the compliance criteria);
9. A series of recommendations and educational guidelines aimed at parents/players to better inform them about the academy industry and matters they need to be aware of prior to deciding on whether they should enrol their child with a private provider.
10. Finally, an Executive Summary of Recommendations that can be considered by Management and the Board and assist in determining how Football NSW should proceed in this area.
6. THE LOCAL FOOTBALL LANDSCAPE

The Australian sporting landscape, particularly in team-based activities, is typically centred around a community club – loosely defined as a group of members coming together to participate in a competitive league across a season. This applies across many of the most popular team sports in the country, namely football (soccer), AFL, rugby, basketball, netball and cricket.

In football, this club-based model applies throughout the world and indeed across all levels - be it the English Premier League, La Liga in Spain, the Hyundai A-League (or Westfield W-League), the National Premier League or in local community leagues within our Member Associations.

It would be fair to say that this format and structure of our game – often referred to as ‘traditional’ – has developed and evolved over the last 100 plus years and is what has made football the team sport with the highest participation level in Australia. That said, and as will be discussed in the next Chapter, this traditional model is under pressure and, as Australian society changes, so too does sport’s need to change and adapt accordingly.

Typically, this traditional model is based on players registering for a club, graded or allocated to a given team, and through aligning with similarly skilled teams, competing in a league.

With respect to registration, participants competing in formally recognised leagues under the jurisdiction of the sport’s national governing body (as stipulated by FIFA), Football Federation Australian (FFA), are required to register through MyFootballClub – the FFA’s online and national registration system. Further, these participants participate under the FFA’s National Registration Regulations, the rules that apply to the conduct of football competitions and matches in Australia. This system ensures football is regulated in a consistent and coordinated manner across the states/territories, districts, zones, associations and clubs.

Normally, and as is certainly the case in New South Wales, players register with a community club/team (often based around a certain suburb or geographic area) and these clubs play within a particular Association and generally in a certain geographical footprint, (eg the Sutherland Shire or Northern Beaches). These Associations are formal constitutional members of Football NSW - the state’s governing body for the sport – which, in turn, is a Member Federation of the FFA.

Across any 12-month calendar period, a normal season may consist of all (or a number of) the following relatively distinct phases:

1. Trials and registration;
2. Pre-season training and practice/trial matches;
3. A season of competitive matches – usually in a home and away format;
4. Finals (where relevant); and
5. An off season and a period of rest and recovery.

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At the micro level, during the season, players participate in a combination of club-based training sessions (anything from 1-4 sessions per week depending on the level of the club) and matches (usually once per week on a Saturday or Sunday, although Cup or catch-up matches may be scheduled mid-week).

The majority of Australia’s 1.1 million registered participants follow the above general phases.

**Youth Development and the National Curriculum**

Ideally, particularly at the youth level, the club should be following the principles of the FFA’s National Curriculum and should base their training programs, playing activities and styles on the respective age grouped phases:

1. Discovery Phase (5-9 years);
2. Skill Acquisition Phase (9-13 years);
3. Game Training Phase (13-16 years); and
4. Performance Phase (16 plus years).

The quality of training program and thus the development of young players is almost perfectly correlated with the quality of coaching offered by the club (often overseen by a Technical Director).

As the key ‘connection’ between a player and the sport, whether a young player develops or stagnates, has fun or does not, stays within the game or leaves, is almost perfectly correlated with the quality of their coach and the training and playing environment that those coaches foster. The FFA’s mantra of ‘Better Coaches, Better Football’ reinforces this. Past FFA customer experience surveys suggest that three of the top five reasons why young players leave the game are coaching related and its Whole of Football Plan states:

“Coaches have more influence over the enjoyment of participants than any other person in the game”.

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39 FFA and Sports Business Partners Customer Experience Survey
40 p3S FFA Whole of Football Plan
In the same document,\textsuperscript{41} the FFA categorises the various segments of the coaching populace as follows:

![Diagram showing segments of the coaching populace]

As can be seen from the above, and despite the best efforts of the FFA, Member Federations, Member Associations and clubs, most of the sport’s coaches are voluntary ‘football helpers’ and ‘community committed’ individuals.

The Australian Sports Commission (ASC) offers a wider ‘whole of sport’ approach in its own research, ‘How can clubs support community coaches?’\textsuperscript{42}

In stating that there are as many as 500,000 people currently coaching sport in Australia with no formal training, not only does the ASC emphasise that coaches are critically important but contends that ‘a good coach will encourage participants, a bad coach will turn them away’. In commissioning research in the area, the ASC identifies its own –and very much aligned with those of the FFA - segments in the community coaching space, namely:

1. **The Happy Helper** – typically a parent of a child currently playing the sport, most likely a volunteer and a first-time coach, and depending on the sport, may not have played the game before;
2. **Community Committee** - generally a longer-term coach, this group is likely to be a former player or parent who has remained in the game after their child has left or moved to older teams; and
3. **The Opportunist** - typically a new teenager or young adult still playing the sport.

As graphically portrayed in the above diagram, the largest portion of community coaches are the ‘happy helpers’ – volunteer parents, overburdened due to lack of knowledge, potentially time poor and generally with a lack of accreditation and with a limited desire to undertake training. The ASC quotes a typical Happy Helper as saying, ‘you see something has to be done so

\textsuperscript{41} p36, FFA Whole of Football Plan
\textsuperscript{42} ASC Community Coaching Insights paper ‘How can clubs support community coaches?'
you step up and do it’. The majority of coaches in grassroots football probably fall within this segment.

It is the **opportunist** that has particular relevance to the private academies and external provider space and it is suggested that it is this group of coaches who either form their own small coaching business under the guise of an academy (or are the principals of same), or who dominate the staff positions in these organisations.

The ASC research categorises them as usually being a young adult, currently playing the sport, motivated by personal benefits such as learning more about the sport, expanding on their resume or to earn an income. It makes these further comments⁴³ about the typical ‘opportunist’ coach:

- **They feel that effective coaching is about skill development, placing a high priority on the ‘technical knowledge’ of the game and on how to develop necessary skills**
- **Having played the game for a long time and received training themselves, they perceive themselves to have these technical skills**
- **They prioritise skill development and therefore emphasise sport specific skills**
- **They generally have high levels of accreditation and seek qualifications for personal benefit**

All such qualities and beliefs were well portrayed during the various meetings had with private academies and external providers or were articulated in the submissions and received from same.

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⁴³ Community Coaching Insights paper *How can clubs support community coaches?*
7. HISTORY OF FOOTBALL ACADEMIES AND THE FUTURE OF SPORT IN AUSTRALIA

Perhaps the first ‘academy like’ offering in football was what was previously known as the Bobby Charlton Soccer School. On the back of a World Cup win, European Cup success and national hero status, the iconic (and now ‘Sir’) Bobby Charlton essentially licensed his name to be associated with the School. In existence for almost 40 years, the renamed Bobby Charlton Soccer and Sports Academy boasts being ‘UK’s first ever soccer school’ and continues to promote the fact that a 10-year-old David Beckham was spotted at one of their schools.44

On the back of this first, increasingly high-profile players conducted similar educational and football clinics, schools or camps. In Australia in the 70s and 80s, local legends like Johnny Warren45 and Rale Rasic46 offered their own programs. Further, when visiting overseas players made guest appearances for local clubs (generally English players such as Kevin Keegan or George Best), they would often also conduct junior clinics as part of their short visit to these shores.

International football educators such as Alf Galustian (Coerver)47 48 and Tom Byers (T3)49 crisscross the globe espousing the benefits of their own approach and philosophies of the game, including in Australia where they have well established franchises. These early ‘academies’ were the catalyst for providing a skills training and youth development activity outside the normal club environment.

30-40 years on, Bobby Charlton, Pele and Johnny Warren have been replaced by more recent player celebrities including Harry Kewell and his academy50, Tim Cahill and his Foxtel academy51 and even Matilda Kyah Simon with her football clinics52. Nowadays, many other lesser known but nonetheless former Socceroos, National Soccer League and Hyundai A-League (HAL) players are involved in local private academies and external providers.

Recently, individual players have been increasingly replaced by overseas clubs as part of their globalisation and branding programs – Celtic53, Liverpool54, AC Milan55 and Spanish powerhouses Real Madrid56 and Barcelona57 are just a few who run programs of some sort in Australia. These will be discussed in greater detail in a later chapter.

In 2013, The Australian Sports Commission (ASC) partnered with the country’s peak science agency CSIRO to jointly conduct and publish ‘The Future of Australian Sport – Megatrends shaping the

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44 [www.bcssa.co.uk](http://www.bcssa.co.uk)
48 It is worth noting that Football NSW previously held (for some 10-12 years) the Oceania licence for Coerver and grew the program to as many as 250 full/part time staff and 4500 players in the program, camps and clinics.
50 [www.harrykewellacademy.com](http://www.harrykewellacademy.com)
52 [www.kyahsimon.com/football-clinics](http://www.kyahsimon.com/football-clinics)
56 [www.frmclinicsaustralia.com](http://www.frmclinicsaustralia.com)
57 [www.fcbescola.fcbarcelona.com/sydney](http://www.fcbescola.fcbarcelona.com/sydney)
sports sector cover coming decades’.\textsuperscript{58} The report identified six megatrends that the ASC/CSIRO propose will likely impact on the conduct of sport over the next 30 years, namely:

1. **A Perfect Fit** - Personalised sport for health and fitness
2. **From Extreme to Mainstream** - The rise of lifestyle sports
3. **More than Sport** - The attainment of health, community and overseas aid objectives via sport
4. **Everybody’s Game** - Demographic, generational and cultural change
5. **New Wealth, New Talent** - Economic growth and sports development in Asia
6. **Tracksuits to Business Suits** - Market pressures and new business models

... and how sports need to adapt and thrive (or conversely, not adapt and perish). Several of these ‘megatrends’ apply to the Australian football landscape.

Amongst other findings and recommendations, the ASC/CSIRO specifically noted the rise of non-organised sport which now has much higher participation rates and suggested organised sport (such as football) occurs at fixed times, follows structured rules, is managed by sporting clubs and requires a greater level of commitment from participants. Cost was identified as a significant barrier to participation in organised sport. Further it also reported a significant concern that will no doubt have massive consequences on the future of football, particularly if it continues its steady year on year increase in popularity:

“the barriers to volunteering are growing. They include issues such as time pressures, the increased bureaucracy associated with running voluntary sports organisations, lack of local council support, lack of appreciation or recognition and the fear of being sued. Without volunteers, it has been suggested, many sport organisations or individual clubs could not continue functioning.”\textsuperscript{59}

In another key project,\textsuperscript{60} again conducted by the Australian Sports Commission, they addressed the ‘nationwide decline of sport in our communities and the increasingly low levels of physical activity of Australian children ‘to ensure that the people who teach sport to children are suitably prepared and support in their roles’.

The FFA has identified football’s own challenges\textsuperscript{61} moving forward, some of which are closely aligned to those identified by the ASC and CSIRO, namely:

i. **Population Growth and urbanisation;**

ii. **Football will become more than a sport, having a role to play in social cohesion, community integration, physical health and well-being and international relations;**

iii. **Personalisation, with participants engaging in football on their own terms beyond the traditional club structures and expecting football to be more ‘flexible’;**

iv. **Everybody’s game, with more women and older participants, and non-European migrants playing; and**

v. **The Asian Century, with more immigrants, trading and capital coming from the Asian region.**

A key recognition was that football was the ideal sport being able to be enjoyed ‘Anytime, Anyhow, Anywhere’.


\textsuperscript{60} Teaching Sport to Children, Discussion Paper, Australian Sports Commission, August 2017

\textsuperscript{61} p21, FFA Whole of Football Plan
8. THE TERM ‘ACADEMY’, PRIVATE ACADEMIES AND EXTERNAL PROVIDERS

The word ‘academy’, in a football sense, is an often used and very much maligned term. The application of a very broad range of different operating models under the phrase ‘academy’ is unfortunately a broad brushed approach to the whole industry and often does little but muddy discussion.

Increasingly the term has become a ‘catch-all’ phrase to encompass a range of football training activities that has, in some respects, even replaced the normal training programs of a football club (particularly in respect of youth development), almost to the point where some clubs seemingly abdicate one of their key responsibilities, being the conduct of training and improvement of the player.

Even its use in the title of this Review is a slight misnomer as through the conduct of this analysis, and as will be demonstrated below it, the author is of the view that it creates confusion and requires more ‘considered’ use. This will only increase going forward with HAL Academies and the 1 and 2-Star Academy Accreditation system about to be promoted and rolled out across the country to NPL clubs.

The addition of the word ‘private’ as a ‘prefix’ significantly alters the focus and draws attention to this rapidly growing industry. Typically, the phrase ‘private academy’ applies to those programs and activities that are run as privately owned small to medium sized enterprises or businesses, external to the formal structure of football in Australia – the formal structure generally being the FFA, its nine Member Federations and all Member Associations, branches, zones and clubs captured within the FFA’s National Registration Regulations.

Because such entities are privately owned and considered ‘outside’ and not part of the FFA system, they often attract negative connotations on the premise that money and funds are ‘leaking’ from the sport.

Private academies and external providers may range from one-man ‘sole traders’ to those more medium size businesses, some with 10-20 plus staff, their own premises, facilities and so on. Increasingly on some occasions, some private academies operate under licence from or with a formal association to an overseas club.

From a marketing perspective, they take many shapes, forms and labels.

These labels are generally all centred around ‘educational’ terms presumably to establish some perceived link to providing a young player with a ‘football education’ akin to an academy, school, college, clinic and centres of excellence (there already exists in Australia a private ‘football institute’). Two well-known private academies use Escola being Spanish for school.

Other names relate to certain cultures - particularly famous is Brazil, mostly likely related to their ‘jogo bonito’ style of play, being the winner of five World Cups and synonymous with excellence.

It is somewhat ironic, that the FFA continues to be criticised for its ‘national curriculum’ when such a term and approach is taken from the educational system (that is, primary and secondary school students across the country follow a certain subject curriculum – why shouldn’t the same apply to football?).
in football, individual personalities (many of whom are former national team players), various age groups (particularly in the toddler range of 3-5 years) or other non-descript and perhaps questionable marketing catchphrases (especially related to use of words such as technology, professional, international and so on – as if to impress). One private football academy in Sydney is called Cognitive Situational Training promoting its philosophy on:

‘the development of an individual’s cognitive ability, not only as a footballer but as a person in whole with the social, emotional and physical development of a player is enhanced through constant engagement’. 63

By no means an exhaustive list, a simple google search of ‘Football academies in Sydney’ produced a list of some 60 or so organisations and offerings – listed in Annexure I.

By virtue of the above definition, private academies are seen as being ‘outside’ the system with claims that any revenues and surplus monies are considered to be taken out of the game and not invested back inside the sport. Whilst this will be discussed later, it essentially splits the football industry or ecosystem (a term increasingly used) into ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’ providers of football activities. In short, clubs registered within the FFA and Member Federation structure are considered as being official providers whilst private academies are clearly currently labelled as being unofficial providers. In many ways, this ‘categorisation’ of the formal and informal system essentially excludes such groups as schools (primary and secondary, public and private), church and corporate leagues and private competition operators in recreation centres (offering futsal and many other derivatives of the sport – for example, Soccer 5s).

In its Whole of Football Plan, the FFA identified this ‘threat’ from a participation perspective when addressing the challenges to the sport, stating:

‘Due to a shortage of opportunities and emerging trends in personalisation, Football players increasingly have been looking to play football outside of traditional club structures. This has been evident by the growth in social football. Currently, much of social football is operated by private providers who operate outside the scope of Football’s administration.’ 64

In terms of what is ‘provided’ by private academies and external providers, activities may range from one on one specialised skills and technique coaching, group training sessions, fitness work, holiday programs and clinics, overseas tours and the most recent initiative, provision of specialist football training facilities. In some instances, particularly those with their own premises, children’s birthday parties and other special events are offered, and the odd provider has retail space selling football clothing, boots and equipment.

Services on offer can include the usual weekly training program (one or more sessions over a period of a week or several terms), one on one specialist sessions (for example, for goalkeepers, strikers), holiday clinics/camps, overseas trips to tournaments or matches against foreign clubs, or supposed identification trials by foreign clubs. In the winter of the 2018 at least three private providers (two of which are well known English Premier League teams – conducted ‘trials’ for young players (see below marketing flyers) 65.

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63 www.cognitivesituationaltraining.com/about.html
64 p29, FFA Whole of Football Plan
With several private providers there is a growing trend to move away from mere training sessions, holiday clinics and obvious skills-based training to more ‘bespoke’ offerings. Some providers offer specialist training facilities and equipment not normally found at community clubs, and some are moving into physical preparation and fitness training (offering in depth sport science and sports medicine services). In other words, personal trainers specially targeting footballers and helping clubs create their own ‘high performance environment’.

One of the largest private providers in Sydney has essentially become a ‘labour hire company’ - a form of employment agency - for young coaches (and football ‘development officers’) and offers a ‘turnkey’ and bespoke coaching solution to a club’s (including an A-League club) shortage of qualified coaches. Another is offering the use of ‘GPS’ and video analysis including the editing of match footage and splicing together ‘snippets’ to send to clubs overseas.

An area that is increasing become popular is the use of technology and the internet to provide what is essentially a ‘online jobs board’ or marketplace and a means of linking coaches who wish to promote and offer their private services to clubs/teams needing coaching support. On their website, Treiner claims it is “the most convenient way to book an expert, safe and football coaching professional within your area, budget & availability’. Coachable offers a similar service and claims it “is the easiest, safest and most affordable way to connect with an experienced coach who can help you improve your athletic performance and reach your individual goals”. Almost half of the sports coaches registered on Coachable.com.au within the Sydney metropolitan region are football (soccer) related. Even the ubiquitous ‘sales’ website Gumtree lists 73 coaches within NSW alone and their contact details should anyone be ‘surfing the net’ looking for some private coaching. In nearly all instances, these are individuals offering (selling) their coaching services and not private academies per se.

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67 www.treiner.com.au
68 www.coachable.com.au
69 www.gumtree.com.au/s-services-for-hire/nsw/soccer+coach/k0c9303i3008839
In a further diversification of their business, one external provider branches out into general football administration offering such specific skills as administrative support, club auditing, and AV assistance – all for an hourly fee, and providing support in areas which, up until recently, may have been absorbed by club volunteers.\(^{70}\)

Of real concern, all the above is happening parallel and with little to no input, regulation or guidance from the sport’s governing bodies. As stated above, it is all external to and outside the formal FFA ‘system’.

Increasingly the term academy is now being used by HAL, NPL and other clubs. This will only increase, particularly given the introduction of the FFA’s 1 and 2-Star Club Academy Accreditation system that it is now beginning to be implemented across the country and introduced in to the NPL club landscape.

### 8.1 Football’s Youth Development Program

The formation of the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) by the Federal Government (in conjunction with the then Australian Soccer Federation) in Canberra in 1981 created the sport’s first formally recognised Youth Development program. Shortly thereafter and recognising the benefit of decentralised and local underpinning programs, State/Territory Governments around the country created their own multi-sport Institutes and Academies, most of which had football programs - then termed soccer and at that time only for male players. As a quick aside both Queensland and the ACT preferred to use the term ‘Academy’ of Sport (both supporting soccer) as opposed to Institute, and before too long, the largest state, NSW had regional academies in the two biggest cities outside Sydney, being the Hunter Academy of Sport and the Illawarra Academy of Sport.

The influx of funding and other government support in the lead up to the Sydney 2000 Olympics created further initiatives and opportunities, including for the first-time programs catering for elite female players/teams.\(^{71}\) Other than additional funding for full-time coaches, more international travel to overseas tournaments and increased training camps, this also included specific support for the establishment of Intensive Training Centres (ITCs), which later morphed in to National Training Centres (NTCs) with tripartite FFA, State Government and Member Federation funding support and overseen by the National Elite Sports Council.

Within the ‘official’ football youth development system, Australia had numerous programs – Institutes, Academies, Intensive Training Centres, National Training Centres, Centres of Excellence – and so on. In NSW alone, over the last decade or so, there has been the Junior Development Program, the Elite Development Program and Project 22, aimed at identifying and developing young players in the state in preparation for the 2022 FIFA World Cup which Australia was bidding for at the time, and there is currently the Girls’ Institute Program.

Suddenly there was a network of (mostly) full time coaches employed by Member Federations for both male and female teams. During this time the AIS, ITCs/NTCs, and the then National Soccer League (NSL) clubs formed the basis of the formal youth development system.

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\(^{71}\) Women’s football had just been incorporated in to the Summer Olympic sports program
throughout country, with talented young players training for and being showcased at the annual National Youth Championships across various ages and then ultimate selection in national teams for their respective World Championships.

Collectively – particularly in the male game – this system was credited with creating the ‘golden generation’ that qualified for the 2006 FIFA World Cup (for the first time in 32 years) and who had qualified and performed admirably at various FIFA World Youth Championships commencing in Portugal in 1991 and culminating in a Final’s appearance at the 1999 Under 17s World Championships before losing to Brazil in Auckland.

Since the 2000 Olympics, a confluence of many factors has worked against continuing the trajectory set by Australia’s youth teams of the 1980s and 90s.

Undoubtedly, the transition of the sport’s former governing body, Soccer Australia (beset with financial challenges) to the newly constituted FFA (and incorporating for the first-time women’s football and futsal under its responsibility), the creation of a new national league franchise model (the Hyundai A-League), together with Australia’s move from Oceania to the Asian Football Confederation (with undoubtedly more difficult qualifying pathways) were key, but other issues that the FFA had to deal with at the time included changes in Federal/State Government sports policies (following the Beijing Olympics and even continuing to now), a number of stuttering HAL franchises, the Global Financial Crisis and a tightening of the sponsorship dollar, the unsuccessful 2022 FIFA World Cup Bid and the fact that it now it had to support nine national teams (including the Futsalroos and Pararoos) and their respective preparatory and qualifying programs.

Given the direct correlation that has been demonstrated time and time again between increased (or conversely decreased) funding support and international success (or lack of), it is clearly apparent that the FFA’s ‘many mouths to feed’ challenge has had a detrimental impact on youth development in the country.

At an estimated total loss to the sport of an estimated $2 million nationally in government funding, no State/Territory Institute or Academy currently supports or provides funding for Member Federation run football programs. Of further impact has been the FFA’s decision in 2017 to close its Centre of Excellence in Canberra (formerly the AIS football program) and allocating the $1.6 million elsewhere – supposedly within the national team’s program budget.  

As a further gauge as to how far football has slipped in terms of government support, of the eleven Regional/Country Academies of Sport scattered in cities and towns around NSW (such as Goulburn, Bathurst, Wagga, Newcastle, Lismore and so on), only one (the Northern Inland Regional Academy of Sport at Tamworth) supports local young talented footballers as part of their overall program. All of this at a time, when football continually gets recognised by any measure and government survey as the country’s most popular participant sport and at the elite end, both the Socceroos

72 It is worth acknowledging that recently (March 2018), the FFA together with the Australian Sports Commission, the NSW Institute of Sport and Football NSW, all combined to initiate the ‘Future Matildas’ program operating out of Valentine Sports Park with the aim of continuing the upward trajectory of women’s football and the recent success of the Westfield Matildas.

73 For example AUSPLAY
and Matildas have continually qualified for their respective World Cups and anecdotally been acknowledged as two of the more popular national teams across all sports.

As a quick side note, when the FFA closed the Centre of Excellence in Canberra, a prominent Melbourne based private academy, Football Star Academy, was quick to promote that it was in discussions with the Australian Sports Commission about ‘saving’ it and implementing its own structure, where:

‘There will be no difference from what the A-League clubs and how they run their academies, but the big difference will be our academy will be full time and they will be living on site compared to more of a part-time set up.’

To the best of the author’s knowledge these discussions went nowhere.

In recent years there has been a slow transition (particularly in the men’s game) away from Member Federations being the centre of youth development to one where increasingly Hyundai A-League (HAL) clubs are being required to be responsible for the identification and development of the best youth players in the country (and receiving FFA funding for such).

In 2017/18 and with HAL clubs running their own youth development programs, financial support previously offered to Member Federations for NTC programs for male players (in the order of $50,000 per annum) has been re-allocated to the newly created Talent Support Programs – a number of training hubs for young players in their local environs and servicing the layer of talented players from NPL clubs so as to underpin the work being done by HAL clubs.

Parallel to this, National Youth Championships, once the domain of state/territory representative teams only, are increasingly involving teams from HAL clubs – a trend first started by the Emerging Jets’ and Future Glory teams but now expanding to include several other teams in 2018. At the upcoming National Youth Championships in Coffs Harbour (September 2018), Newcastle Jets, Perth Glory and Brisbane Roar will have teams competing in the Tournament.

8.2 ‘Official’ Academies

Recently there has been increasing adoption of the word academy by formal bodies within the ‘official’ FFA and Member Federation/Association structure. This is none more so with the formation of youth academies by HAL clubs – partly by way of separating the activities of the first team competing in the A-League, and as a means of demonstrating significant investment in a youth development program with their youth teams competing either in the Foxtel Youth League (a competition played amongst HAL clubs over the summer) or in the various National Premier League (NPL) competitions in most capital cities across the country. It is now a formal FFA requirement that to participate in the HAL (ie have a licence), then the club must have a youth academy of some form. It is also very much in line with the norm in Europe, where for example, many English Premier Leagues (EPL) have well established and quite famous (given the success of

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some their graduates) academies and their structure and role has been emphasised with the development and implementation of the EPL’s Elite Player Performance Plan.

In Australia, the academy nomenclature has been further reinforced through the creation and implementation of the FFA’s Academy ‘Star’ Accreditation program - initially with ‘2-Star’ ratings being awarded to a number of HAL clubs and their youth development programs, and a soon to be implemented ‘1-Star’ Academy structure for NPL clubs (see Annexure III for a brief description of this program). In short, the FFA has established criteria for each level of ‘star’, an assessment and compliance framework and a marketing designation and logo for use by assessed and recognised clubs.

The above clearly demonstrates that a formal FFA academy accreditation system already exists at the 1 and 2-Star levels (a third star level has been foreshadowed but no club yet qualifies and meets the stated criteria), created specifically for the benefit of HAL and NPL clubs at the elite level of the game. Further it adds and endorses another formal component of the FFA’s stated Talented Player Pathway – as graphically demonstrated in the FFA image below.
9. THE NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE - PRIVATE ACADEMIES AND EXTERNAL PROVIDERS ACROSS AUSTRALIA

As in New South Wales, there are many private academies and external providers across the country.

As a general observation and from afar, they are similar in format and organisation as those in Sydney although pro-rata perhaps not as prevalent and as advanced in activities as what is on offer in New South Wales. This is most likely a reflection on the size of the sport and the number of participants and the supply/demand of the market for such activities. Simply put and extrapolated out, there is a greater ’depth’ in the football economy with so many players and therefore, the academy industry in Sydney/NSW is probably a similar 50% of the total country’s market.

The recognition and treatment of football academies and private providers varies amongst Member Federations (MF).

As part of this Review, Football NSW contacted each MF to ascertain and understand their formal position - specifically on:

- The size of the market of football academies or private providers in their specific footprint and their general and high-level observations or concerns;
- whether the MF has a stated position on such providers particularly when it comes to recognising them, or promoting/marketing on website or through other social medial channels?
- whether the MF has formal regulations in place as part of their respective competition regulations? and
- whether the MF has considered or sees the need for some form of licencing or accreditation system in place.

**Northern NSW Football** is aware of the existence of private academies throughout its geographic footprint but recognises the difficulty in quantifying their involvement in the game. Like many others, they state that they exist due to the demand, caused primarily by clubs not being able to provide sufficient training opportunities. Further, they state that football coaches want to work and due to lack of full-time positions within clubs, this provides an avenue into the game.

Northern NSW Football do not have any stated position, policy or competitive regulations in place (either for or against) regarding private academies, however tacit approval is almost stated given its acceptance of the Liverpool International Academy (based at the Southern Cross University) which, although based in Lismore, competes across the NSW-Queensland border in the Gold Coast competition.

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75 Almost 50% of the nation’s players are registered with Football NSW
Similarly, Football West (Western Australia) does not have a stated position on private providers, however it does not promote private academies, clinics or coach workshops specially when a fee is demanded by the clinics. That said, a representative stated that if a commercial offer was proposed (in the form of a sponsorship) it may be something that may be considered. Furthermore, Football West does not have any formal policies in place as part of its competition regulations. Clubs can associate with private academies, and with respect to the NPL, the only requirement being that the club declares such a relationship.

Western Australia has an extensive market in private academies – this is perceived to be a result of most Perth clubs only training twice a week with many young players (and their parents) seeking extra training elsewhere. Most academies base their sessions around the clubs and grounds of Perth, however there several indoor training centres beginning to emerge. It is recognised that there is generally a good level of expertise and engagement with these private providers acknowledging that their success depends on it. Football West stated that there are obviously exceptions to that, and some poor operators out there, but they don’t tend to be too large.

As experienced in NSW and elsewhere, there are concerns in Western Australia with academies selling the elite dream of players getting professional contracts in Australia and Europe through the contacts, even at grassroots levels. Given the high percentage of British expats (with dual passports and thus eligibility to play/work in the UK), there has historically been a high number of British teams run clinics and ‘trials’ in Perth.

Capital Football (Canberra and the ACT) acknowledges that private academies are part of the football landscape and need to be considered if they are to unite, engage and enhance the coaches and opportunities presented within the player pathway. They do not have any significant issues with those private academies and external providers that exist within the ACT and do not have any regulations that restrict their clubs aligning with them. Capital Football recognises the potential of external providers to enhance grassroots football where it is difficult to retain and recruit volunteers and harder still to encourage them to undertake coaching courses.

That said, they do see the potential for conflict when the academies are engaged by NPL clubs in the player pathway, especially where there is a mix of ‘academy sessions’ and ‘club sessions’ in any given week. Capital Football suggests that this could impact the integrity of the selection process (i.e. with players only getting selected if they are paying to be in the academy). They believe that it can also blur the registration fee structure potentially driving up the cost of playing.

Finally, Capital Football acknowledges the advantages of an accreditation system that brings private academies and external providers into the formal framework however strongly believes that any accreditation system need to be developed by the FFA given that it would be problematic if each MF had their own accreditation system. Equally, they acknowledge the challenges related to the establishment of any accreditation system mainly around the necessary resources required for the development and ongoing monitoring of compliance.
Whilst not as prevalent as in Sydney, **Football Federation Victoria** (FFV) believes there is a plethora of academies that either stand alone as private businesses or are club/association based. Some of the country’s bigger (and more well-known) private academies are based in Melbourne. FFV does not have a formal policy on private academies and the only specific restrictions on their involvement are contained in the Licence for NPL and WNPL clubs. That said, FFV believes that the way players need to be registered, pay their FFV/FFA fees and the rules that clubs sign up to in meeting these obligations usually handles the most complex issues that can arise if an academy’s association with a club blurs into management and governance areas of the club. As with other MF’s, FFV believes that the notion of regulating or licensing private academies requires the involvement and leadership of FFA.
10. FOOTBALL FEDERATION AUSTRALIA’S POSITION ON PRIVATE ACADEMIES AND EXTERNAL PROVIDERS

Football Federation Australia (FFA) has demonstrated a strong and consistent view in this area and does not encourage the concept of private academies and external providers in the sport and has stated that it will not ‘implement an accreditation process for Private Providers’.

In its Whole of Football Plan, it stated:

“Private providers, whether they be ‘for profit’ or philanthropic, want to be acknowledged for providing a service and contribution to Football. Anyone wishing to help grow the game should be encouraged to do so but should also operate within the framework of the game.”

As a follow-up to the above Whole of Football plan statement and with private academies becoming more prevalent in Sydney, in 2017 Football NSW wrote to the FFA to seek the its formal position on private academies. In response they wrote:

“This has been a long-debated topic over the last few years. Probably one best discussed face to face. However, a few high-level points which might provide you with context. It is acknowledged that Private Academies are active in providing additional training to players. Some of which provide a quality service, some not so much. FFA’s view is that we would like to build capacity within the current pathway, as outlined in our Ecosystem, which focuses on providing more training through SAP, and Talent Support programs etc. Our focus is to rollout a Club Accreditation program for Clubs. Our intention is to focus on supporting our NPL Clubs and HAL clubs to ensure the quality of service which is provided is increased.

However, the challenge we have is that some Clubs are creating partnerships with Private Academies, we tried to police this through the NPL criteria, but unfortunately, we have failed. ... There is no regulatory power that FFA has via FIFA to police these Academies, and therefore this area is very challenging and complex. I am not aware of any Federation who accredits Private Academies, however some Clubs may have a relationship as outlined above.”

In 2010, the FFA conducted a ‘desktop’ analysis of the Academy ‘market’ so as to understand its impact on the FFA’s talented player pathway and to attempt to quantify what they referred to as ‘leakage’ from the game – that is, revenue generated by private academies and ‘leaking’ outside the formal club structure and the game overall.

Using a very ‘constrained’ definition of an academy – mainly relating to ‘elite talent’ and developing players for professional football and essentially ‘competing’ directly with FFA pathways - the review found from a total of 50 academies analysed across the country (of which 22 were in NSW), total revenue (or ‘leakage’) was estimated to be in the range of $4.5–5.5

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76 p26, FFA Whole of Football Plan
77 Correspondence between then Football NSW CEO, Stefan Kamasz and FFA Head of Community Football, Emma Highwood
78 FFA Analysis, 2010 ‘Sizing the Private Academy market and understanding its impact on FFA talent pathway and revenues’
million per annum. Further, they reported that another $500,000 could be ‘lost’ through the 10% or so of academies conducting international tours.

Leaving aside the concept of ‘leakage’ and using their ‘elite’ academy definition, significantly the review found that the abovementioned 50 academies only accounted for 10% of the total academy market. The remaining 90% of academies – presumably catering for players at the grassroots and community level - were not included in their analysis.

By any rough ‘guestimate’, with only 10% of the academy market having revenue of say, $5 million per annum and eight years on and with substantial growth in the number of external providers since 2010, this industry has an annual turnover in the many tens of millions of dollars.79

In its conclusion, the recommendations from the FFA’s 2010 Review suggested that the governing body had four possible courses of action:

1. Take no action
2. Create their own private academy to directly compete in market
3. Endorse current academies and provide them with an FFA badge and accreditation
4. Ban private academies but leave the current pathway system unchanged.

The FFA decided to take no action.

For this Review, the FFA were again approached for its formal position and key representatives80 were both consulted and met with on several occasions. Formally, their written position81 was as follows:

1. Affiliated Clubs are the heart of our game and the centre of player development;
2. An affiliated club may engage a third party to provide services to support player development;
3. FFA and/or the Member Federations will provide guidelines and an MoU to support clubs when looking to engage the services of third parties;
4. Third parties engaged by clubs will be contracted by the club and will represent the club during the agreed times of engagement; and
5. No groups outside of the affiliated club network will be endorsed/accredited to provide player development services directly by FFA or any of the Member Federations. That is, FFA will not implement an accreditation process for Private Providers. All player development occurs within the affiliated club environment.

79 A rough ‘back of a napkin’ exercise as part of this Review suggests that alone, the Sydney market for private academies is potentially in the order of $25-30 million and many more millions could be included if Overseas Tours is included.
80 Including their recently departed National Technical Director, Eric Abrams
81 Correspondence from FFA dated 5 June 2018
11. OTHER SPORTS AND PRIVATE ACADEMIES

No other team sport\textsuperscript{82} in Australia experiences the predominance of private academies and external providers in its environment as football.

In previous Chapters, regular mention has been made of the growing industry and the plethora of private academies and external providers that are appearing across the Sydney metropolitan landscape and in other states. In Chapter 7 reference was made to the ASC/CSIRO’s Megatrends study on the Future of Australian Sport which offered a forecast as to what the sports industry is likely to look like in the near to medium term. Whilst no major sport comes close to football, a number of other key sports in the Australia will no doubt be soon ‘challenged’ in this area as participants look to alternative means by which to participate in sport.

It is also worth noting and considering the likely implications of another trend occurring in the sports and recreation industry.

There is a similar proliferation in tertiary institutions (Universities, Colleges and other vocational learning centres) offering ‘sports studies’ courses and other like named degrees, diplomas and certificates that are training coaches and sports development officers. A rough estimation would have anything from 300-500 students per annum graduating and looking for suitable employment opportunities in the sports and recreation industry in Sydney alone. The popularity of the ‘world game’ would suggest that many of these graduating students would most likely have either a background or interest in the sport.

With jobs in the formal football industry being relatively finite it stands to reason that one such employment avenue for these students will be their own private ‘sole trader/operator’ model. The fitness industry has already seen this explosion through the advent of ‘personal trainers’ operating completely outside the normal gymnasium or fitness centre but now registered with and regulated through either Fitness Industry Australia or the abovementioned ESSA.

Although rather simplistic, a scan of the website Coachable\textsuperscript{83} shows the skewed nature of the ‘private provider’ business when football is compared to other sports. Coachable is a recently created jobs board website that allows individuals to register themselves as offering coaching services of one form or another in their chosen sport. Anyone in need of a coach can conduct a search, find a list of possible options, their contacts, together with hourly rates, qualifications and geographic footprint that they cover. Another website Treiner\textsuperscript{84} works in a similar way.

Of the 104 coaches who have registered their services on the Coachable website and are within a 50 km radius of the Sydney CBD, almost half (51) were football coaches (see below). A similar

\textsuperscript{82} Team sport is specifically mentioned given that individual sports such as tennis, golf and swimming (for example) operate almost a purely ‘private’ coaching model.
\textsuperscript{83} www.coachable.com.au
\textsuperscript{84} www.treiner.com.au

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search on Gumtree found 73 football coaches\textsuperscript{85}. Note, these are not private academies per se, but rather individual coaches who are prepared to provide one-on-one or small group training as an individual. These are, for all intents and purposes, a small cohort of the ‘external providers’ that make themselves available to clubs, teams and individuals who which to access ‘coaches for hire’.

There are several possible reasons for the predominance of private academies and external providers in football when compared to other sports:

1. As the most popular junior participation sport, it stands to reason that the market for private academies and external providers in football is much bigger and there is a greater demand given the number of consumers. It is suggested that there is a simple correlation between the number of private academies/coaches and the number of junior participants in the game. This can also be extrapolated out across a whole range of similar metrics – for example, most football boots sold, most Active Kids vouchers\textsuperscript{86}, and so on;

2. Just as in the popularity of the sport and the many tens of thousands who participate, creates the market, it also creates the demand (and problem) for coaches. It stands to reason that for every 10-16 players that the sport has, a coach is required. It is suggested that coaches (particularly those that are committed and appropriately trained and skilled) are harder to find than players. Elsewhere, mention has been made of the declining nature of volunteerism, the need for more proficient and accredited coaches and the resultant move towards a more privatised user pay ‘tuition’ service – all of this is so much more exacerbated in football. In other words, an increase in the

\textsuperscript{85} Recognising that many of these coaches may be the same, advertising their services across various portals

\textsuperscript{86} Active Kids is a NSW Government initiative whereby each eligible junior player was entitled to a $100 voucher to make participating in sport cheaper. Almost 40% of all vouchers were redeemed by football players.
number of young players creates an increase in the demand for more coaches in junior football, and when this can’t be met by volunteer mums and dads, then clubs turn to external providers. When clubs don’t do this, and parents perceive their child to be not receiving sufficient ‘skill training and development’, some turn to private academies for this. Whilst ever player recruitment outstrips coach recruitment (and education), this will only get worse, as will the so called ‘churn rate’ where three of the top five reasons for young players leaving the game is presented as being due to poor coaching experiences.

3. The international nature of our game both in terms of large overseas clubs that have their own academies (Barcelona, AC Milan, Real Madrid, Celtic and so on) and the halo affect that this has on the broader sport drives the industry. It is suggested that these overseas clubs are both seeing the potential ‘new’ market for their activities but are also driving others to engage in the business. If it is good enough for Barcelona, it is good enough for Real Madrid and so on, and if overseas clubs can do it, so too can HAL clubs and in turn former players and new young coaches wanting to create their own business for themselves.

4. There used to be a somewhat flippant (perhaps real) suggestion that parents should enrol their young child prodigy in tennis or golf classes given the extraordinary money that was to be made on the respective world circuits of these sports. Given the popularity and exposure of the likes of Tim Cahill, Harry Kewell, Aaron Mooy and so on, the financial rewards that are now available and regularly ‘on show’ for football players (vis-a-vis sports such as netball and to a lesser extent Australia’s national sport of cricket), it is suggested that there might now be more ‘financial’ incentives for parents and young players to seek out additional training in the hope and dream of becoming a professional football player in Europe or elsewhere. This clearly is a concern with certain private academies and external providers ‘selling the dream’ and promising unrealistic opportunities and the number of supposed ‘trials’ on offer – all for a fee.

It is suggested that the number, and predominance, of private academies and external providers in football, when compared to other sports is more likely a combination of all the above and there is no reason to suggest that this will change (although it may get more pronounced) in the future.

When analysing other sports’ activities in this area, one of the most noticeable aspects is the domination of the ‘iconic’ personality - most often former national players who have almost become household names in Australian sport and wanting to commercialise or commoditise their name become connected within an academy landscape. These include Steve Waugh88.

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87 This ‘phenomena’ may soon be experienced in basketball given the recent success of Australian players in the NBA
88 www.stevewaughcricket.com.au

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Shane Warne\(^{89}\), Darren Lehman\(^{90}\) and Michael Clarke\(^{91}\) (cricket), Liz Ellis\(^{92}\) and Anne Sargeant\(^{93}\) (Netball) – all of which have their own academy or clinics (or at least put their name to a youth development program). These are similar in nature to Tim Cahill’s Foxtel Academy\(^{94}\) and the previously mentioned Bobby Charlton so many years ago (Refer to Chapter 7).

Australian Rules Football (AFL) provides an interesting perspective. Despite its dominance in the Australian professional sports industry, particularly in respect of its large TV broadcast rights, high average attendances at most games, and some famous personalities (albeit only in Australia) there are very few private academies. Clearly the lack of an international pathway and the top down funding model (with significant funds cascading down to grassroots levels) dampens the demand and opportunity and most likely this space is filled by well supported (and sometimes paid) development officers/coaches of Auskick\(^{95}\) or similar. That said and as stated previously, there is one ‘private academy’ in Sydney run by former Sydney Swan’s player Tim Schmidt called Kicking Dynamics. According to its website:

“Kicking Dynamics provides a specialised kicking school for kids and adults wanting to take their AFL kicking to the next level. With a proven high level of kicking and technical skills in the AFL, we offer the highest standard of coaching and teaching”\(^{96}\).

As three other sports with a reasonably high profile in the Australian sporting landscape, cricket, rugby league and rugby union all have ‘smatterings’ of private academies across Sydney, however these are much more for the ‘elite’ young player as they are progressing through their junior and youth development through to the senior ranks. There does not appear to be either the demand and thus supply of private services at the grassroots and community level in these sports, and it is presumed that this is all met at the club level.

In most cases these are run by former national team or national league players in their respective sport (for example, Sheffield Shield or NRL), and in some instances there appears to be some formal association with the official state sporting organisations or professional club. A number of private academies in other sports seem to replicate the structure and offerings of football clubs – namely, several week term programs, holiday clinics, facility hire, fitness training, private 1-on-1 coaching, and overseas tours.

Another extremely popular participant sport – albeit mostly for girls and women – is Netball. Other than the abovementioned Anne Sargeant and Liz Ellis ‘clinics’, there seems to be few private academies and external providers. That said, one private operation ‘Quick Feet’\(^{97}\) offers

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\(^{89}\) www.shanewarne.com.au  
\(^{90}\) www.dlca.com.au  
\(^{91}\) www.michaelclarkeacademy.com.au  
\(^{94}\) www.foxtel.com.au/timcahillacademy  
\(^{95}\) AFL’s modified version of the game equivalent to Miniroos  
\(^{96}\) www.kickingdynamics.com.au  
\(^{97}\) www.quickfeet.com.au/
clubs an ‘inhouse’ coach support solution, going into clubs and assisting volunteer parents who have found themselves coaching their child’s team. Their website promotes:

“Let’s face it… Clubs run on volunteers. If we don’t have volunteer coaches we’re all in strife. Show them some love and book coaching sessions for your club. We work with brave parents who have put their hand up for Netta98, those wishing to impress and inspire, all the way to Representative coaches who want to diagnose a problem or tweak an old drill. Quick Feet Netball will come to your venue and take your coaches through new drills, skills, techniques, rule changes and equipment innovations.

Quick Feet offers different courses designed to suit the needs of your club”.

As a rough estimate, the number of private academies and external providers in all other sports compared to football is about 20-25% of the football market.99

An area that some other sports seem to excel in is with the provision of parental information and policies. The below are examples covered across other sports which football can possibly learn from and adopt as ‘best practice’:

- Insurance coverage
- Clear listing of Terms and Conditions
- Payment policies including cancellation and refunds
- Medical Clearance, Consent and Safety Rules and Regulations, Allergens
- Wet Weather and Heat Policy
- Policies related to the taking of photos and videos
- Punctuality, Attendance and Participation
- Lost Property
- Code of Conduct of the Player and the Responsibilities of the Parent/Caregiver
- Privacy and Security Policies

As previously stated in Chapter 4 individual sports such as tennis, golf, swimming and gymnastics/dance all have very strong and well-structured professional coaching frameworks with a ‘user-pay’ system in place. That is, it is generally well recognised and commonly accepted that there are full-time career professionals in these sport, readily available to help participants work on their short game, serve or stroke. For all intents and purposes, there are no ‘volunteer’ golf or tennis coaches but rather private providers who make a living from charging hourly rates.

Whilst recognising the individual nature of these sports, the youth development and coaching model is clearly aligned to that of additional ‘educational tutoring’ and it is very much a ‘pay as you learn’ model. That is, parents of interested young swimmers, tennis players, golfers or gymnasts pay large and regular payments for their child to partake in these ‘learn to ….’ sessions. Even at the adult level, more ‘mature’ players of these sports can pay the local tennis

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98 Netball’s modified version of the game
99 Based on simple count of internet listings
or golf pro for lessons on their swing or serve technique, and adult ‘learn to swim’ lessons are increasingly popular – again all on paid hourly rates.

Of significance for these sports, the professional coaching model and industry is integrated within and compliant with the formal structure and governance of the game including recognition by the respective sports’ national governing body and its coach education and accreditation scheme.

Both golf and tennis are interesting models that football can potentially learn from with regard to the private academy and external provider industry.

Tennis Australia offers what it calls its ‘business package’ for those ‘external’ coaches who want to formally apply for membership with the national body.

“Whether you already hold a qualification, or you’re interested in coaching at your local tennis club - our membership packages are specially designed to support you in your coaching career. With access to on-court insurance, world leading benefits and professional development and business resources, take your coaching to the next level."

For an annual fee of approximately $600, benefits include access to insurance, discounts to conferences and workshops, access to Australian Open tickets (pre-sale), some local marketing and other miscellaneous offers. Significantly, private coaches can ‘buy’ recognition and approval to implement and deliver some of Tennis Australia junior and community programs including ‘Hot Shots’ and Cardio Tennis. In this regard, benefits specifically include Listing on Tennis Australia’s ‘Find a Coach’ website; the ability to leverage of the national Marketing Campaign with marketing resources to help promote the program; Discounts on equipment and merchandise; the Opportunity to connect with schools through the Tennis for Primary Schools programs amongst other things.

Separate to the sport’s formal governing body, Tennis Australia, there is also the Australian Tennis Professional Coaches Association (ATPCA), which promotes itself as:

‘an independent non-profit public company, to provide the industry with economical and quality assured tennis coach training and membership services to enable and support professional (or part-time) tennis coaches in Australia’

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Presumably similar to the objectives of Football Coaches Australia, the ATPCA also offers its members access to personal insurance, access to job and employment opportunities, marketing resources, ongoing education and training, and discounts on equipment and other offers.
12. FOOTBALL NSW’S CURRENT POSITION ON PRIVATE ACADEMIES AND ITS COMPETITION REGULATIONS

Football NSW’s position on private academies and external providers is currently based primarily on five aspects:

i. that private academies fail to meet minimum standards (or protecting the ‘football family’);

ii. that participation in private academies may take players outside the formal talented player pathway, or at least limit/reduce their participation in it;

iii. a willingness to support its Member Associations in relation to their concerns around private academies;

iv. the impact of private academies on the ‘cost of football’ and inflationary pressures at a time when there are already numerous complaints that the ‘cost of football’ is becoming unaffordable; and

v. that the selection of players to a particular team will be contingent on them being registered with a private academy.

The first aspect relates to Football NSW’s concern that private academies are not governed in the same way as affiliated clubs and, therefore, Football NSW is unable to provide the same levels of assurance to its Member Associations, their clubs, players and their parents (essentially the football family), that private academies meet minimum standards, particularly in relation to:

- teaching the FFA National Curriculum – as espoused by the FFA and which is taught at the various coaching courses conducted by Football NSW and FFA;
- their coaches holding the appropriate coaching qualifications/accreditation;
- their coaches and staff having been verified for Working with Children Check purposes in accordance with NSW legislation;
- having additional systems in place for the safeguarding of children; and
- holding appropriate insurance cover (e.g. public liability, professional indemnity and personal accident).

These are standards that Football NSW is able to mandate, to varying degrees, in relation to clubs and teams participating in its own competitions, or in competitions conducted by its Member Associations.

The second aspect relates to the concern that private academies may take players outside the formal ‘talented player pathway’ or at least limit or reduce their participation in it.

Chapter 8.2 introduced readers to the current ‘football ecosystem’ and the proposed pathway that players (in this case, male players) may follow on their journey from joining and participating in Miniroos all the way through the various levels culminating in the Hyundai A-League and potentially national team selection. The graphic in Chapter 8.2 seeks to demonstrate that the journey is not linear in nature (that is, A to B, then to C and then to D and so on) but can be entered at any point and at any age. That said, it recognises and reinforces
the ‘official’ components of the formal structures of the game. Any player that is not involved (or worse still, prevented from being involved) in these components, is at risk of having their progress through the journey impeded.

The third aspect relates to Football NSW’s willingness to support its Member Associations in relation to their concerns around private academies.

The fourth aspect relates to concerns about the ‘cost of football’ and the fifth relates to concerns that the selection of players to a particular team will be contingent on them being registered with a private academy.

With these issues in mind, Football NSW has introduced a number of regulations which seek to govern the links between clubs and private academies at both elite and grassroots levels.

**12.1 Elite Clubs**

To be eligible to participate in Football NSW’s outdoor competitions (e.g. National Premier League), clubs must participate in an Application Process which requires them to submit a number of documents. Included in those documents is the Participation Agreement which governs the club’s participation in the competition and sets out the obligations of both the club and Football NSW. Clause 8 of the Participation Agreement addresses the participation of clubs and their associates (e.g. coaches) in “Non-Sanctioned Competitions” and “Non-Sanctioned Programs”.

As alluded to above, Football NSW is concerned about the increasing costs associated with participating in football.

Football NSW is concerned that elite clubs that have an affiliation with a private academy may require their players to undertake additional training sessions with that private academy or with coaches affiliated to that private academy. The cost of these additional training sessions would be in addition to the annual club registration fee ($2,400 for a junior player in NPL in 2018), thereby increasing the ‘cost of football’. Further, participation in these additional training sessions may be contrary to the FFA National Curriculum and the overall health and wellbeing of the young player. Unfortunately, there is little to no oversight and coordination of the total workload of young players across a range of activities, which may place unacceptable stress on the growing body (discussed further to in Chapter 2, point j).

Football NSW is also concerned that elite clubs that have an affiliation with a private academy may make selection into that club (or into one its teams) conditional on the player joining the private academy with the player then having to pay the private academy’s fees in addition to the annual club registration fee.
12.2 Grassroots Clubs

Grassroots clubs are those clubs at the community level participating in competitions conducted by Football NSW’s Member Associations.

While grassroots clubs are members of Football NSW’s Member Associations and generally play their football within competitions conducted by those Associations, they are also eligible to participate in two competitions conducted by Football NSW, namely the State Cup and Champion of Champions.

The State Cup is open to all Member Association teams in each eligible age grade and sees teams participating in a knock-out competition conducted from around April to July each year. Champion of Champions is open to one team (usually the top placed team) in each eligible age grade nominated by each Member Association and sees teams participating in a knock-out competition conducted in September and October each year. The minimum eligible age grade for both competitions is the U12s.

In 2014, some Member Associations raised concerns about the impact private academies were having on grassroots football.

One of these concerns was the situation where, because of a grassroots club’s affiliation with a private academy, a player’s selection in one of that club’s First Division teams would be contingent on the player registering with a private academy. The impact of this could be two-fold:

a) all First Division players would be required to pay the private academy’s fees in addition to the annual club registration fee; and

b) players who would otherwise make the First Division team based on their talent would miss out on playing at that level if they were unable to afford to also pay the private academy’s fees.

By way of a specific example, in 2014 Football NSW became aware of a relationship between a grassroots club playing in one of its Member Association’s competitions, and a well-known private academy. In communication issued by the club, it was suggested that players interested in playing in the First Division teams of some age grades take part in trials with the private academy. If selected into a team that had an academy coach appointed by the club, the players would be required to pay $2,800 in private academy fees in addition to the annual club registration fee. The total cost for a junior player (aged between seven and 16 years of age) would therefore have been well over $3,000. Keeping in mind the fact that this is a fee to play grassroots football, comparative fees at elite clubs participating in Football NSW’s elite competitions, at the time, were well below this figure, with SAP capped at $1,500 (U9–11) and Men’s NPL and NPL 2 capped at $2,400 (U12–U15). Further, it is worth noting that clubs participating in Football NSW’s elite competitions (that is, NPL) are required to deliver a 40-week program, whereas the private academy’s program was to be delivered over a 30-week period.
Another concern was private academy-affiliated grassroots club seeking to ‘retain’ players at the grassroots level rather than promoting them through the talented player pathway (that is, progressing from a grassroots club through to an NPL club, on to National Youth League clubs and then through to Hyundai A-League/Westfield W-League teams and so on through to our National Teams).

The State Cup and Champion of Champions are intended to be opportunities for grassroots clubs to play against grassroots clubs from other Member Associations that they would not normally play against (in the case of the State Cup) and for the best teams in each Member Association to pit themselves against each other (in the case of Champion of Champions) on, as much as possible, a level playing field. The concern in relation to private academies, particularly in the case where they have a strong link to a grassroots club such that the club’s First Division team is made up exclusively of private academy players, is that not only will those teams dominate their local competition but they will also dominate the State Cup and Champion of Champions competitions at the expense of other clubs that have remained true to the philosophy of grassroots football.

In light of the concerns set out above, Member Associations lobbied Football NSW to limit the ability for a grassroots club to participate in the State Cup and Champion of Champions competitions where that club has a relationship with a private academy that includes a condition relating to selection to First Division teams, or where the relationship results in significantly increased costs to players. Subsequently, Football NSW’s competition regulations for these competitions were amended to reflect the desire of its Member Associations.

The relevant section of the State Cup Regulations is provided below (Section 3, subsection 5 on page 13 of the 2018 version). The Champion of Champions Regulations are in identical terms in respect of this issue.

5. Private Academy Relationship
   a) Teams may not be permitted to enter the Competitions if:
      i. The Club of the nominated Team engages a private academy or other external provider to deliver the match day and/or training of any team at the Club which falls within any of the age grades listed at Section 1 (Organisation), paragraph (f) of these Regulations (Competition Age Grade) where that engagement results in increased fees to players, or
      ii. The Club of the nominated Team engages a private academy or other external provider in a model that promotes participation in the private academy to ensure selection in any Competition Age Grade team of the Club, or
      iii. The Club of the nominated Team endorses or recommends a private academy or other external provider that promotes or offers players a real or perceived “pathway” to a professional football club, either domestic or international, or
      iv. There is any other formal or informal activity that FNSW may determine, in its absolute discretion, as constituting a relationship between the Club of the nominated Team and a private academy or other external provider, or
      v. The same applies for items i., through iv. should the Team engage a private academy or other external provider independently of its Club's direction.
   b) Should a team be accepted into the Competitions and subsequently be found to breach the eligibility condition relating to private academies, that team may be removed from the competition.
Another concern that Football NSW has in relation to private academies is that some of them promote or offer players a real or perceived ‘pathway’ to a professional domestic or international football club. These private academies use this ‘link’ as a unique selling point and as a way to charge more for their services while, in reality, no such ‘pathway’ may actually exist and, even if it does, it is one which very few and only the very best players are ever able to avail themselves of, thereby potentially creating false hope in the minds of players and their parents. Further, parents are often not fully aware of the FIFA regulations restricting the movement of minors to overseas clubs.

Since the competition regulations were amended in 2014, the overall football landscape has changed significantly. Despite the Member Associations themselves advocating for these amendments, their approach (and that of their clubs) towards private academies and external providers now varies significantly across the Football NSW footprint. Some Member Associations provide opportunities for private academies and external providers to ‘co-exist’ within their respective footprints, including allowing them to have relationships with clubs, allowing private academies to directly or indirectly field teams in their competitions, promoting them on their websites, using them to deliver aspects of their community programs and, in one example, a Member Association itself being sponsored by a private academy.

Notwithstanding the legitimate intent of the regulations, some grassroots clubs have recently expressed concerns that some of the clauses in the regulations may impose restraints that are not reasonable.

12.3 Other Policies Applicable to Private Academies

Football NSW has a number of other internal policies applicable to private academies and external providers. These relate mainly to perceived conflicts of interest and not wanting to be seen to be endorsing or supporting one academy or provider over another. These policies include:

a) Football NSW does not market or promote any private academy or external provider on its website, social media channels or through eDMs (marketing emails). As the governing body for football in New South Wales, the position historically has been that allowing a private academy to advertise on the Football NSW website could be perceived by members of the football family as tacit endorsement by Football NSW of that particular private academy in circumstances where no such endorsement actually exists. The view has also been taken that it would be inappropriate to publicise one or more private academies over others and that doing so could lead to claims of bias or favouritism against Football NSW.

b) Football NSW does not permit the hiring of any of its facilities at Valentine Sports Park (VSP) for football or any other activities conducted by private academies or external providers. This policy has been adopted for the same reasons outlined in the point above, that is, not wanting to be seen to be endorsing one private academy over another by allowing it to carry on its activities at VSP and not wanting to allow some private academies to use VSP in circumstances where access cannot be granted to all.
c) Further, Football NSW does not allow coaches of its State Representative Teams to be involved with private academies. This is on that basis that, when selecting players for trials, programs or state representative teams, Football NSW coaches must be (and must be perceived to be) completely objective and independent and not allow themselves (or Football NSW) to be in a position where they can be accused of favouritism or selecting players from a particular private academy (rather than on merit). Football NSW must avoid any perception that state representative players are selected on the basis of their participation in a private academy.
SECTION THREE
13. PRIVATE ACADEMIES AND EXTERNAL PROVIDERS IN SYDNEY

Whilst this Review was aimed at being a state-wide analysis of the private academy and external provider industry, it soon became apparent that the majority of activities occurred within the Sydney metropolitan area. This is reflected in both the submissions received (only one was received from a regional area) and the plethora of private academies that are known to exist in Sydney.

Annexure I is a sample list of some of the private academies and external providers that are known to exist within Sydney and surrounding areas extending down to Wollongong and up to Gosford. It has been obtained through internet searches, submissions received, and own general knowledge and other investigations.

In the main, it only includes private academies and external providers that have been set up as businesses that promote their programs and services widely and to the general public. It does not include academies, programs or competitions run by schools (public or private), in recreational facilities (such as gymnasiums, YMCAs or PCYC’s or those operated by councils). Whilst there are a number of ‘toddler’ programs catering for 3-5-year old children listed, this area is also likely to be underestimated due to activities run within the Child Care and Creche industry.

Given that the list is by no means complete, it would be reasonable to assume that there are in excess of 60 or so private academies in Sydney and many more external providers. As per the listings of individual coaches on websites such as Treiner, Coachable or Gumtree, a conservative guestimate of individual football coaches (not academies per se) offering their services is in excess of 70 but this could easily be double or even tripled.

There is nothing to suggest that the above numbers will show any sign of decreasing. Indeed, as has been outlined in previous Chapters in respect of likely future trends – greater personalisation, decreasing volunteerism, increased user-pay and so on – if any, private academies and external providers, will significantly grow.

102 Recognising the existence and geographical area of Northern NSW Football as a Member Federation within the FFA structure, focus was only on the footprint that Football NSW oversees.
14. SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

Following Football NSW’s decision to conduct this Review, a public announcement was made on the organisation’s website and via its various social media channels, calling for submissions from interested parties.

A list of individuals and entities that made submissions is set out in Annexure II. In many instances and so as to discuss key issues, meetings were also held with respondents. On most occasions, follow-up emails were sent back and forth to parents in order to accurately capture their sentiment. Confidentiality was assured to all respondents.

Not surprisingly and as one would expect, most of the positions outlined in the various submissions followed the ‘party line’. That is, they reflected the general views of the group represented. For example:

a) As a collective whole, private academies and external providers stated their case and fervently argued their role in providing a quality football development program for young players and offering training programs and skills that clubs do not provide and doing so at a higher level and high intensity. They stated their willingness to work within whatever framework was established and indicated a desire to be bought in to the formal system, to be consulted with and engaged with. This is discussed further in section 14.1 below.

b) Member Associations meanwhile, with an understandable sense of loyalty to their own local competitions, stated that private academies and external providers imposed a financial strain on parents and posed a threat to their club competitions. Nearly all Member Associations indicated that they felt they should be the ones setting up ‘academies’ (or an equivalent elite development program of some form). Why they had not yet done so (conscious that a small number have) was more a reflection on current pressures affecting their core business of running competitions. Nearly all argued that Football NSW had a role to play in developing a suitable model and structure for Member Associations to then implement (see section 14.2 below).

c) Interestingly, submissions from grassroots clubs – some from within the same Member Associations that argued against private academies – strongly argued the opposite position and maintained that the presence of private academies and external providers was beneficial and, in some cases, necessary to effectively operate their club (often making up for a lack of volunteer coaches) and to provide provided better coaching and youth development programs for their players.

d) Several submissions were received from parents, the paying customers of the private academy and external provider industry. In some instances, it appeared as though academies may have ‘encouraged’ parents to contribute to the Review. While there is nothing wrong with this, it was felt that the overly positive feedback received from parents may have been impacted by this approach.

14.1 Feedback from Private Academies and External Providers

Submissions from private academies and external providers were, on the whole, generally quite professional and, in arguing their case for value and legitimacy, were extremely passionate.

Their submissions focused on the positive aspects and value of the services they offer, spoke of their passion and commitment to the game and ‘wanting to make a difference’ and ‘give something back to the sport’. Most focussed on promoting the quality of their coaches, the overall coaching service, and the philosophy that they follow.

In terms of coaches, many submissions listed their staff as being ‘professional’ and qualified (generally stated as meaning they held various levels of FFA, AFC or UEFA licences). In some instances, and where applicable, academies promoted their coaches’ playing histories (national representation, A-league, overseas leagues, NPL and so on).

Many claimed that they followed the principles of the FFA’s National Curriculum. Whether or not this is in fact the case was not confirmed as it did not form part of this Review. However, the fact that they claimed they followed the FFA’s National Curriculum (i) indicates knowledge of its existence and (ii) suggests they may be using the claim as a selling point to market the academy and as a means of establishing authenticity and validity within the football landscape. Notwithstanding this, one could assume that if private academies have FFA licenced and accredited coaches who have come through the FFA coaching system, and knowledge and promotion of the FFA’s National Curriculum, then that is a positive.

Some academies were more concerned with promoting an alternative ‘curriculum’ or culture – one either developed internally or adopted from another country or club. By way of example, one private academy promotes playing the Brazilian way with Brazilian flair and a Brazilian mind.

In addition to referencing the FFA’s National Curriculum, nearly all academies also stated their own personal philosophy, values and coaching methods. Most academies emphasised their role in the ‘non-football’ area - whether that be developing social skills, good community citizens or general ‘life skills’. Regularly, certain ‘buzz’ words were used – respect, responsibility, self-belief, confidence, commitment, discipline and humility. Among the many ‘tag-lines’ listed were phrases such as:

- Creating Future Stars
- Lose your fear with us, develop your skills and confidence
- Our goal is a complete football player development
- A way to Play, A way to Grow
- Professional Coaches for Grass Roots Players
- Developing Players for Life
- Football training and coaching for all ages
- Unlock your child’s full potential
- Developing Better People, Better Footballers
- Love the Ball. Master Your Skills. Enjoy the Game
- Rapid Technical Development – our program brings out the best in players.
Most submissions from private academies critically referenced the fact that they receive no support or recognition from any of the governing bodies at the national, state or local level. All submissions ‘welcomed’ the Review in the hope that this would change.

Overall, private academies and external providers expressed a strong desire to work with football’s governing bodies and a general willingness to adapt accordingly and follow and implement ‘best practice’. As one submission stated:

“I would like to reiterate that we have always and will always endeavour to comply with all regulation that seeks to promote the sport by providing a better experience to participants.”

One particular submission was quite critical of the current system, and some of the comments contained therein are worth repeating in their entirety as they reflect the general antipathy towards the current system held by private academies and external providers:

“What is difficult for many to comprehend in the private sector is that coaches need to gain an FFA Coaching Qualification to coach and can pay substantial amounts of money to obtain a football license. Once acquired and meeting the FFA approval process, a coach can then be recognized and promote their Coaching Qualification throughout Australia. However, once a coach or organization starts to offer Private Coaching or Private Football Services all of a sudden, they are deemed to be the enemy & NOT OFFICIAL, cannot gain FFA, FNSW or Association Approval because they are NOT OFFICIAL.

How does this work? Coaches pay high cost fees to obtain a National Coaching License and & should automatically be an OFFICIAL FFA Coach which is recognized at State and Local Association Level. However, the governing bodies BASH private providers and are happy to promote out in the open market that academies are EXPENSIVE & basically ripping off parents. (This is false advertising) and it also damages ones BRAND.

We believe there is a lot of work to be done, with football the largest participation sport and one that does not have enough qualified and experienced coaches to service the entire market. Grass roots football is screaming out for more quality coaching and the governing body now needs to review this situation and seek to work with the private sector which is booming and offering some great programs with many satisfied players and parents. Time for Private Football Academies to be acknowledged for their great contribution to football instead of being repeatedly BASHED by governing bodies and associations.”

Most submissions from private academies welcomed and openly encouraged the introduction of some form of licensing or accreditation system. Many supported the concepts of:

- Compulsory accreditation and obligatory minimum levels of coaching qualification
- Promotion of the FFA’s National Curriculum
- Signed agreements so as to prevent any players from not being allowed to progress
- Regular audits and compliance checks
As one respondent stated:

“We very much welcome this review and are 100 percent supportive of FNSW providing a process where an organisation can be accredited with FNSW as an official private provider.”

Another stated:

Associations are FREE to operate their own independent academies which are sanctioned by state bodies and the services may not be up to par, pricing may be too high and there is no regulation to the actual services being provided our what the player outcomes are being achieved. Locally our business has the Highest Qualified Pro Licensed Coach working with our business here in the [private academy] but yet we get the local association spruiking that our Academy is NOT OFFICIAL.

In speaking to several principals/owners of private academies, they too would often comment on the perceived ‘bad apples’ in the industry, as if their reputation was also negatively affected by those who did the ‘wrong thing’. Many expressed opinions – both positive and negative – about their peers.

The Review formed the view that much of their desire for some form of licensing or regulatory framework was partly to weed out those not doing the right thing but also because of the commercial benefits, in the form of increased patronage and increased profits, that would likely flow from endorsement by the governing body and the ability to promote that endorsement.

In a limited number of instances, academy submissions referenced overseas partners and relationships with either clubs, international academies, organisations or businesses that offer camps, tours and ‘international trials for players seeking a career as a professional footballer’. Again, the authenticity of these partnerships was not validated but, just as they were promoted to this Review, they could equally be used as a promotional tool for parents/players. This issue is discussed further in Chapter 15 dealing with Overseas Tours and Overseas Trials.

**Academies and their relationships with each other**

A growing facet of the private academy landscape is their relationship with each other and the opportunities being presented by several academies coming together to work cooperatively.

In the past, private academies have typically operated independently and have catered for individual players from grassroots clubs who come together for extra training (as opposed to catering for an entire team from a given club). As stated elsewhere in this Review, clubs have either been reluctant to play, or in some instances, have been prevented from playing, matches against private academy teams. This left private academy teams on the ‘outer’ in terms of playing matches and being able to offer a match environment.

Nevertheless, a number of academies have historically organised and played matches against each other and the practice is becoming increasingly common. So much so that there are now [private academy]...
several mini-tournaments – mainly run during school holiday periods – at which academies come together to participate as teams. Among many others, examples of mini-tournaments include:

- [www.sydneyinternationalcup.com](http://www.sydneyinternationalcup.com)
- [www.craigfostercup.com](http://www.craigfostercup.com)
- [www.sydneyyouthcup.com](http://www.sydneyyouthcup.com)

In many instances, such matches are not sanctioned by the relevant governing body and, without sanctioning, participants are not covered by the Football NSW insurance program. It is not known whether organisers or participating private academies arrange insurance cover for the participants or whether parents are required to sign waivers in order for their children to be able to participate in such tournaments. What is also not clear is whether there are any ‘disciplinary and grievance’ policies and procedures in place (i) in the event that unsavoury events occur during such tournaments (eg dangerous play, fighting, other misbehaviour and so on) or (ii) to ensure that players serving lengthy suspensions for their behaviour in a sanctioned competition are not able to play in these tournaments.

Only time will tell whether such tournaments will grow and become full leagues conducted outside the formal system. The recent announcement of the Premier Academy League, involving nine or so of the better known private academies in Sydney, is an example of these types of tournaments.

### 14.2 Feedback from Member Associations

As part of this Review, Football NSW sought the views of its Member Associations.

On the whole, Member Associations were united and firm on their position against any form of recognition, accreditation or licensing of private academies and external providers. Member Associations were similarly united in their request that Football NSW work with them and provide resources to better develop coaches and training programs. Below are two quotes from the submissions received from Member Associations:

“**There is no reason nor requirement for FNSW to endorse private academies.**”

“**We feel that rather than offering the approval of our parent body to private providers, it would be more appropriate for FNSW to provide assistance to clubs and associations to ensure that we can offer additional training to any player in the football family who wants it**”

This position was supported by the Associations Standing Committee which unanimously agreed with the general position advanced by Member Associations in their submissions which called for greater assistance from Football NSW to help Member Associations better develop coaches and training programs.

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105 [www.premieracademyleague.com](http://www.premieracademyleague.com)
Among the submissions received, many Member Associations were critical of Football NSW and implored it to provide greater assistance and leadership to Member Associations in the area of coach and player development. The following comment is typical of some of the responses received from Member Associations:

“[Member Association] would like to see some support and guidance for Associations and other FNSW stakeholders in organising and managing Academies. The objective would be to provide quality programs that are developed by the State Body. The Associations would implement these. This would also create another revenue stream for Associations and most importantly the money would stay in Football. These funds would then go towards football infrastructure, coach education, player development, staff development and administration”.

To its credit, one Member Association shared information about this Review directly with its member clubs and formally requested their opinions. This was particularly useful as a number of that Member Association’s own clubs were customers of local private academies. A number of these clubs took the opportunity to provide feedback to the Member Association and also provided feedback directly to Football NSW (reported below in Section 14.3).

Member Associations were strongly of the view that they needed Football NSW to provide them with the resources to compete with private academies.

A key concern for a number of Member Associations was the perceived ‘leakage’ of funds from the sport. That is, the perception that funds paid to private academies are going into the hands of private operators rather than being reinvested back into the game in the way that grassroots clubs and Member Associations do.

Some other pertinent comments from Member Associations include:

“Players and parents already have a difficult enough time working out what the appropriate pathway is for kids’ development”

“Football NSW should be working to ensure that the football family provides opportunities for players of all abilities to choose appropriate development programs within the family for a reasonable price; from qualified and WWC-verified coaches, and consistent with FFA curriculum.”

“If clearly aligned and coordinated within the family, we could make it easier for parents to know what their options are within the football family and make it easier for them to choose a program that is set up for the good of the game ....”

Whilst a number of Member Associations have already done so, for example, Northern Suburbs FA with its XLR8 program106 and St George FA with its association with 1stEleven,107 it is evident that there is a strong desire by Member Associations to create their own youth development programs in a similar format to that of some of the private academy models.

106 http://nsfa.asn.au/xlr8
107 http://www.1steleven.org
14.3 Feedback from Clubs

The Review received a number of submissions from clubs – mainly those at the grassroots level\(^{108}\) playing in competitions organised by Member Associations.

All of these clubs had previously either been found to have breached competition regulations relating to Football NSW competitions (i.e. Champions of Champions or the State Cup) or had been issued with a ‘please explain’ letter for alleged breaches of those competition regulations (refer to Chapter 12 for these regulations). These clubs argued strongly for the need to be able to use private academies and external providers to fill or supplement coaching positions within the club due to a decline in volunteer numbers and increased demand for high-level coaching.

Having been, in some instances, formally excluded from participating in the abovementioned competitions, the submissions from these clubs were some of the most forceful received, particularly in one instance in which an Open Age team was excluded from a competition on the basis that one of the club’s junior teams had used an external provider. The same club argued that there were three major factors that needed to be considered in relation to the current regulations, namely (i) market demands, (ii) football administration guidelines and (iii) Australian law, before going on to present a very strong argument dealing with all three factors.

Central to most clubs’ arguments was their desire to ‘provide sufficient coaching resources at a suitable level to ensure the optimal development of skills for all club players’.

There have been numerous references made in earlier chapters of this Review to the issue of volunteerism and parents of players not having the time, energy and/or inclination, or the appropriate skills, to coach their child’s team. In such circumstances, and supposedly at the request of and with the approval of parents, a ‘coaching’ levy is applied as part of the registration fee so that a suitable external provider can be engaged. A typical situation was outlined in one particular club submission – repeated in full as it summarises the views of clubs in similar positions:

“In 2008 the Committee of [Club] were approached by a number of concerned parents of miniroo and junior age groups, noting that the club was losing many of its good players to other clubs (such as [Club] and [Club] FC) as it was unable to provide professional level coaching to these players. In addition, the club felt it was unable to provide sufficient coaching resources at a suitable level to ensure the optimal development of skills for all club players. The Committee therefore in 2008/09 after due process engaged a locally based company (external provider) to run and manage a number of coaching initiatives within the club. In 2013 we engaged one of the coaches from [external provider] (and suggested he form his own company [name of company]\(^{109}\) for which he just trains players in our club in our program that follows FFA structure. We are wanting to expand this program age into under 12 and 13 due to parent demand. With [external provider] coaches now having obtained both European and Australian Class B licenses as well as all coaches having completed at least skills acquisition.

The Committee made the decision that the costs of this coaching would be partly subsidized by the club (coaching for Under 8 – Under 11 Development players CoDE numbers) or the individual members taking

\(^{108}\) One submission was received from an NPL club
\(^{109}\) Name of company offering football coaching services
up the offerings at a break-even price. The investment of professional coaching in development squads is obviously a significant cost with bi-weekly training sessions and game time. As with association representative squads, such as ..., these costs are set to be as fair as possible but may be enough to deter some individuals from participating. [The club] does provide a number of other programs for individuals not in the development programs which are run by paid coaches of the club. The underlying aim however is to enable [the club’s] members to participate in quality coaching sessions at a fair price.

The success of this program over the past 10 years has been significant to the club and football in general. [The club’s] members now make up a portion of the junior representative sides in both the [State League team] and other State League teams. The club has seen a significant improvement in the end of season ranking of its miniroo teams within [Member Association] and would like this to now move into the Under 12-13 age groups. The committee feels this would stem the drain of talent to other clubs which in turn has enhanced the community spirit within the club. Growth in player numbers of close to 40% over the past five years is not an insignificant result. Statistics over the last 5 years

- for under 6 to under 11 players at the club is up 19%
- For under 12 to under 16 players we are down 27%
- For player aged U18 and above we are up 5%
- Overall club numbers are only up 2%“

This club concludes its submission and summarises its position by stating that it believes:

“market forces should be allowed to prevail in regard to how clubs and its members choose to utilise/employ coaching staff but that all such coaches and their employers (if relevant) should be properly accredited by the FFA/Football NSW and provide coaching in accordance with proper principles and standards.”

It is worth noting that the majority of clubs that use external providers for their junior/youth teams are located in what is one of the more affluent areas of Sydney. It is also where the respective Member Association was the first to establish its own ‘academy’/youth development model, under which it too makes employed or contracted coaches available to member clubs. This has resulted in clubs which use a Member Association coaching service being permitted to participate in Football NSW competitions, but clubs using an external provider for coaching services being excluded from those same competitions. In a number of submissions, clubs claim that the Member Association service is more expensive than that of the external provider, whilst the Member Association counters that surplus funds made as a result of this initiative are reinvested back in to football, thereby allowing the Member Association to keep its fees reasonable and to employ additional staff to improve the services it delivers. A final and important point is the fact that this Member Association does not itself have any regulations in place restricting the use of external providers by its member clubs for coaching services and actually has a well-known ‘academy’ competing in its competitions.

**14.4 Feedback from Parents**

As the customer of the various programs and services offered by private academies and external providers, the view of parents is both crucial and insightful.

It would be safe to assume that parents’ overall and high-level objective is, on the whole, well-meaning and aimed at providing their children with the best opportunity to develop and.
improve their football skills. In a few of the submissions received from parents, the stated reason for sending their child to a private academy was to maximise the child’s opportunity to progress as far as possible in the sport, including moving along the talented player pathway, but for the most part, this was a secondary objective and in many cases, not even considered.

In their submissions, a number of parents pointed out that the decision to enrol their child in a private academy was no different to paying for extra tuition in a school subject (e.g. in mathematics or science), a foreign language, a musical instrument or for another sport (e.g. swimming, tennis or gymnastics/dance). In other words, parents are merely trying to do the best for their child in the hope they will progress as far as they can in their chosen endeavour.

Almost all of the feedback received from parents was positive and generally supportive of private academies. This is not surprising for various reasons:

(i) As one submission suggested, all parents who engage with private academies “will be positive about the experience so as to justify their decision, thus giving credence to their involvement and investment”;

(ii) The same submission suggested that parents are open and honest, and know how the ‘system’ works, and that their motive is based on ensuring that their child gets game time on the weekend especially where private academy owners/coaches are connected with clubs/teams;

(iii) There is clear evidence that parents with children at certain academies were ‘encouraged’ to send in submissions so as to provide weight to the overall positive message. Whilst this is not necessarily a bad thing and is, to a certain degree, expected given the Review encouraged input from parents as well as the general football community, it did result in slightly biased and skewed feedback. This was exacerbated by the fact that private academies were unlikely to encourage parents who had had a bad experience to provide feedback to Football NSW; and

(iv) Despite the fact that information could be submitted confidentially to this Review, parents dissatisfied with their private academy experience are less likely to complain because of the fear of repercussions and retribution against their child, especially when it comes to selection, game time and possible state team selection. This is common feedback from parents in football, as they do not want to ‘rock the boat’ or adversely affect their child’s prospects.

Notwithstanding all the above, and as stated earlier, parents were overwhelmingly positive about their overall academy experience. No overwhelmingly negative submissions were received from parents.

While there is often criticism about the high cost of supplementary academy training and additional sessions, most submissions from parents commented on the ‘value for money’ they believed academies provided. Typically, parents indicated they paid, about $20 per hour for these sessions which equates to about $25-$30 per session. There appeared to be general satisfaction with this level of investment.
Some other feedback received from parents in respect of the cost of academies included:

“We saw this as good value as a 10-session pass (total cost of $200) could be used on a ‘come and go’ basis with no pressure to attend compulsory sessions and no negative implications for nonattendance. We compare this to swimming lessons and other extracurricular activities (tennis lessons etc) which are similar fee level but often no refund for non-attendance during a term”.

“Cost is good value”

“Effectively we pay $20/hr for good-quality training within a group of boys, typically 20-25 per class, split into smaller groups”

“I believe [private academy] offers good value for money because the coaching is well structured and organised”.

While generally happy and willing to pay such fees, a number of parents did comment on the increasing cost of playing the game, lamenting that players from low socio-economic backgrounds (typically making up the majority of footballers in the past) were being ‘priced out of the game’. One parent suggested that:

“Some kind of scholarship program be mandatory to ensure talent without wealth doesn’t slip through”

A key criticism that was raised in a number of submissions was that the relationship between academies and clubs – both at the NPL and community level – makes some parents feel compelled to join the academy and pay the additional associated fees in order to guarantee their child’s place in the club or improve their child’s selection prospects.

The two comments are indicative of parents’ concerns in this regard:

“My main concern with the academies - and something that I hear a lot of parents complain about - is when they are attached to an NPL club and boys will only be considered for the NPL club if they have come up through the academy. From what I can see, these clubs won’t even have trials, but will take players from their associated academies and put them straight through without opening the trialling opportunity up to other boys. From what I understand, in some cases the parents also need to keep the kids in the academies (after securing a spot) to keep their place in the NPL team.”

“The main problem I see with the [private academy] is the affiliation with [NPL Club]. From what I understand, if you are in the [NPL club]’s SAP you must attend the academy. My son was playing at [Club] but it is implied that if you attend the academy and do well than you will have a good chance of getting in to the [NPL club] squad. Club training is scheduled around the academy session. [Name of coach] is apparently head of SAP for [NPL Club] and makes all selection decisions. I asked about when the trials were for SAP, and [Name of coach] told me there were no trials and that he makes all the selection decisions. He told me that my son may have a chance to get in next year and that we should chat a few months prior. [Name of coach] and [NPL club] management would argue that this arrangement produces the best results for youth development - not for me to judge if that’s correct. There is obviously a level of politics at play.”

110 Parent with children in NPL Youth U14s and SAP U11s
111 Parent with child in SAP U10s
14.5 Feedback from Individuals

The Review also received submissions from several individuals who wished to provide their own thoughts and opinions on the subject. In many ways, this was probably the most independent and objective feedback received in that they had ‘no skin in the game’ and expressed their views without fear or favour.

These individuals ranged from lawyers, long time soccer/football aficionados and observers of the game, and ‘ordinary’ people who just felt obliged to contribute. A detailed contribution was received from a well-established and FFA registered intermediary and football consultant/lawyer.

Significantly, discussions were also held with the Chief Executives of Professional Footballers Australia (PFA) (John Didulica) and the newly formed Football Coaches Australia (FCA), John Didulica and Glenn Warry, respectively.

As observers, they all welcomed the Review, stating that it was well overdue as they collectively expressed concern about the growth in private academies over recent years.

One individual succinctly stated that, “contributors will have an agenda depending on where they stand; club, privateer, a parent with a foot in either camp or even a club coach/administrator who operates an academy”, before going on to, quite accurately, summarise the position of all separate parties be they administrator, club, parent or private academy.

In summarising his position, this individual stated further, “When you search the internet for private football academy the search unearths a multitude of providers; representing those that have websites. Some only exist on social media and some through word of mouth. Most have a common factor being that they are operated by former players. But in recent years there seems to be more private academies then there are McDonald’s Restaurants; at least one has a governing body to control what is being served.”

Another individual stated:

“The lack of overarching framework and clear pathway through the grades and age groups often leads to parents pin-balling around between different clubs, Academies and options, often without any rhyme or reason. You could argue this is free market capitalism at its best (freedom of choice!) ... or you could see it as a confused and convoluted mess driven by self-interest.’

In congratulating Football NSW for instigating this Review, FCA Chief Executive, Glen Warry, stated that his organisation was keen to take a ‘proactive and lead role’ in the professional development of coaches, the development of a code of conduct/ethics and in contributing to some form of regulatory framework for private academies. FCA’s full submission is provided at Annexure III.

The PFA was similarly very supportive of this Review with its Chief Executive, John Didulica, taking an alternative approach to the issue, arguing that many of the concerns in this area were anchored around law and children’s rights, and the commercialisation and commodification of
youth sport. The PFA provided a range of extremely valuable documents that will be examined in due course in order to determine whether there are any key recommendations, advice and best practice that should be adopted in the management of the game in New South Wales, namely:

2. International Safeguards for Children in Sport
3. The Experience of Children Working in Organised Sport
4. Protecting Children from Violence in Sport
5. World Players Association Declaration of Rights
6. World Player Declaration on Children Rights.
15. OVERSEAS TOURS AND TRIALS

15.1 Overseas Tours

A key component offered by many private academies is the opportunity for participants to go on an overseas tour. In the main, these tours are generally to Europe, (typically England, Italy or Spain) although increasingly the USA, Asia and South America are becoming options and alternatives so as to provide variety and a new experience.

A typical tour consists of a combination of training/playing games and sightseeing, including visits to football stadia and attendance at some professional matches. Clearly, the opportunity to visit iconic stadia such as the San Siro, Old Trafford, Anfield, Camp Nou or the Bernabéu, combined with the potential to play against junior teams from these clubs is extremely attractive and a highlight for any keen young footballer.

There are a number of specialist ‘sports tour operators’ (effectively travel agents) who package and organise these tours on behalf of private academies and other football organisations. Typically, the cost of these tours range from $5,000 to $7,000 depending on the length of the trip and offerings contained within. This cost generally covers the international flight, on ground expenses such as accommodation, transfers and bus hire for intercity travel, and other ancillary costs such as match tickets, entry fees and the like. In most instances, part of the cost charged to each participant is used to cover the costs of taking coaches and other staff on the tour. This is similar to school excursions where the teachers’ costs are covered by the fee charged to students. In some cases, the opportunity exists for parents to accompany the group at the parents’ own cost.

Whilst there is nothing fundamentally wrong with such tours, it is important that parents properly inform themselves of the purpose of the tour. Some of these tours are akin to a school excursion, such as an art class going to Paris, an Italian language class to Rome or a science/astronomy class visiting NASA. That is, they are no more than a ‘once in a lifetime’ football experience providing young participants the opportunity to see the world through football, playing games against overseas clubs and immersing themselves in a foreign culture. Parents should be wary of tours that purport to provide elite trials with overseas clubs or opportunities to be scouted by such clubs. Whilst these tours may provide participants with games against the youth teams of EPL or other professional clubs, their value as a means of ‘talent identification’ and being placed in front of scouts needs to be carefully considered and is limited by FIFA regulations in any event (see below).

Participation in overseas competitions and tournaments is increasingly becoming part of the youth football landscape. There are some well-known and indeed historic football tournaments around the world for junior and youth teams to compete in. These include, Viareggio (in...
Tuscany, Italy\textsuperscript{112}, the Dana Cup (Denmark)\textsuperscript{113}, the Gothia Cup (Sweden)\textsuperscript{114} and the Dallas Cup (in the USA)\textsuperscript{115}, to name but a few.

From a local perspective, Australia has the Kanga Cup\textsuperscript{116} in Canberra, which, this year, in its 27\textsuperscript{th} edition, had 5,500 participants across 380 teams. In the past, teams from Italy, Russia, England, Georgia, Denmark, USA, South Africa, China, Malaysia, India, Korea, the Philippines, India, Indonesia, East Timor, Chinese Taipei, Fiji and New Zealand have participated in the Kanga Cup.

Increasingly, Member Federations, HAL Academies, NPL clubs and Member Associations are also undertaking overseas tours. In the last few years, Football West and Perth Glory have sent youth teams to China and South East Asia, and Northern NSW has taken teams to both Qatar and Japan for Youth Tournaments. The Sydney FC Academy has also travelled to Japan and recently announced a formal relationship with Ajax with the view for future tours.

Football NSW itself has in recent years sent teams (predominantly the equivalent of girl’s ‘state representative squads’) to the USA to compete in events such as the Dallas Cup, and in 2019 will send several teams to compete in games in France organised to coincide with the 2019 FIFA Women’s World Cup.

Football NSW has developed a formal process to be followed by Member Associations and registered clubs wishing to undertake overseas football tours, particularly when those tours involve minors. This process includes the requirement that the tours be sanctioned by Football NSW and the FFA. The sanctioning process ensures that, among other things, players are covered by Football NSW’s Personal Accident insurance policy (as applicable to overseas tours and subject to policy wording) and that risk management and other policies are adhered to. As private academies are not part of the formal structure of the game, they are neither required nor able to have their tours sanctioned.

Parents should consider the issues that may arise in respect of overseas tours that are unsanctioned by the governing bodies here and in the host country. These issues may include the opposition not being permitted to play the game or referees not being allowed to officiate. Football NSW emphasises to its affiliated clubs/teams intending to undertake overseas (and interstate) tours the need to have tours sanctioned for insurance and other risk management purposes.

Given the inherent risks of playing sport and the increased cost of medical treatment in countries like the USA, it is important to understand what types of insurance and levels of cover the tour operator has in place. An interstate or international tour unsanctioned by Football NSW will not be covered by the insurance policies (as applicable for overseas tours and subject to policy wording) as arranged by Football NSW. Further, parents must ensure that the

\textsuperscript{112} http://www.viareggiocup.com/
\textsuperscript{113} http://www.danacup.com/
\textsuperscript{114} https://www.gothiacup.se/
\textsuperscript{115} http://www.dallascup.com/
\textsuperscript{116} https://kangacup.com/
tour operator is aware of its obligations under Working with Children legislation, including the
verification of coaches and other staff for Working with Children check purposes.

For affiliated clubs and teams, Football NSW emphasises on its website:

“Teams travelling interstate or overseas to participate in football events must complete the
relevant touring permit prior to entering the event and submit their permit application to
Football NSW a minimum of eight weeks prior to departure”

The webpage then provides a link to the online permit application form.

Once Football NSW’s own internal processes are completed (including adding the tour to the
official list of sanctioned events for insurance purposes), Football NSW notifies the FFA and
requests FFA sanctioning. The FFA, in turn, notifies the National Association of the host
country. In theory, overseas teams (the opposition) are not permitted to play games that have
not been formally sanctioned by both National Associations. In some instances, Football NSW
or the FFA will inform the Australian Embassy or Consulate in the host country so as to record
the sporting visit of a group of young Australians in a foreign country.

Parents should ask a tour operator whether a particular tour has been sanctioned by Football
NSW and the FFA and, if not, should keep in mind the matters discussed above.

15.2 Overseas Trials

Previous chapters have referred to the practice of charging parents/players for overseas trials
or, more specifically, purported trials ‘in front’ of overseas clubs and their scouts. As part of this
Review, Football NSW became aware of one agency charging as much as $750 for the
opportunity to participate in a clinic/camp whereby players (some as young as 10 years of age)
would allegedly be trained and watched by (in their words) “the world’s most successful
football trials company for scouting players and getting them professional or semi-professional
club trials”.

In many instances, these clinics/camps are conducted across various ‘regional’ hubs only for
players to be selected to then participate in a centralised national clinic/camp where more
money is required to be paid. In the words of one such operator, with a “further opportunity
from the National Camp to gain an invite over to the UK for an Elite International Camp”. Again,
all at significant cost to parents.

At this point, it is worth noting the following article from the USA, where administrators are
confronted with similar challenges. The theme and messages contained in the article are
equally relevant to Australian players and their parents (note the bolded emphasis is the
author’s):

118 https://form.jotform.com/43377843467972
119 www.soccertoday.com/the-reality-of-overseas-opportunities-for-youth/
‘The growth of the game of youth soccer in the United States over the last 10-15 years has seen the increased presence of a number of mostly European professional football clubs on these shores, whether it be on the ever-increasing number of television channels that show live soccer from every major European league or in the form of partnerships with youth clubs or leagues across the nation.

Some clubs use this as a marketing exercise, to grow their fan base, sell more replica shirts and ultimately increase their revenue numbers as the global game truly becomes global. Others are on a scouting mission to unearth a hidden gem who may be playing on the fields of New York, Chicago, Miami or Los Angeles. But how realistic is it to actually be discovered? For a player to be in a youth game in one of the countless leagues and tournaments in the USA and next be training and ultimately playing in one of Europe’s big leagues, is not as easy as some would have you believe.

In the 1990’s horror stories of young African boys being abandoned and left to fend for themselves with no money or passports in European countries by so called ‘agents’ promising the world and riches of professional soccer forced the governing body of world soccer, FIFA, to act and consequently implement Article 19 – “The Protection of Minors” across every country affiliated to FIFA.


The article does offer three exceptions to that very clear-cut rule:

- The player’s parents move to the country in which the new club is located for reasons not linked to football. Such reasons could be a job offer, with adequate paperwork, visas, home rental/purchase agreements etc. to support the application.
- Players within the EU (European Union) between the ages of 16 and 18, and only if strict criteria is adhered to concerning the player’s education and welfare.
- Players living within 50 kilometres of an international border, may sign for a club that is no more than 50 kilometres on the other side of the same international border. For example, a boy living in the USA within 50 kilometres of the Mexican border may sign for a Mexican professional football club provided that club is within 50 kilometres of the American border.

Time and again there are articles or comments from players, parents and coaches that a player, invariably under the age of 18 is on trial from the USA at one club or another in Europe – this may well be true, but unless the player’s parents, as detailed above, move to the country for “reasons not linked to football” and have adequate proof that the reasons are not linked to football, the registration of the player at the respective country’s football association will be flatly rejected by FIFA.

Even if the player does sign for the Academy and his parents do move for “reasons not linked to football” unless that player has an EU (European Union) passport the chances of them obtaining a work permit to play football professionally may also be very slim.

This mostly depends on the European country they are based at, with England being notoriously the most difficult, strict rules backed by the most powerful players union in world football – the PFA (Professional Football Association), which includes in its work permit granting criteria that a non-EU player must have played in 75% of his countries full national teams games within the past two years (note: full national team not youth representative teams).

Therefore, even if an overseas club is interested in signing a young footballer scouted on one of these tours, FIFA regulations severely restrict the player’s ability to take up this opportunity.
Tour operators may not always disclose this information and, as stated previously, the sport’s governing bodies could do more to educate parents on the complexities and regulations relating to minors moving overseas to play football.

In reality, if a young player is sufficiently talented, they will usually already be known to the relevant club or selectors, they will be ‘on the radar’ so to speak and will usually already be part of the FFA’s Talented Player Pathway. They will either be training with one of the HAL Academies or with an NPL club and will have represented NSW (or another state) at the FFA’s National Youth Championships, which are increasingly becoming Talent Identification Tournaments.

Parents should carefully weigh up the value of paying money in order to have their child ‘spotted’ at clinics/camps or on tours.
ANNEXURE I – SAMPLE OF ACADEMIES IN THE SYDNEY METROPOLITAN AREA

A simple Sample of Private Academies and External Providers in Metropolitan Sydney – obtained by simple Google search ‘football academies in Sydney’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Activity/Program</th>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Location/s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AC Milan Soccer School</td>
<td>acmilansoccerschool.com.au</td>
<td>Wilson Park, Homebush, Riverview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Madrid Clinics</td>
<td>frmclinicasaustralia.com</td>
<td>Kings School Parramatta and Newington College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European School of Football</td>
<td>europeanschoolfootball.com</td>
<td>Homebush</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast Football Academy</td>
<td>fastfootballacademy.com.au</td>
<td>Croydon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Devils Football Academy</td>
<td>reddevilsacademy.com.au</td>
<td>Marrickville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Phase Football</td>
<td>firstphasefootball.com.au</td>
<td>Seven Hills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney Football Academy</td>
<td>sydneyfootballacademy.com</td>
<td>Balmain, Castle Hill, Fairfield, Gymea and Rye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just Football Academy</td>
<td>justfootballacademy.com.au</td>
<td>North Ryde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Youth Football Institute</td>
<td>australiayouthfootballinstitute.com.au</td>
<td>Homebush, Rydalmere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS Roma</td>
<td>asrfootball.com.au</td>
<td>Seven Hills, Concord, Liverpool, Merrylands, Punchbowl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCB Escola - Barcelona</td>
<td>fcbescola.fcbcelona.com/Sydney</td>
<td>Abbotsleigh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccer de Brazil</td>
<td>soccorderbrazil.com</td>
<td>Northern Beaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Sydney Youth Soccer Academy</td>
<td>cfasydney.com.au</td>
<td>Merrylands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney Institute of Football Development</td>
<td>sifd.com.au</td>
<td>Fairfield, Beverly Hills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Futboltec</td>
<td>futboltec.com.au</td>
<td>Smeton Grange, Seven Hills, Fairfield, Wetherill Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASA Football</td>
<td>asafootball.com.au</td>
<td>Hills District/Western Sydney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongo Football</td>
<td>mongofootball.com/</td>
<td>Macquarie University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK Football Trials Australia</td>
<td>ukfootballtrials.com.au</td>
<td>Mount Annan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Soccer Academy</td>
<td>isasoccer.com.au</td>
<td>Chester Hill, Homebush</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney Victory Football Academy</td>
<td>sydneyvictoryfootballacademy.com.au</td>
<td>Bonnyrigg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazilian Soccer Schools</td>
<td>braziliansoccerschools.com.au</td>
<td>Northern Beaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivate Football Academy</td>
<td>motivatefootballacademy.com.au</td>
<td>Canberra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football Star Academy</td>
<td>sportstaracademy.com/football</td>
<td>Chatswood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football Development Australia</td>
<td>footballdevelopment.com.au</td>
<td>Kings School, Parramatta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s Soccer Academy</td>
<td>goalsocceracademy.com</td>
<td>Mainly Eastern Suburbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football Excellence Academy</td>
<td>footballexcellenceacademy.com.au</td>
<td>Penshurst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review in to Private Academies and External Providers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Private Football Coaching</strong></td>
<td>treiner.com.au</td>
<td>Various sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FCV International Football Academy</strong></td>
<td>internationalfootball.academy/overseas</td>
<td>Bossley Park and Kemps Creek</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Elle Football Academy</strong></td>
<td>ellefootballacademy.com.au</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Soccer 10 Academy</strong></td>
<td>soccer10academy.com.au</td>
<td>Hornsby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bondi Football Academy</strong></td>
<td>bondifootball.com</td>
<td>Centennial Park and Bondi Beach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Soccer Kickstart</strong></td>
<td>sportskickstart.com.au</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grasshopper Soccer</strong></td>
<td>grasshoppersoccer.com.au</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Little Kickers</strong></td>
<td>littlekickers.com.au</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Great Star Football Academy</strong></td>
<td>greatstar.com.au</td>
<td>Seven Hills, Carlingford and Homebush</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mile Sterjovski Football Club</strong></td>
<td>msfc.net.au</td>
<td>West Pennant Hills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shane Webb</strong></td>
<td>srwfootballcoaching.com.au</td>
<td>Milperra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nick Rizzo International Football Academy</strong></td>
<td>nrifa.com.au</td>
<td>Leichhardt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Liverpool International Football Academy</strong></td>
<td>liverpoolacademynsw.com.au/upcoming-clinics</td>
<td>Barker College, Hornsby and Hills Sports Hill School, Seven Hills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Illawarra Football Academy</strong></td>
<td>illawarrafootballacademy.com.au</td>
<td>Wollongong</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Pro Soccer Skills</strong></td>
<td>prosoccerskills.com.au</td>
<td>Kings Langley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Soccer 5s</strong></td>
<td>tuggerah.soccer5s.com</td>
<td>Tuggerah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Josh Rose Football Academy</strong></td>
<td>rosefootball.academy</td>
<td>Central Coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Joner 1 on 1</strong></td>
<td>joner1on1footballtraining.com</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ANNEXURE II – SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED OR PARTICIPATION IN A MEETING

Formal responses/submissions have been received from or meetings/discussions have been held* with the following individuals or organisations

Parents – 13 parents

Academies/Private Providers

James Muir – Trainer
Jason Hayhurst – Football Focus
Rocky Silipo – Just Football
Roy Hunter – Premier Football Tuition
Rob Polistina – ASA Football
Diego Ros – Sports Kickstart
Sean Brohier – Soccer de Brazil
Michael McBride – Football Technical School*
Leanne Tiffen and Jorge Fernandes – FCB Escola

Mark Tyssen – Illawarra Football Academy
Cam Jones – Coerver Coaching
Terry Mosse-Robinson – the Football Factory
Andrea and Rosie Icardi – AC Milan
Ian - Brazilian Soccer School*
Nick Rizzo – Nick Rizzo International*
Glen and Jason Trufiro – Futboltec*
ASR Roma*
Cyril – Mongo Football

Individuals and Organisations

Peter Paleologos – Libero Consulting
Geoff Stanmore – various positions
Eric Abrams, Salv Calm, Les Bee, Sean Douglas,
Emma Highwood, James Duvcevski - FFA
John Didulica – Professional Football Association

Doug Henretty and George Fallah
Member Federations – Queensland, Victoria,
Western Australia, ACT, Northern NSW

Glen Warry – Football Coaches Australia

Clubs

Kevin Johnson – West Pymble FC
Francis Child – Lane Cove FC
Paul Smith – Sutherland Sharks
Bikram Sarna – Castle Hills RSL Rockets

Louise Walker – Mosman FC
Lyle Hudson – St Ives FC
Kelly Cross – Sydney FC*

Associations

Ann Marie Ballina – Football South Coast
Bill Kostandas – Blacktown
David Mason – Manly Warringah
Helen Armsn – Gladesville Hornsby*
Linda Cerrone – Nepean
Association Standing Committee* – discussion
at meeting of 9 July and formal resolution

Jeff Stewart – Sutherland
Aaron Dibdin – Eastern Suburbs
Ian Holmes – Canterbury*
Malcolm Waldock – Northern Suburbs*
ANNEXURE III – FOOTBALL COACHES AUSTRALIA SUBMISSION

20 August 2018

Mr P. Hugg,
Head of Football
Football NSW
Valentine Sports Park
Glenwood 2168
E: peterh@footballnsw.com.au

Review into private academies and external providers:

Football Coaches Australia congratulates Football NSW on instigating a review into private academies and external providers.

FCA welcomes the opportunity to work collaboratively with key football stakeholders – FFA, Member Federations and FFA - to align and support the development and wellbeing needs of all Australian coach cohort members, including coaches working in their own or other external private football academies.

In particular FCA is keen to support FNSW regarding the development and implementation of a definitive position regarding the role of private academies and external providers in the Australian football landscape.

This would include FCA taking a ‘proactive and lead role’ in relevant professional development of coaches, developing a code of conduct/ethics and possibly some form of regulatory framework for private academies and external providers.

A number of stated FCA objectives clearly outline our future role in supporting professional and community coach cohorts in regard to their development and support:

(a) set professional standards - leadership and aspirational values and high performance;
(b) represent and provide a collective voice for Australian professional football coaches;
(c) organise and provide continuing ‘re-validation’ professional development activities for Australian professional football coaches (in liaison and partnership with FFA Coach education, Member Federations and other national & international education providers);
(d) provide opportunities for Australian professional football coaches to contribute intellectually to football decision making that impacts on their role;
(e) develop collaborative alliances with key Australian football stakeholders and overseas football coaching associations;
(f) actively pursue research to establish performance, expertise, development and wellbeing needs of professional coaches;

In addition to the FFA Coaches Code of Conduct FCA aims develop a “Football Coaches Australia” Code of Conduct so that coaches:

- Demonstrate leadership qualities that are in line with FCA standards,
- Identify best practice from other organisations,
- Develop ‘collegiate culture’ (defining FCA ‘norms’ & ‘professional standards’),
- Have mechanisms for ‘sanction’ when a coach breaks the code,
- Act always in a professional manner that is considered acceptable by the FCA.

Football Coaches Australia Inc.  W: www.footballcoachesaus.org.au  E: generalfca@gmail.com
In developing regulatory frameworks for coaches working within private academies FCA will, at all times, adhere to the regulations, policies and guidelines which underpin football’s (FFA’s) integrity framework.

FCA concurs with FFA customer experience surveys and the FFA Whole of Football Plan statement: “Coaches have more influence over the enjoyment of participants than any other person in the game”.

Coaches are leaders, innovators, managers, teachers, mentors, parents, professionals, volunteers etc and have a profound influence on player development. In this ‘new world’ that our youth live in today we need to ensure that all coaching cohorts are positioned to have a parallel and co-ordinated influence on male and female footballers within the Australian player development pathway.

FCA will work towards becoming a rightfully recognised stakeholder within the game rather than a “significant interest group”.

FCA aims to ensure that the profession of football coaching is appropriately recognised and benchmarks are set for contracting and remuneration for all coaching cohorts. This includes standard contracts (terms and conditions) for coaches employed/contracted in the various coaching environments and a formal grievance procedure.

The continued growing trend of private and independent school football programs, and the employment of professional coaches, many in partnership with state football federations and A-League clubs, has enormous implications for the player development pathway. In the same way the number of professional coaches working within football academies – HAL/NPL, private and international club academies will continue to grow.

Within FNSW’s Academy Review Terms of Reference and key deliverables to attain a detailed analysis of the football academy ‘industry’ FCA will be in a position to implement research into the development and wellbeing needs of its Academy cohort coaches. This will be part of a more detailed research project, in partnership with University of Queensland, into the Wellbeing, Mental Health and resilience of Australian professional and community football coaches.

Regards

Glenn Warr
Chief Executive Officer
Football Coaches Australia
FFA 1-STAR CLUB ACADEMY ACCREDITATION

CRITERIA 2019
Introduction

AFC Elite Youth Scheme

An integral part of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Vision and Mission is to improve playing standards and increase the possibility of success at the top level. The development of aspiring young talents is at the core of these objectives, and AFC, in close collaboration with Football Federation Australia (FFA) will use the Elite Youth Scheme to grade club youth academies, offering national and continental recognition for the standards attained.

FFA Club Academy Accreditation

To truly capitalise on the growing popularity of football, investment into the identification and development of talented junior players is essential. In line with the release of the Whole of Football Plan (2015), our aim is to develop a world class talent development program with support tools for coaches which will enable Australia to compete with the best in the world.

FFA considers youth development a core responsibility and certain principles are therefore considered fundamental:

1. Each young player’s welfare and enjoyment is a priority
2. Player education and individual development takes precedence over short-term results
3. Coach education and ongoing development is a key focus
4. Implement a system of effective measurement and quality assurance
5. Increasing the number and quality of Australian players gaining professional contracts at the highest level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Categories</th>
<th>Key Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TEAMS</td>
<td>Team Composition, Player Points System (PPS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLAYER DEVELOPMENT</td>
<td>Player Training Plan and Program, Application of National Curriculum, FFA Elite Programs, Liaison with MF TD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COACHING</td>
<td>Coaching Accreditations, Sport Science Coordinator, Talent Identification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINANCE</td>
<td>Registration Fee Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FACILITIES</td>
<td>NPL Venue Requirements, Stadium &amp; Training Locations, Equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIFA TRAVEL COMPENSATION</td>
<td>FIFA Compensation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEMBERSHIP PROTECTION</td>
<td>FFA Member Protection Policy, Child Protection Legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDICAL</td>
<td>Match Day &amp; Training Coverage, Sport Science, Management, Supplies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REPORTING</td>
<td>1-Star Audit Report, Technical Director's Report</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ANNEXURE V – A PARENTAL GUIDE TO FOOTBALL ACADEMIES

Currently there is no guidance, support or information for parents to utilise when choosing which academy to enrol their child in. It is very much a case of ‘caveat emptor’ - buyer beware.

While matters such as location and convenience may be very ‘front of mind’ from a logistical perspective, the more ‘discerning’ consumer will investigate further and most likely look for extra information, taking into account the quality of coaching staff and their accreditation, experience and reputation, and the overall philosophy. Submissions from parents suggest that the cost of the program is very much a subjective evaluation and that parents are willing to pay where they consider there is ‘real’ value and their child is benefitting and enjoying.

The below information is not an exhaustive list of aspects to consider, but hopefully will act as a guide in the event that a parent wished to go down the path of choosing an academy program for their child.

Quality of Coaching and the Training Environment

Parents should be aware of the suitability and quality of coaches that they are leaving the child - their most valuable asset - with and the training environment and experiences that they are being exposed to.

There are now well-established requirements and standards that must be met by anyone that is involved with children’s activities.

All academies and private providers must be registered – this can be done at:

A Working with Children Check (WCC) is a requirement for people who work (in either a paid or volunteer capacity) with children and minors. It involves a national criminal history check and a review of findings of any workplace misconduct. Applicants for a WCC can do so at:

Being outside the formal football system, private providers are not checked by Football NSW, the FFA or any affiliated club. That said, and as a matter of course, anyone working with minors should be compliant with government regulations and should be able to produce their own WCC number but the responsibility for checking rests with the parent/guardian.

The NSW Government’s Office of the Children’s Guardian has further information on WCC (and other topics in this increasingly important area) on their website www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/working-with-children-check

90 | Review in to Private Academies and External Providers
Further, they have developed a series of key principles for what they refer to as ‘child-safe organisations’ to follow, namely:

- Principle 1: The organisation focuses on what is best for children
- Principle 2: All children are respected and treated fairly
- Principle 3: Children’s families and communities are welcome and encouraged to participate in the organisation
- Principle 4: Children receive services from skilled and caring adults

**ACTION:** Parents SHOULD ask to see the WCC for each coach working for the academy private provider and to judge for themselves whether the academy environment espouses the above principles.

Secondly, parents should be able to assume that the coaches involved in teaching their child has some sort of formal coaching qualification. Preferably this should be from the FFA’s Coach Accreditation system (following their National Curriculum) although in some instances, coaches may be accredited through overseas Confederations such as UEFA (Europe) or the AFC (Asia).

One wouldn’t send a child to a teacher, doctor, dentist or similar who has never been to University/College and obtained their respective training in the form of a degree, diploma or certificate. As such, beware of ‘instructors’ who have no coaching qualifications whatsoever and who may just be a ‘fan’ of the game or a previous player!

Whilst attending a course and getting their license doesn’t necessarily make them a ‘great’ coach, it does imply some form of instruction and a knowledge of the Curriculum and should be the very basic of tests.

Be cautious of academies who employ ‘backpackers’, or those who have ‘played a bit’ - if one is paying for a ‘professional’ coaching service, then the least one can expect is a ‘professionally trained’ instructor. Similarly, children’s football is not the same as the professional adult game - the mentality of the child and the skill development and instruction required is fundamentally different than that of adult football. To state the obvious, young players are not competing in the World Cup, and thus should be treated according to their age, skill level and learning phase.

Further information on the FFA’s Coaching Scheme can be found at [www.ffacoachingresource.com.au](http://www.ffacoachingresource.com.au/)

**ACTION:** Parents should ask what coaching qualifications the respective coaches have.

Coaching qualifications aside, the attitude and behaviour of the academy’s coach and the overall training environment should be positive, encouraging and generally uplifting. Parents
should not confuse shouting and berating with instilling discipline or demanding excellence. Some simple points to look out for include:

- How does a coach welcome and speak to players?
- How do they provide instruction and reinforce good actions or correct bad behaviours?
- Does there appear to be a structure to the program and each training session – is this shared with parents?
- What is the ratio of coaches to players?
- Do young players enjoy, have fun and finish session looking forward to the next or are they terrified that they might not be good enough?

**ACTION:** Parents should monitor their child’s reaction to training sessions and ascertain whether they are enjoying the overall experience.

Football, like many sports and physical activities, can result in injuries - some of which may be serious enough to require medical treatment. Broken bones, a ruptured ACL or other injuries requiring an ambulance, surgery, hospitalization or physiotherapy can be extremely expensive and may not be covered by Medicare. It is important to recognize that many training activities, games and tournaments conducted by private academies and external providers are UNSANCTIONED are not covered by Football NSW’s insurance program (unlike normal club training sessions and matches).

Some private academies may not have any insurance in place and instead ask parents to sign a waiver indemnifying the academy of any ‘blame’ or responsibility. Parents need to be aware of what insurance is in place (if any) and make an informed decision as to the risk in the event that the child is injured.

Involvement in private academies is often supplementary to club training and its demands, and sometimes on top of school sport, potentially football and a whole host of other activities that children do nowadays. Other than the him/herself, there is often no one monitoring the workload, total hours and overall stress that a young child’s growing body is exposed to. This can lead to some potentially serious injuries and should be constantly and closely monitored.

Further, research tells us that early specialisation in just the one sport (such as football) may lead to repetitive strain injuries and loss of interest. Children should be encouraged to be involved in a range of sports and physical activities.

**ACTION:** Parents should ask what insurance coverage the private academy or external provider has in the following areas: a) Personal Injury, b) Public Liability, c) Professional Indemnity, and d) Management Liability.
Marketing and Promotion

It is not uncommon for private academies and external providers - particularly those affiliated with well-known overseas clubs, to market their program along the lines of ‘Play like [club]’ or ‘Play the [club] way!’ - as if to imply that if you attend their academy then the young child will play like their well-known sporting hero or international club they support. Unfortunately, for so many reasons, football and youth development simply doesn’t work this way. As much as every coach would like their team to play ‘tiki-taka’ or in the style of the European Champions or World Cup winning team, this takes years if not generations and a whole culture to develop. Obviously attending an academy as an individual doesn’t convert the whole team to play the same way.

Not only that, but with the FFA’s National Curriculum, there is the concept of an ‘Australian way’ in which all young players (and their coaches) are encouraged to follow, adopt and play. The Curriculum has been extensively researched and developed and is applied across the country in both coaching courses and coaching sessions. Offering an alternative style or playing a way that the child is not capable of or beyond their skill level (for example, a one touch, high tempo pressing game) does very little for a young player’s development and may in fact confuse their understanding of how they are expected to play and what to do in any given situation.

The FFA’s ‘Player Centred’ approach is designed to develop and prepare the young player in readiness for their adult participation at their chosen level. Replication of current adult styles – as demonstrated in the EPL, Champions League or the World Cup – may not necessarily be relevant 5-10 years in the future.

**ACTION: Parents should inquire whether the private provider follows the principles of the FFA’s National Curriculum.**

Beware of programs that sell dreams and promise a fast track to success. As the cliché goes, ‘if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is’.

Similarly, beware of programs that offer trials to overseas clubs - often this is nothing more than a money-making and branding exercise by the said club. If a player is skilled and talented and is wanted by an overseas club, then that same club will pay all necessary expenses for a trial. No parent or player should pay for a trial with an overseas club in order to be ‘selected’. There is a well-recognized ‘talented player pathway’ in the Australian football system, and while history has shown there are a very small few who have made it ‘big’ via alternative means, these players are few and far between, and the majority progress through the ranks of the formal pathway.

Parents are encouraged to seek out experienced coaches and technicians in the game who can provide some high-level objective advice and support before making life-changing decisions.
Most importantly, parents/players should be aware that the current FIFA Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players (Clause 19 on the Protection of Minors) prevent the international transfer of young players under the age of 18. Further, citizenship and visa restrictions can often inhibit players registering and playing overseas, particularly in Europe.

**ACTION:** Parents should question what is being ‘promised’ - many times it is nothing more than exaggerated marketing gimmickry.

Many private academies offer as one of their key activities or programs the prospect of an international tour and matches against overseas clubs. Whilst in the main these are valuable personal experiences (similar to a school excursion) and a novel way to play similar (and often big name) club academy teams, such tours should be seen as lifetime experiences and cultural exchanges rather than from a football perspective. As outlined above, even if a 14-year-old was spotted as having talent, FIFA Regulations prevent any international transfer and registration until they reach the age of 18 years.

A 1-2 week football experience will not be the determining factor in a player’s development. Rather, it is their love of the game, and commitment and dedication to their own personal technique and skills development that will help them shine and progress.

**ACTION:** Parents should recognize the concept of overseas tours for what they are - the chance for their child to experience an international culture and to play against foreign clubs. They are often a football club’s equivalent to a school excursion.

With some private providers, payment of significant fees is involved - often up front. A best practice academy should offer some form of payment schedule either over a series of terms (in a year) or even a pay as you go system for only the sessions attended. Even better might be the offer of at least one free trial session to see if the child enjoys it. Similarly, and recognizing the high cost of attendance, a certain number of places in an academy should be set aside for ‘hardship’ cases – that is, for parents of skilled players who, for one reason or another (eg newly arrived refugees), may not be able to afford to pay the full price.

**ACTION:** Parents should ask what the financial terms of the private academy and external provider are including whether there is a refund policy up to a certain number of sessions attended. If money and payment of fees are an issue, ask whether there are options for scholarships or payments schedules over an extended period of time.

No club should force participation in a private academy or an external provider in order for the young player to be selected in the First Division team (or equivalent). No participation in an academy program should ever be compulsory and as part of a forced program so as to play for a club. Parents/players pay their registration fee to participate and compete for a team based on their skill level. Any compulsory requirement that forces the player to attend a private provider for an additional supplementary fee is fundamentally wrong.
That said, it is recognised that some clubs offer different levels of service and program offerings. For example, they may offer a premium service with additional training and for an additional fee. Parents should make themselves aware of the different programs and levels of service offered by a club and base their decisions on affordability, value for money and alternative options.

**ACTION: Attendance at a private academy and external provider should never be compulsory and there should never be a forced additional fee to normal registration.**

**Other Policies that the Academy should have**

It is not unreasonable to ask to see (and be given copies of if requested) a number of other policies that a ‘best practice’ academy should have. These may include, but are not limited to addressing such important matters as:

- Codes of Conduct – for Management, Staff, Staff, Participants/Children and Visitors
- Pick-up and Drop Off Policy
- Photography and Videoing Policy
- Discipline Procedure – how does the academy deal with misbehaving and ‘unruly’ children
- Complaints – including procedures for making a grievance
- Payment and Refund Policy – including the possibility of free 1 (or 2) sessions trial
- Other Child Safe Procedures

**ACTION: Never be afraid to ask questions and never be afraid to work with and encourage the academy to have a higher level of ‘duty of care’ for your child.**