



30 July 2021

Messrs J Johnson & M Falvo  
Chief Executive Officer & Chief Operating Officer  
Football Australia

Locked Bag A4071  
Sydney South  
NSW 2000, Australia

By email:  
james.johnson@footballaustralia.com.au  
mark.falvo@footballaustralia.com.au

Dear James and Mark,

### **Notice of special interest group intending to apply as a Qualifying Member of Football Australia**

We write on behalf of our growing special interest group within the Football Australia Family: independent football coaching providers and competitions. For details of our organisation, Independent Football Australia Limited (“IFA”), please refer to our [website](#).

### **Profile and purpose of special interest group**

At the time of writing and prior to our roadshow - which will commence following the date of this letter - we are working with in excess of 50 independent providers coaching 3,000 footballers and playing in competitions held across New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Queensland. During our roadshow we will approach providers in the remaining States and Territories: our goal is to represent the interest group nationally.

Overall, we propose a structure to Football Australia (“FA”) that attends to the sector’s good governance. IFA is committed to regulating and representing independent football coaching providers and competitions with the view to providing an inclusive, diverse, player-centric environment, and advancing the game in Australia. In doing so, we intend to work within FA’s architecture: collegiately and with all its stakeholders.

### **Formal instrument of incorporation**

Since our last correspondence with Mr Falvo on 25 June 2021, we have now incorporated IFA. In drafting the [constitution](#), we have had strong regard to FA’s and FIFA’s formal instruments, particularly the “XI Principles”. Most saliently:

1. Principle 5 (world class youth development and increasing match minutes);
2. Principle 6 (providing more opportunities for coaches to deploy their trade);



3. Principle 7 (transitioning to embrace wider global standards and best practice governance);
4. Principle 9 (ensuring accessibility and opportunity to all who wish to participate in football); and
5. Principle 10 (ensuring diversity of participants and equal development of footballers)

Each is fundamental to our proposal to integrate independent football coaching providers and competitions into the thriving Australian football ecosystem.

### **Initial Board**

In the course of developing our proposed solution we have sought input from the Football Community, including past professional players, administrators and media personalities.

IFA has been incorporated with an initial board of three individuals including Marc Chiarella and Nick Elliott, both of whom are independent and objective business people with no direct commercial interests in the sector.

Alasdair Gyngell is the third initial director and has also agreed to act as the Company Secretary. Alasdair is the Managing Director of Atlas Sports Management, the operating company of Premier Academy League. Three additional independent director appointments are imminent.

The initial directors will hold office until the first Annual General Meeting of IFA, at which stage each will resign, and the members will elect up to six Elected Directors. We have modelled the criteria for Elected Directors from the approach taken by Football NSW. In addition to the Elected Directors, the directors may themselves appoint up to three other persons.

IFA's constitution prevents any directors elected or appointed to the board at or following the first Annual General Meeting from holding a position of officer or employee of an entity conducting, participating in, or administering football or any football competition in Australia (excluding officers of IFA or FA).

It is the intent to maintain this independence so that IFA may continue to work toward its purpose with no conflict. IFA's constitution also requires that the future composition of the board meet FA's 40/40/20 requirement. The three potential additional initial independent directors that we are presently in discussions with are all female and we support the principle that it is vital to have a diverse board to ensure IFA's long-term sustainability and success.

### **The Executive Panel**

The board is advised by an [Executive Panel](#) comprising the founding coaching provider directors. Those on the Executive Panel have no vote in the resolutions the board can make but may furnish resolutions to the board for the board to consider and vote on.

Each member of the Executive Panel has been integral in conceptualising the purpose of IFA. Each sees the need to work with, not against the established football community to build the next generation of excellence across Australian Footballers. They see however that can only

happen working by providing a safe, credible, diverse, and financially viable environment for young players and their parents.

## Benefits of IFA to the Football Family

Key benefits of IFA include:

### 1. For players:

- (a) By creating a well-regulated marketplace, IFA will ensure that youth players are receiving the best player-centric development experience possible to reach a level of skill that fulfils their potential and enhances their enjoyment of the game in a safe, inclusive and well-structured environment. To ensure this, IFA requires that its members register (via a [registration form](#)) and thereafter conform to the [published standards](#).
- (b) By working within the official architecture of the game, IFA can ensure those who wish to play or transition into state-based competitions receive support to do so on their terms and within the flexibility of the providers' sessions. This is so they:
  - (i) Enhance and extend their development.
  - (ii) Are not lost to the game due to conflicting scheduling, say, between school or other activity commitments.
  - (iii) Train on their terms and in accordance with their schedules.
  - (iv) Experience a level of coaching which may not be available to them at club level due to lack of resourcing at the clubs.
  - (v) Do not get left behind at an early age, falling into the development gap that emerges early on between grassroots and talent pathways. In particular, the phenomenon of the "end-of-year" child or late developer is well-documented in terms of missing out or being lost to the game. This can be addressed as part of a national plan, and independent coaching providers can be patient supporters of these and other players: enhancing their development and enjoyment of the game, enlarging the talent pool in Australia, and assisting them play or transition into state-based competitions.

### 2. For coaches:

- (a) By intending to work with members such as Football Coaches Australia ("FCA"), IFA will ensure that independent football providers support coaches' personal and professional development.
- (b) By setting clear and consistent standards, IFA will ensure quality and consistency in the independent football coaching environment of viable career pathways for coaches in line with the broader aims of growing coaching talent in the game; and help to establish football coaching as a recognised profession more broadly.

3. For parents:

By creating best practice principles, IFA will educate parents and ensure they have access to accurate and objective information and guidance with regard to the factors they should consider when choosing an independent coaching provider.

4. For FA and its Members:

- (a) IFA intends to create a national system of registration, monitoring and compliance in line with FA guidelines and regulations, and as part of the official structure of football in Australia. IFA will oversee and regulate delivery standards and provide additional visibility of player talent and development.
- (b) By collaborating with and being part of the national architecture, IFA will be contributing to the “One Football” vision of FA.
- (c) By collaborating with other stakeholders, including clubs, coaches and other representative bodies, IFA will seek to align different mindsets between the traditional pathways and those offered by independent coaching providers.

5. For IFA Members:

- (a) By delivering business support to Members, so the Members comply with the [published standards](#).
- (b) By working with FCA to provide independent counsel and review of programs and standards, IFA can provide independent coaching providers with pointers to improvement.
- (c) By providing a voice for independent coaching providers and competitions, IFA can ensure representation in the official architecture of the game.
- (d) By legitimising and publicly endorsing the benefits of IFA members, IFA will help ensure a vibrant, competitive, and well-run environment.

### **Response to Football NSW Review on Private Academies and External Providers**

As set out in the [Football New South Wales \(Football NSW\) review on Private Academies](#), the private/independent marketplace has evolved principally to meet a demand that continues to grow in football in Australia.

The increase in number and variety of independent football coaching providers and competitions over the last few years responds to these needs, showcasing the vibrancy of football in Australia. It also brings to the fore a diverse and multi-cultural approach to football, reflecting the game’s multi-cultural origins in the country.

It is however generally acknowledged that the historic lack of regulation in the sector has led to a situation where there is little or no oversight of the delivery “inputs” and patchy visibility of the “outputs” in terms of player talent and coach development. It has also left independent

football coaching providers on the “outside” with little or no voice; fundamentally leaving them unable to work with their counterparts across the football community openly and collegially.

IFA began its journey in 2020 with a handful of independent coaching providers in Australia, specifically setting out to support the “One Football” vision of FA. By providing governance and playing a clear role within FA’s architecture, IFA will also address the issues identified in the Football NSW review.

This approach is in line with precedents, in particular, FCA. By way of example, the IFA intends to enter into a memorandum of understanding with FCA to collaborate on coaching development; independent review of IFA members’ coaching programs and standards; and providing and supporting an additional pathway for coaches in Australia.

By offering a ready-made solution aligned with the FA’s XI Principles and within its Framework that requires broad buy-in across the independent marketplace, IFA is responding to the challenges and recommendations in the Football NSW review, in particular, that “private academies themselves could come together and establish their own representative body and create their own self-regulating model”.

### **How it is proposed to function**

IFA is creating a national system of registration, monitoring and compliance in line with FA guidelines and regulations to ensure:

1. consistent service levels and minimum standards provided by appropriately qualified providers:
  - (a) compliance with FA statutes including the constitution, Member Protection Policy, National Registration Regulations, National Code of Conduct, National Disciplinary Regulations, National Anti-Doping Policy, working with children, insurance and any other by-laws etc of FIFA, the Asian Football Confederation and FA.
  - (b) independent counsel and review by qualified third parties or FA approved stakeholders, and high accountability;
  - (c) technical requirements and standards;
  - (d) facilities and equipment standards;
  - (e) compliance with competition governance, rules, code of conduct and promotion;
  - (f) process for complaints and dispute resolution;
2. football continues to grow and provide a great experience for players, coaches and other stakeholders:
  - (a) an inclusive, diverse player-centric environment;

- (b) talented players are identified, and strategy developed, so that they are not lost to the game;
- (c) coaches are supported in their careers;
- (d) match officials are developed;
- (e) cooperation with member associations;
- (f) funds are reinvested back into the game;

3. education of parents of best practice principles. As a member of FA, and in a well-regulated, unified environment, independent providers have a clear role to play in furthering the development of the game and nurturing player and coach talent in Australia.

### Strategy

We propose to outline in greater detail IFA’s strategic plan in our submission to become a Qualifying Member. We consider at this stage that the scope of that document must really be informed with input and upon collaboration with FA and the key stakeholders within the Australian Football Family. That said, the milestones as we now see them are:

30 July 2021	Letter to Football Australia
10 August 2021	Roadshow – Part 1: Independent football coaching providers
21 August 2021	Application for memberships open
1 September 2021	Roadshow – Part 2: FA Stakeholders (Members)
2 – 20 September 2021	Consultation with Key Stakeholders
20 -30 September 2021	Consultation with FA
30 September 2021	Finalisation of initial board of IFA
15 October 2021	Consideration by IFA in consultation with the FA as to whether it requires additional time to address stakeholder concern or whether it can submit “Qualifying Membership Application” to FA for voting on by FA Members – the decision may cause an additional consultation period requiring the application to be submitted in November 2022.
November 2021/22	Vote by Members of FA for IFA as a “Qualifying Member”

IFA intends to have a formal submission to FA so that it may be considered as a “Qualifying Member” at either FA’s 2021 or 2022 Annual General Meeting. We understand the date for FA’s Annual General Meeting is in or around November. We would appreciate any direction you could give as to when formal submissions are due so our application may be considered by FA members prior to the Annual General Meeting and so it may be voted upon.



In the meantime, we would appreciate FA agreeing to meet with us between the dates allocated above or earlier if it desires.

We thank you for reviewing the above and look forward to moving our cause forward with the help and guidance of FA.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alasdair Gyngell".

Alasdair Gyngell  
Secretary of Independent Football Australia  
Email: [board@independentfootballaustralia.com](mailto:board@independentfootballaustralia.com)

On behalf of the Executive Panel:  
Chris Deblaere  
Lorik Haliti  
Cam Jones  
Leonardo Pinto

On behalf of the Initial Board  
Marco G Chiarella  
Nick Elliott  
Alasdair Gyngell (Secretary)