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FFA GENERAL MEETING
Summary - CHAIRMAN ADDRESS

Opening Remarks

The FFA board has been consistent throughout – it has championed expansion of the Congress; it has argued for greater representation for women and other underrepresented groups. It has initiated a process to give the A-League greater autonomy so that clubs can generate a better return on their investment as well as attract new capital into the game.

In fact, the FFA board supports many of the recommendations arising from the CRWG, as can be seen from the submissions FFA made to the Working Group process.

But, as directors of FFA, we have a responsibility, indeed we are required by law, to act in what we believe are the best interests of the company. Hence our unanimous recommendation that members vote against Resolution 1 before the meeting today.

Were the members to do so, FFA has proposed that stakeholders, FIFA and AFC develop an alternative plan that would retain the core elements of the CRWG proposals, comply with FIFA Statutes and expand the Congress in time for the 2018 Annual General Meeting.

But for the record, let me state that we believe the professional game plays a critical role in growing the game in Australia. The A-League needs a new operating model to maximise its potential.

But the A-League is part of a football ecosystem and our Socceroos, Matildas, our youth teams and our grassroots are an equally important part of that ecosystem.

Only a truly independent governance structure can guarantee that the competing interests and finite resources within the ecosystem are managed in a balanced and independent way.

The game that all of us in this room love has come a long way since 2003. Having an independent board has played a huge role in that, and restored confidence in our sport from sponsors, government and the community.

Closing Remarks

Some aspects of the outcome will be positive for the game – such as the increased representation of women.

And while the FFA board is disappointed with other aspects of the outcome, we respect the right of members to give effect to their views through their vote.

The implications of today's vote will determine the future of football in this country. Each member has an obligation to ensure the concerns raised do not play out over time and that the three pillars of the game continue to be properly supported.

For my part, this obviously means that I will carry through with my stated intention not to seek re-election as Chairman at the upcoming AGM.

The precise detail and formalities arising from today's meeting will be worked through in the coming weeks and FFA will make announcements about that as required.

Finally, I want to say what a privilege it has been to serve as Chairman of FFA.

It's true that the prolonged debate over the governance of the game has taken up much of our time and energy.

But it's also true that much has been achieved, both on and off the pitch that I am very proud of.

Blue-chip corporate sponsors have continued to show faith in our game.

So have State and Federal Governments.

We concluded a record \$350m 6 year broadcast deal for the game in an ultra-competitive sports media marketplace.

Our operating revenue this year is forecast to be \$121m, up from \$103m the year before I took office which itself was up from \$77m three years before that.

The Socceroos, champions of Asia, are one of just 12 national teams out of 211 in FIFA to have qualified for the past 4 World Cups.

I am really proud that after the departure of our successful national team coach, Ange Postecoglou, we secured the services of two world class coaches, firstly Bert van Marwijk for the World Cup and now our own Graham Arnold for the upcoming Asian Cup title defence and our next World Cup campaign.

The Matildas, current runners-up and past champions of Asia, are a top-10 ranked football team, and our progress in the women's game overall is world-leading.

We have announced our intention to bid to host the 2023 Women's World Cup.

And overnight, our Joeys qualified for the FIFA u/17 World Cup in Peru next year.

The FFA board takes great pride in the progress we have made to support the women's game.

We have been able to dramatically improve pay and conditions for Australia's women players and promote the women's game to a new generation of girls and young women.

The A-League, despite its very real challenges, has continued its upward trend, including in club asset values.

FFA has worked hard on expansion plans with strong demand from bidders to enter new clubs in the competition.

The FFA Cup is thriving and the participation rate in our game continues grow, already being the highest club participation sport in the country.

These are all reasons to be optimistic about the future, and why I and the board have fought so passionately to maintain the independence of the board.

I want to thank everyone who has supported the FFA board during a challenging time for the game.

My fellow directors have been thoroughly professional, collegial and supportive throughout.

The management team, led by David, is superb. It punches well above its weight given the enormous range of issues domestically and internationally that football has to deal with.

I hope, for all the reasons I've mentioned, that our game reaches its full potential.

END