



# **Capital Football Academy Review**

**Report Extract**

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**An Extract from the Report on the Review of the Capital  
Football Academy**

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**October 2007**

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***This is an extract of the full report on the review of the Capital Football Academy and does not contain sensitive and confidential information outlined in the findings of the original report.***

***It does however clearly articulate the recommendations and the implementation plan in the original report.***

## 1.0 Executive Summary

The development of elite junior sports participants can be a controversial topic, especially when it involves taking players away from their home clubs or integrating age groups. In ACT football, players (both male and female) are selected at an early age to participate in the Capital Football Academy (CFA also referred to as *the Academy* in this report) and ACT Academy of Sport (ACTAS) squads aimed at elite player development and identification for higher level teams.

The ACT has performed very well given its size and is often said to 'punch well above its weight' in the context of football nationally providing representative players to the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS), Young Socceroos, Joeys, Matildas, Young Matildas and the Select XI at the Friendship Games for U13 boys. The ACT is also viewed as innovative in its development of junior players and supporting structures and resources, including the introduction of small sided games and the adoption of the AIS style of play.

In examining the current health of the Academy and the current challenges at operational level, this report aims to identify the key strategic issues that may well provide the way forward as well as a plan for ongoing improvement for the Academy and more broadly for Football in the ACT. The review has taken into account existing documentation, agreements and plans including the *Review of Technical and Coaching Development in the ACT Soccer 2004*, *Capital Football Academy Vision 2005- 2007*, *Capital Football Strategic Plan 2005-2007*, and the *Football Federation Australia Technical Development and Identification Review*. The *FFA National Football Development Plan* was released at the end of this review process and its implications will be considered as part of the implementation process. Consultation has taken place with a representative group of stakeholders either through direct interviews or by way of surveys and written submissions.

The review also aimed to deal directly with factual, structural and strategic challenges and opportunities and sift through peripheral and often counterproductive personality issues, which while common in sport, need to be managed. The report does not provide a set of technical 'quick fix' recommendations but takes a more strategic approach requiring buy-in by all stakeholders leading to action and implementation.

Generally the ACT is producing good results and the overall strategy is working and the Academy demonstrates a model that is far ahead of other states at the moment. ACT football has the additional advantages of the proximity of the AIS and the obvious benefits that that network of coaches and support services can provide. The ACT also has the geographical advantage over other states when it comes to player selection and travel for competition and training.

Some of the relationships with key partners however are not as good as they could be and there is a 'greyiness' in some understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each of the partners. This often translates to friction at operational level and the day-to-day management of the program and its activities and communication at all levels could be improved.

Many of the clubs seem unsure or critical as to the overall benefits that the Academy and ACTAS provide to local football. Some see it as 'taking away' their skilled players rather than viewing their club as a key step in the development pathway for young talented players. Other clubs however do recognise the benefits of the Academy and ACTAS programs and have adapted their own programs to reflect their objectives and playing and coaching style. The Academy needs to be able to measure its success and promote the benefits to player and coach development in the broader community.

There is also a common interpretation of elite sport as having the negative connotation of 'elitism' rather than the positive message expressed by the term 'high performance' and the top-down benefits that it can bring to many aspects of sport.

There have been mixed responses from players and parents. Players generally see the benefits of involvement with the Academy and ACTAS programs but pathways and competition remain inconsistent. Parents are generally supportive but again there is some friction created by operational and communication gaps and there are some specific issues relating to the girls' programs discussed later in this report.

More importantly there appears to be differing understandings of the goals and objectives of the Academy at CF Board level, as well as the roles of each of the key partners, and this can translate to confusion at management and operational level in trying to deliver those goals.

### ***A Way Forward***

The 2004 Technical Review states the original vision of the Academy as "enabling excellence in football" and the key objectives as:

- Adopting a best practice system of play for the Capital Football Academy
- Establishing a transparent pathway for elite player development including involvement in sufficient competitively challenging games
- Professionalising the management of the Academy

The Capital Football Strategic Plan 2005-2007 commits to implementation of the recommendations in the 2004 Technical Review and to promoting pathways and excellence.

The FFA National Football Development Plan 2007 aims to improve the overall technical standard of the Australian player base and provide clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders involved in supporting the national pathway.

It must be remembered that the Academy is a Capital Football program and if it is therefore to be a key link in the national pathway the goals and objectives need to be clarified and clearly articulated by the CF Board and implemented by CF management. If this is the case then I would suggest there are three key steps in ensuring the future success of the Academy and the ongoing improvement of football in the ACT. These steps are interdependent and would need to be carried out sequentially in order to ensure maximum effect. The recommendations outlined later in this report will provide suggested implementation plan for each step.

### **1. Strategic Direction and Commitment**

There needs to be a renewed examination and articulation of the purpose, objectives of the Academy and its place in Capital Football, ACTAS and the ACT football community. Once this is done a commitment will be required to redeveloping a shared vision, objectives, funding and support.

### **2. Relationships with the Partners – Roles and Responsibilities**

A commitment to the national pathway by CF will need review and restatement of the relationship with FFA and ACTAS. A clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each party and commitment to the broader plan will be required before anything at operational level can be agreed upon.

### **3. Operational Activities and Practices**

Once the above steps have been taken and there is a clear understanding and commitment to the plan, then the 'mechanics' and operational practices can be re-stated, consolidated and confirmed.

There is also an opportunity for Capital Football through the Academy to bring a culture of excellence and high performance, rather than one of perceived elitism, to all aspects of the sport in the ACT including players, coaches, competition and club development.

## **Conclusion**

Overall there is strong support for the Academy and compared with other states the Academy is seen as a leading model in Australia. The FFA plan will continue to evolve with regard to junior high performance development and the Academy is well poised to play a key role in that evolution. Funds available for Academy development are limited and maximising and growing funding and partnerships are crucial for future sustainability and growth. Most importantly there is a strong need for the continuous education of CF stakeholders as to the benefits of the Academy to the broader football community in the ACT.

Brendan Lynch  
October 2007

## **2.0 Background, Purpose and Scope**

The development of elite junior sports participants can be a controversial topic, especially when it involves taking players away from their home clubs or integrating age groups. In ACT football, players (both male and female) are selected to participate in the Capital Football Academy (CFA) and ACT Academy of Sport (ACTAS) squads aimed at elite player development and identification for higher level teams.

In 2007, players from the age groups that compete in the FFA National Youth Championships (U14 & 15 boys and U15 & U17 girls in 2007) as well as the Friendship Games for U13 boys and Kanga Cup for U14 girls were given the opportunity to play with the Academy squads for training and competition. Academy squads for players

aged 11 to 13 were also selected for development and training prior to the winter season. These players returned to clubs for the Junior League (JL).

The Academy squads play in local competitions (through the 'Capital FC' club) at a level that aims to represent a significant challenge to their abilities and therein compete against the local clubs. The following applied in 2007:

- U13 boys - in the JL under 15s
- U14 boys - in the JL under 16s
- U14 girls - women's under 18s
- U15 girls - in Women's State League 1
- U17 girls joined the ACTAS women and played in the boys U15 league.

This year, the ACTAS women's squad had nine out of 15 players who were age eligible for the ACT under 17 squad but many chose not to be available for selection for the national championships for various reasons.

To provide an appropriate challenge for the U15 and ACTAS boys squads it was decided to play these teams against the newly formed Premier League clubs, the U15 playing the bye PL U18's and ACTAS the bye PL Pathway teams on the same day. Up until the end of July the U15's had managed only 4 games out of 9. ACTAS had fared better.

Academy teams play in the Junior League without accumulating points and there are no finals in the Junior League. The Academy teams in the Women's League, however, compete for points and are eligible for the finals.

Capital Football aims to promote the objects of Football. The elite development of players through the Academy and ACTAS is an intrinsic part of the development of Football in Canberra and the region. The concurrent improvement of the Premier League is also part of this development. Many, if not most, of the ex- Academy and ACTAS players are now playing in the premier league.

Implementation of the elite development strategy as outlined in the 2004 Technical Review is understood to have resulted in both positive and negative effects for players, parents, coaches, clubs and management. Understanding these is an important factor in moving forward.

Capital Football has supported full-time national training centre programs for men's and women's football through the ACT Academy of Sport since January 2005. The previous part-time programs were extended in order to provide a more integrated pathway for players from the Academy to the ACTAS programs. Until 30 June 2007, Capital Football employed the respective men's and women's ACTAS coaches but ACTAS now has that responsibility.

The ACTAS football programs are jointly funded and managed by Football Federation Australia (FFA), Capital Football and ACTAS. Representatives from the three partners, including the coaches, form the Joint Management Committee (JMC) which meets about twice a year. The main role of the JMC is for partners to advise each other of any critical issues as they arise as well as establish and review an effective management plan (currently outlined in a four year agreement, 2005-2008) that is inclusive of all program

partners and in-line with appropriate program partner policies. The ACTAS programs are essentially designed to provide for the needs of players in national squads and develop talented players with potential to progress to AIS and national level through quality coaching, training and competition, facilities and support services.

### **Purpose and Scope of the Review**

The review aimed to:

1. Examine the performance of the Academy and ACTAS squads.
2. Examine the level of support given by the men's premier league clubs in providing appropriate and regular competition for the Academy 15s and ACTAS.
3. Examine the governance and management of the Academy program, including the delivery through the Technical Department and League Services as well as allocation of resources and financial opportunities and risks, as well as compliance with competition regulations
4. Highlight strategies for continuous improvement as outlined in the 2004 Technical Review and in comparison with other similar programs
5. Determine the benefit from a management, operational and financial perspective of Capital Football's involvement as a partner with FFA and ACTAS in the national training centre agreement.

### **An Inclusive Process**

The review process was designed to include the representative views of CF board members, member stakeholders and clubs, players, coaches, management, staff and officials, parents, and other individuals interested in the success of Academy, as well as other organisations who can provide advice and support to the process such as Sport and Recreation Services ACT, ACTAS and Football Federation Australia.

### **Limitations**

As with many review projects they are often a 'snapshot in time' and can only report on the facts as they currently stand. As stated above, consultation took place with a representative group of stakeholders through interviews or by way of surveys and written submissions. There is often a challenge with the time allocated to the consultation phase of reviews and the availability of some stakeholders. The limiting factor of the survey method is that not all those who were offered to participate were able to do so.

### **3.0 Summary of Findings**

The ACT has performed very well given its size and is often said to 'punch well above its weight' in the context of Football nationally providing national representative players and coaches, although the most recent results in the 2007 National Youth Championships are seen as disappointing from a competition results perspective. The ACT is also viewed as innovative in its development of junior players and supporting structures and resources, including the introduction of small sided games and the adoption of the AIS style of play.

Generally the ACT is producing good results and the overall strategy is working and the Academy demonstrates a model that is far ahead of other states at the moment. ACT football has the additional advantages of the proximity of the AIS and the obvious benefits that that network of coaches and support services can provide. The ACT also has the geographical advantage over other states when it comes to player selection and travel for competition and training.

Some of the relationships with key partners however are not as good as they could be and there is a 'greyness' in some understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each of the partners. This often translates to friction at operational level and the day-to-day management of the program and its activities and communication at all levels could be improved.

Many of the clubs surveyed seem unsure or even critical as to the overall benefits that the Academy provides to local football. Some see it as 'taking away' their skilled players rather than viewing their club as a key step in the development pathway for young talented players. Other clubs however do recognise the benefits of the Academy programs and have adapted their programs to reflect the objectives and playing and coaching style of the Academy.

There is also a common interpretation of elite sport as having the negative connotation of 'elitism' rather than the positive message expressed by the term 'high performance' and the top-down benefits that it can bring to many aspects of sport.

There have been mixed responses from players and parents. Players generally see the benefits of involvement with Academy and ACTAS programs but pathways and competition remain inconsistent. Parents are generally supportive but again there is some friction created by operational and communication gaps and there are some specific issues relating to the girls' programs discussed later in this report.

Funds available for Academy development are currently limited. This however should not hinder forward planning and the setting of long terms goals. There should be recognition that maximising and growing funding and partnerships will be crucial for future sustainability and growth.

#### **3.1 Objectives of the Academy**

The 2004 Technical Review states the original vision of the Academy as "enabling excellence in football" and the key objectives as:

- Adopting a best practice system of play for the Capital Football Academy
- Establishing a transparent pathway for elite player development including involvement in sufficient competitively challenging games
- Professionalising the management of the Academy

The Capital Football Strategic Plan 2005-2007 commits to implementation of the recommendations in the 2004 Technical Review and to promoting pathways and excellence.

The FFA Football Development Plan 2007 aims to improve the overall technical standard of the Australian player base and provide clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders involved in supporting the national pathway.

There appears to be differing understandings of the goals and objectives of the Academy at CF Board level, as well as the roles of each of the key partners, and this can translate to confusion at management and operational level in trying to deliver those goals. It must be remembered that the Academy is a Capital Football program and if it therefore is to be a key link in the national pathway the goals and objectives need to be clarified and clearly articulated by the CF Board and implemented by CF management.

### **3.2 Key Relationships**

As outlined in the ACTAS agreement with the Academy and FFA, Program partners should establish and maintain an environment that promotes continuous improvement – expertise, innovation, planning, management and evaluation are critical to achieve this end.

A Joint Management Committee (JMC) has been established with representation from each of the 3 partners. The role of the JMC is to approve the annual operational plan including performance targets, activities, services, and associated budget each year including:

- Approve and monitor the annual budget for the program
- Formally monitor and review the performance of the program twice annually.
- Ratify selection criteria, processes, and agreed squad for ACTAS scholarships.
- Fulfil, monitor, and evaluate agreed actions and strategies from previous management meetings to ensure the ongoing success of the program.
- Appoint and appraise ACTAS Coaches according to agreed procedures.
- Jointly and efficiently manage any program related issues

The Coaches and program partners are jointly responsible for advising each other of any critical issues as they arise and establishing an effective management plan that is inclusive of all program partners and in line with appropriate program partner policies. ACTAS manages the JMC approved annual budget and the Coach is responsible for managing expenditure within the JMC agreed annual budget. The day-to-day management of the program are be the responsibility of the Coaches with administration support being provided by ACTAS and Capital Football.

The Coaches, in consultation with the National Coach (where applicable) and ACTAS will complete an annual sport plan and will assist JMC members to review the program biannually emphasising improvement and innovation. Strengths, weaknesses,

opportunities and key strategies will be determined annually as a part of program reviews.

The partners contribute funds and services annually in line with agreed contribution levels as detailed below. An annual budget is endorsed by the JMC before the commencement of each financial year.

It would appear that the current relationship between ACTAS and Capital Football is not as healthy as it should be. This is demonstrated by breakdown in communication and confusion of roles and responsibilities between the parties resulting in difficulties with operational delivery including the booking of facilities, grounds, lights and referees.

### 3.3 Competition and Pathways

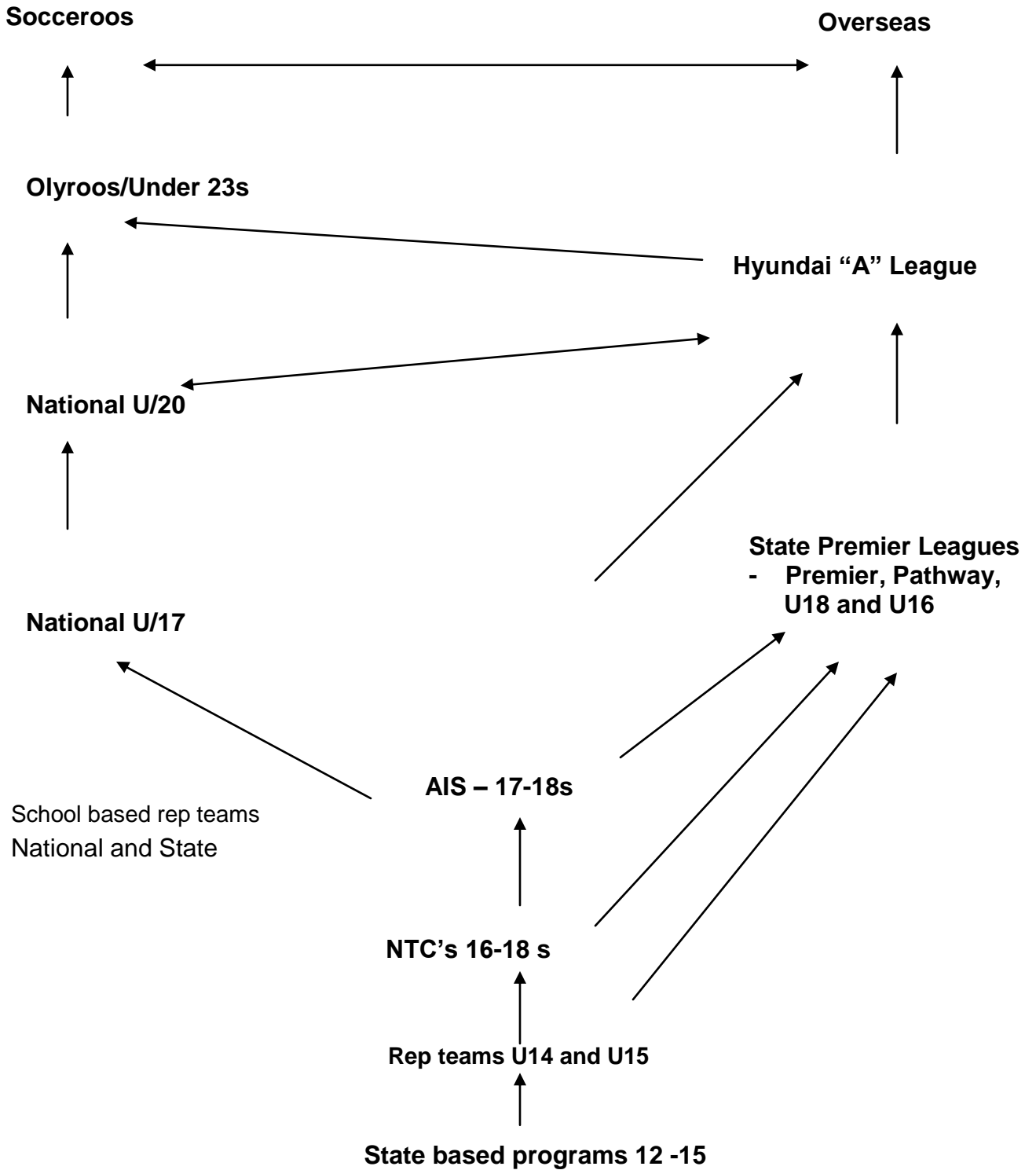
The ACTAS coaches ideally require 30-35 games per season for their players. While the structure of the Academy provides a very good training platform, it is the improved standard of competition and 'match hardness' that coaches see as the essential ingredient to future improvement.

The CF suggested competition structure is:

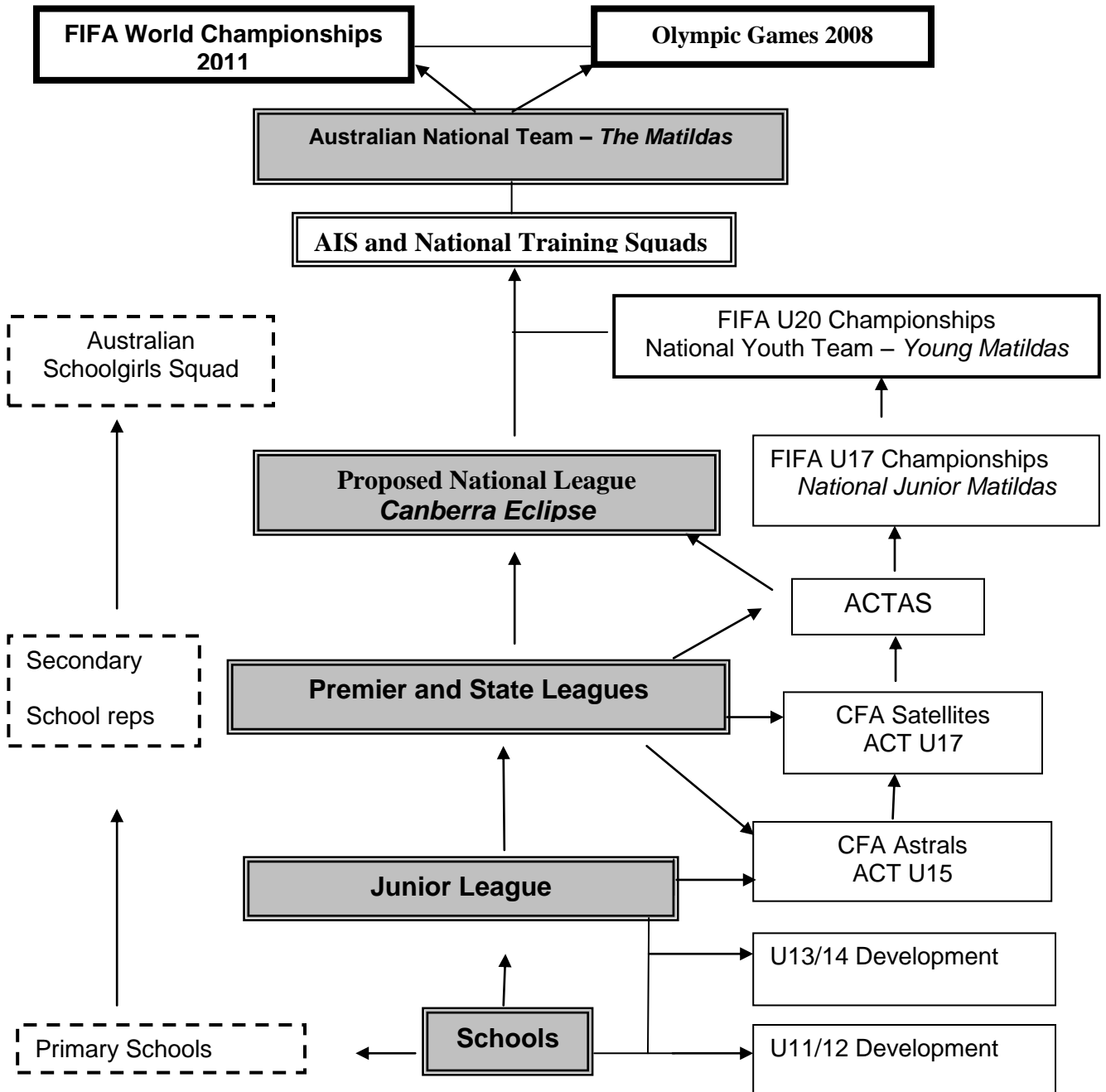
<b>Premier League</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	
Premier Pathway	ACTAS men	ACTAS Women	Boys 15's
Premier 18's	CFA 15's	CFA 17's	WPL
Premier 16's	CFA 14's	CFA 15's	SL1

- There is common consensus that Academy and ACTAS players would gain optimum benefit from genuine competition. The level of competition should be determined to meet the high performance objectives of the program. There is also a suggestion that the Academy squads would benefit from playing in the tougher NSW Premier League.
- The introduction by FFA of the National Youth League and Women's League over the next few years will go a long way to providing the future direction for the Academy. This may mean a 2 year transition strategy is required as a lead in to a longer term plan.
- The 2004 Technical Review recommended the introduction of a Zone-based premier division across the 4 CF Zones, but this has now changed to a 2 Zone competition. The new Premier League structure should benefit both Academy and non-Academy players.
- The Academy, the PL clubs and ACTAS could ideally plan together on a year to year basis as the FFA itself works to improve the pathway. Programs must evolve to meet specific needs of gender and age group.
- Once the National Youth Championships have been completed, there is a need for opportunities for those players not associated with ACTAS. In 2008 The Premier League 16's competition in the new structure should complement the PL 18's.
- It should be noted that the Academy teams are not necessarily the final ACT representative teams. Non-Academy players could well be part of a representative team.
- A link between the Academy and an A League Club would provide a further step in the pathway for ACT football.

The current Elite Pathway for Men is set out below



The current Elite Pathway for Women is set out below:



### 3.4 Players and Parents

The players' survey found that overall the development pathway in place for local football players is clear and understood by local footballers. A majority of Academy and ACTAS survey participants stated that there is a clear progression from club football to the implemented development pathway and opportunity for talented players to receive quality training and facilities.

However many club participants raised the following issues:

- There is a lack of communication of player pathways to all club players. There is a perception that a select few players are being notified about trials or opportunities for development that exist in the ACT area.
- It is hard to be selected in the Academy program if you are not selected in the first year. This disadvantages late developers and players that were unable to participate in the first year for whatever reason.
- The development pathway in the ACT is unclear for players that are not selected in the ACTAS squad after the u15's. This is a very young age for players to run out of development opportunities.
- There is a lack of opportunities for players coming out of the ACTAS squads especially in female football. Female players do not feel encouraged to play high level football in the older age groups above the age of 18.

Regarding ACTAS and Academy squads playing against local clubs as a part of the regular season, the survey results found that a majority of local players felt that ACTAS and Academy squads have no other option than to play against local clubs. The local competition provides a good level of football without having to travel to competitions outside the ACT. The current situation also provides a challenge for local club footballers to test themselves against some of the most talented junior players in the ACT.

Some ACTAS participants suggested that the current situation could be improved by the re-establishment of the National Youth League and the establishment of a National Women's League. With the absence of these leagues the current situation could also be helped with including the ACTAS and Academy squads in the local competition ladder. By doing this it will help create a more realistic match environment and decrease the loss of enthusiasm from playing numerous training games.

A majority of players found the ACTAS and Academy games against local clubs as beneficial to their personal development and their team's development. The local games allow the ACTAS and Academy squads to apply technical skills and tactical team play in a game situation. The local clubs provide a number of matches during the season and varied styles of play.

Survey participants expressed that the benefits to their personal development and their team development could be improved by adding games against interstate teams from similar representative academies, or giving the games a competitive nature such as making the ACTAS and Academy squads a part of the local competition points table.

A majority of Academy players see their future development in the hands of the ACTAS program. However, if not selected in the ACTAS program Academy players face a major problem and see their only option is to return to club football which is often seen as a

regressive step and more effort is needed to ease players back into club football and manage what can be a difficult time for them.

Most Academy players found the facilities, equipment, opportunities and experiences provided by the Academy program are what they had expected from a high quality development program. Comments made for improvement of the program include:

- Provide more opportunities to play teams from other representative programs outside the ACT during the year.
- Reduce the cost for Academy families
- Increase support for players who struggle with the Academy training program e.g. helping players through their football weaknesses

ACTAS players added that additional improvements could include:

- Training could be improved with video analysis
- Provide more opportunities to play teams from other representative programs outside the ACT during the year.

The majority of ACTAS players feel that they were well prepared to make the change from the Academy program to the ACTAS program. The only negative responses are from the ACTAS women's program. These negative responses originate from the perceived gap between the Academy training and the standards of the ACTAS program.

Overall the survey found a positive effect to other aspects of the player's lives outside of football such as education, social and family life although some ACTAS squad members highlighted negative effects to their social life due to commitments required to the ACTAS program. However there is also a view by many within the sport that too much is being asked of players at a young age risking burnout and early disillusionment with the game. The Australian Sports Commission's Junior Sport Framework encourages sports to ensure that the aspect of fun is not lost to junior sport and to ensure care is taken in identifying what age is appropriate for children to specialise.

In regard to the "cost-benefit and value for money" the two key issues identified are the capacity to pay and perceived outcomes. Parents pay approximately \$1050.00 for their child's involvement in the Academy. There are however additional costs which can include such things as physio musculoskeletal assessment, travel and accommodation. While many parents saw value for money in the program others said that care must be taken to ensure that for those with less capacity to pay, that the combined costs of phase payments and additional costs do not become prohibitive. CF needs to continue to promote access to Academy bursaries to clubs and members.

Other specific issues identified by parents and players included the need for development programs to include and integrate structured learning for goal keepers including specific skill development and the development of positional judgement and team play. Many saw the value in having a "home" for the Academy to allow for more interaction between players and coaches from different squads.

There were however some specific issues with the women's program including:

- A turnover of coaches during this year's program
- A playing squad in which a number of players' skills levels were too low
- No effective links with what has to date appeared to be the next level of this elite development pathway to ACTAS

- Confusion over the role and benefits of playing squads and training squads
- Inconsistency in policy on collection of fees
- A lack of clarity about participation in the Academy and selection for the Nationals which did little to enhance the Nationals experience as a playing challenge. In fact 9 out of 15 ACTAS players were age eligible for the ACT under 17 squad but many chose not to be available for selection for the national championships.

Suggested actions to improve the women's program include:

- Establishing clear and well understood development pathways which will attract and encourage girls to stay involved in elite football. This should include effective individual monitoring and feedback and setting of challenges which operate beyond a single season.
- Consideration be given to not building each season around an Academy playing squad in the local competition – for example, an alternative could be specialised training sessions in addition to club sessions together with games against other representative teams from around the region
  - This could be especially appropriate for younger girls where larger numbers could be encouraged to participate in Academy programs
  - It may increase the support for the Academy from clubs which are seeing their players bring skills back into their teams rather than losing elite members
  - It provides opportunities for development flexibility by having a skills-based approach rather than a focus on training sixteen players simply to make up playing squad numbers
- If playing squads are used, movement amongst members to offer challenge should be considered (this may be as simple as exposure to the next level of training). This could particularly be the case for the more experienced players who are looking to experience ACTAS/TDP as exposure to the elite levels of women's football in the ACT.
- Earlier selection of coaches and managers so that development groups can have familiarity and continuity – expectations and programs can be established without disruption
- Review the costs of the Academy for individual participants and ensure clear value for money.
- Maintain a clear distinction between the Academy as a development program and ACT representative teams.

### **3.5 Clubs**

There is a mixed feeling within clubs in the ACT as to the benefits of the ACTAS and Academy programs. Some clubs see selection as 'losing' their best players to the ACTAS/ Academy program and reducing the overall standard of the Junior League, downgrading the image of the club football and leaving a very weak competition that provides little competition for the ACTAS/ Academy squads with some saying that the local competition can be seen as a little more than an ACTAS/ Academy training ground. Taking players away from the clubs to play in the ACTAS/ Academy squads is downgrading the effectiveness of clubs as development tools whilst also affecting the club culture and image of local clubs.

Other clubs however such as Woden Valley Soccer Club (WVSC) recognise Academy and ACTAS as the only providers in the ACT that are capable of delivering legitimate elite junior player development programs. In response to the 2004 Technical and Coaching Development Review recommendation of the identification and development of a preferred 'style of play' that could be learned and adopted through the ACT, WVSC has taken the initiative in developing and implementing club-based programs that align with the Academy model by providing an age-appropriate introduction to the specific best practice curriculum for player development and appointing and developing coaches based on their capacity to deliver the preferred curriculum and meet the developmental needs of young players. The objective is to facilitate the ongoing development of players based on a common style of play and skill set which will enable ease of transition for club level players on their selection into the Academy program, and provide more enjoyable, higher quality training and playing experiences for the vast majority of players who remain at WVSC, which in turn will assist in raising the standard of club football and improve coaching.

In looking at other recommendations from the 2004 Technical Review (*Recommendation 12 - Develop and implement communication strategies to engage local clubs in the Academy and Recommendation 20 - ACT style of play documentation and supporting training guides to be provided to ACT clubs*) a majority of clubs who responded to the survey feel that the Capital Football development pathways are clearly communicated and easily understood.

Others, however, feel that the content such as selection criteria, training programs, focus of training and aim of development pathways should be better communicated to the ACT football public; the development pathway lacks an end goal without an ACT A-league or NSW premier league team for the men or national competition for the women; The current development pathway is not sufficient to cater for the amount of talented players in the ACT; and the transition from the Academy to the ACTAS program is a problem area for the ACT development pathway. Some players do make the ACTAS squad and continue on the development pathway but many players are left without a clear pathway and may have lost any affiliation with their original clubs.

The majority of clubs who responded felt that there could be better communication on selection criteria. However, it was commented that the development strategies and goals are well communicated including the preferred style of play as advocated through some of the CF coaching DVD's and seminars.

Clubs commented that some play games against ACTAS and Academy squads but do not have any interest in the result because it does not affect their competition. Playing for points would encourage competitiveness. Clubs are losing players to the Academy and ACTAS program during the season which leaves very weak competition for the ACTAS/ Academy squads to play against.

Most clubs feel that the Academy squads playing against an opposition above their age is beneficial, however it is relative to the ages, strengths abilities and stage of development of the two teams. The games should be played at a level that suits their physical, technical and emotional capacity.

The Academy playing against local clubs at an older age group is seen by many clubs as beneficial, however, this is only as a substitution of a better alternative. One

alternative recognised as a better solution is playing other representative training programs from outside the ACT in co-operation with Soccer NSW and FFA.

The current mixed gender games may be beneficial for the girls Academy team but they are not beneficial for the club teams.

More than half of the clubs who responded say they have benefited from players returning or signing with their club after gaining training and experience through the Academy or ACTAS programs. The ACTAS and Academy players returning from the program and playing in the local competition bring with them great technical skills however there can be resentment, loss of passion, fatigue and problems from feelings of being 'discarded'. A clear step in the pathway is needed for these players to ensure they understand their options, and importantly that the clubs are ready to deal with them and manage their situation.

A number of solutions were also suggested to increase the benefits for clubs from having an elite academy:

- If there were programs for younger players in the under 8's to 12's during the off season the clubs would benefit from these training programs
- ACTAS/ Academy squads should play outside the local competition and players could still be a part of their clubs
- There is enough time during the season for ACTAS/Academy squads to play in organised friendlies with other academies or representative sides from outside the ACT.

### **3.6 Coaches**

The coaches associated with the Academy view it as having a solid framework and feel they could work more closely in conjunction with the Academy management team in providing a more structured education and development processes for coaches in the broader football community, enhancing current talent identification and selection processes.

There is also the opportunity for this group of senior coaches to provide technical advice and consolidated recommendations on high performance matters to the CF Board and management team. The establishment of the Coaches Standing Committee in 2008 should provide this forum.

### **3.7 Referees**

The surveys and interviews produced several comments centred around the coordination and standard of referees. The Capital Football Referees Technical Committee aims to establish a Referees' Academy for intensive education and development of a small group of referees with a view to accelerated advancement through to Level 2 or Level 1 depending on the potential of the candidates. The purpose of this Academy would be to improve:

- the educational opportunities and coaching for young referees with potential
- retention by concentrating some resources on the very sensitive 15 – 20 yr age bracket
- orientation and experience of young referees before they encounter senior football

This group would ideally provide a ready-made cohort of referees to be considered for attendance as our organisation's representatives to National Youth Championships, National Secondary Schools Championships, other elite tournaments and perhaps also the National Academy Challenge, should it be a permanent fixture on the FFA Calendar. The following activities could be provided for this group of referees:

- Regular targeted seminars and education sessions
- Exposure to Premier League Under 18 competition by rostered appointments to such games in teams of three (hence 9 or 12 members)
- Preparation for elite tournament representation
- Accompaniment to fixtures of coaches and mentors
- Review of other games
- Self assessment of games
- Assistance in gaining interchange and/or elite tournament appointments

### **3.8 Home for the Academy**

There is strong support for CF's move to establish a home for the Academy at Kambah No. 3. Many see this as the opportunity to centralise the Academy's activities and promote exchange of information for coaches, players and parents. Sport and Recreation Services ACT are generally supportive of this approach and discussions are continuing with CF management.

### **3.9 Futsal**

Capital Football-Futsal is the body responsible for the development, conduct, and promotion of the sport of Futsal in the ACT and surrounding region. Capital Football-Futsal is affiliated to Football Federation Australia and FIFA

A range of elite and development programs are also implemented by Capital Football-Futsal including the selection and management of all ACT Futsal squads representing the Territory at State level during National Futsal events held at various times throughout the year. Capital Football-Futsal is also responsible for hosting FFA Futsal events held in Canberra from time to time. Capital Football-Futsal currently has approximately 3000 members made up of 1700 juniors and 1300 senior players.

The ACT is one of the most competitive associations on the Australian Futsal scene, consistently winning numerous National Championships at all age levels. ACT also contributes significantly to the Australian men's and women's Futsal teams.

Capital Football-Futsal senior competitions range from social and mixed leagues, catering for the entry level competitor, to the elite premier leagues for open men and women respectively, operating both summer and winter senior competitions.

ACT teams are selected once annually to represent the territory for National events, including the National Australian Futsal Championships. Teams are selected for the ACT in the following age categories: Under 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, Youth (19), and Open. Selected players in the ACT are exposed to selection for National Teams by competing at the State level through these events. Coaches are selected by Football Federation

Australia and generally require Levels 1 and 2 Futsal accreditation. Further coaching opportunities are available to State coaches through the appointment to Australian Representative teams.

Referees have opportunities to further themselves with appointments to National and International events, including the annual FFA National Australian Futsal Championships. Selection to travel with and officiate at matches involving Australian touring teams is another representative opportunity for referees.

A future Academy is being considered for Futsal.

### **3.10 Other Models**

As mentioned earlier, the Academy model is setting the standard for other football states in Australia. Football Victoria is currently going through a review of its own and will likely adopt some of the key principles already in place in the ACT.

When looking at other football codes it is interesting to note the Brumbies Rugby development pathway. Brumbies Rugby adopts a representational model at the Junior Academy level. That is, talented players are identified at around 15 years of age and brought together regularly for skills development clinics and strengthening and conditioning sessions, but they continue to play for their home clubs. This group then forms the pool for selection for the U16 ACT representative team competing at the national championships against other state representative teams. The potential future pathway for these players would be:

***Junior Academy*** ➡ ***Brumbies Academy*** ➡ ***Brumbies Vikings ARC Team*** ➡ ***Brumbies Super 14 Team***  
➡ ***Australian Wallabies***

The parallel for Capital Football would see the link to an A League team from ACTAS and the Academy in the pathway as mentioned above in Section 3.3.

### **3.11 Communication**

A common theme running through this report is the need for improved communication at all levels, ranging from communication about day-to-day operational matters, selection policies and training programs through to CF conveying its important messages about the role, objectives and benefits of the Academy and ACTAS. The review process has set out to engage CF's stakeholders and gather their feedback at a particular point in time. There is a need for ongoing structured communication and regular engagement of stakeholders and the football community in the ACT. A structured two-way communication strategy will be important in ensuring accurate information can be disseminated as well as providing for regular feedback and consultation with the stakeholders.

## 4.0 Recommendations

As stated earlier, the report does not provide a set of technical 'quick fix' recommendations but takes a more strategic approach requiring buy-in by all stakeholders leading to action and implementation.

I would suggest the following recommendations and options are considered to assist the future development of the Capital Football Academy and the ongoing improvement of football in the ACT. The first 3 recommendations are core recommendations and seen as key interdependent steps and would need to be carried out sequentially in order to ensure maximum effect.

### Core Recommendations

#### **Recommendation 1 - Strategic Direction and Commitment**

*I would recommend that a facilitated meeting of the Capital Football Board be conducted to examine and articulate the purpose and objectives of the Academy and ACTAS and its place in Capital Football and the broader ACT football community. This meeting should aim to develop a shared vision, commitment to the purpose and objectives of the Academy, and clearly identify funding, sponsorship agreements and support.*

When Recommendation 1 is carried out, a commitment to the national pathway by CF will need review and restatement of the relationship with FFA and ACTAS. A clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each party and commitment to the broader plan will be required before anything at operational level can be agreed upon.

#### **Recommendation 2 - Relationships with the Partners**

*I would recommend that a facilitated meeting of the high performance key partners from CF, ACTAS and FFA be conducted to review their relationship with respect to the purpose, objectives and management of the Academy and ACTAS programs. This meeting should clearly articulate the roles and responsibilities of each of the partners and outline a clear plan going forward including:*

- *provision of appropriate competition and clear pathways*
- *employment, conditions and management of coaches*
- *ACTAS program management and budget*
- *communication protocols, reporting and program review*

*This group would identify the agenda and issues to be addressed at operational level outlined in Recommendation 3.*

Once the above steps have been taken and there is a clear understanding and commitment to the plan, then the operational practices and current delivery procedures can be reviewed, adjusted and confirmed to ensure alignment with the agreed plan and

objectives. The agenda for this meeting will come from the meeting of the partners above and the suggestions outlined in the findings of this report.

**Recommendation 3 - Operational Activities and Practices**

*I would recommend that a meeting of the key technical and administrative personnel within the partnership be conducted to clearly articulate the operational and administrative responsibilities of each of the partners. This group will make any adjustments required to the current delivery of the ACTAS and Academy programs to ensure complete alignment with the agreed objectives in Recommendation 1 and the agreed plan resulting from Recommendation 2.*

Once the core recommendations have been carried out, a clear set of actions needs to be developed to ensure the delivery of the required adjustments identified in the core recommendations. The following supporting recommendations will assist in that delivery.

**Supporting Recommendations**

There is an opportunity for Capital Football through the Academy to bring a culture of excellence and high performance, rather than one of perceived elitism, to all aspects of the sport in the ACT linking players, coaches, competition and club development.

**Recommendation 4 – Promote a Culture of High Performance**

*I would recommend that Capital Football considers re-branding its current elite activities as elements of an overall High Performance Program promoting a culture of excellence to all aspects of football in the ACT.*

An ongoing challenge is to promote the benefits that the CF Academy brings to the broader ACT football community. A structured communication and education strategy will be important in ensuring accurate information is disseminated to the CF stakeholders. The strategy should also promote ongoing engagement and consultation with the stakeholders.

**Recommendation 5 – Communication and Education**

*I would recommend that Capital Football reviews its current communication strategies and develops a structured plan to promote the benefits of the CF Academy to its stakeholders and to promote their ongoing engagement and consultation.*

**Action Plan**

***Once the core recommendations have been carried out, a clear set of actions needs to be developed to ensure the delivery of the required adjustments identified in the core recommendations.***

## 4.0 Implementation Plan

The following draft plan reflects the core recommendations and actions required for implementation:

Rec	Task	Objective	Date	Participants
1	Conduct a facilitated meeting of the Capital Football Board to examine and articulate the purpose and objectives of the Academy and its place in Capital Football and the broader ACT football community.	Develop a shared vision, commitment to the purpose and objectives of the Academy, and clearly identify funding, sponsorship agreements and support.	30 Oct07	CF Board  Facilitator
2	Conduct a facilitated meeting of the high performance key partners from CF, ACTAS and FFA to review their relationship with respect to the purpose, objectives and management of the Academy and the ACTAS programs.	<p>Articulate the roles and responsibilities of each of the partners and outline a clear plan going forward including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ provision of appropriate competition and clear pathways</li> <li>▪ employment, conditions and management of coaches</li> <li>▪ ACTAS program management and budget</li> <li>▪ communication protocols, reporting and program review</li> </ul> <p>Identify the agenda and issues to be addressed at operational level outlined in Recommendation 3.</p>	1&2 Nov07	CF President CF CEO FFA HP Director ACTAS Manager ACTAS Assistant Manager  Facilitator
3	Conduct a meeting of the key technical and administrative personnel within the partnership.	<p>Clearly articulate the operational and administrative responsibilities of each of the partners.</p> <p>Identify adjustments required to the current delivery of the Academy programs to ensure complete alignment with the agreed objectives in Recommendation 1 and the agreed plan resulting from Recommendation 2.</p>	Nov07	CF CEO CFA Management and staff ACTAS Management Coaches

## 5.0 Appendices

### 5.1 Methodology

The Review used the following three-stage methodology:

#### Stage 1:

- Review existing and historical information and reports.
- Assemble a small representational focus group to examine and confirm the Terms of Reference for the Review.
- Prepare stakeholder interview questions based on the agreed Terms of Reference
- Publish the terms of reference on the CF website to provide members with the opportunity to make a written submission
- Examine other models

#### Stage 2:

- Conduct interviews and consultation with key stakeholders including a sample of CF board members, member stakeholders and clubs, coaches and officials, parents and staff, as well as other organisations such as Sport and Recreation Services ACT, ACTAS and Football Federation Australia.
- Provide the opportunity for written submissions/survey interviews from others including players, parents and coaches

#### Stage 3

- Collect and analyse the data from the interviews and submissions/surveys and develop initial findings
- Discuss the initial findings with the CEO and the Board and develop draft recommendations
- Prepare the draft report with the findings and recommendations and a proposed implementation plan
- Present the draft report to the CEO and the CF Board
- Complete the final report including

### 5.2 Sample Surveys

As part of the Academy Review it was decided that a survey would be the most appropriate method to gather the opinions of certain ACT football populations. Two surveys are implemented, the first is a survey aimed at attaining opinions from ACTAS, Academy and club players. The survey is designed to be easily completed by all player age groups from U13's to the premier league and ACTAS youth squads. All questions in the survey are directed towards the purpose of the review and to deliver the expected outcomes of the review



# **CAPITAL FOOTBALL ACADEMY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES SURVEY 2007**

**A survey instrument to gain the views of Capital Football Academy (CFA), ACT Academy of Sport (ACTAS) and club players (non-CFA/ACTAS) in Canberra and the region.**

This survey is a part of an independent review conducted on behalf of Capital Football. This research is seeking feedback from local clubs, players, parents and referees on the Capital Football Academy's and ACTAS youth squad's development strategies. We think you can provide valuable information that will add greatly to this review.

**Please fill out and return this survey to [capitalfootballreview@gmail.com](mailto:capitalfootballreview@gmail.com)**

**Return before: Friday, 14<sup>th</sup> September 2007**

**This survey is designed to gain the views of Capital Football Academy (CFA), ACT Academy of Sport (ACTAS) and non CFA/ACTAS (club) players in Canberra. Please complete the survey to the best of your ability. This is**

**your chance to express your own personal views on the CFA and ACTAS development programs.**

**Personal details**

**What age group/competition do you participate**

**What best describes your participation**

CFA

ACTAS

non CFA/ACTAS (club football)

**Survey**

**1. Is there a clear, easily understood development pathway for football players in the ACT?**

**Example: Social Football ➡ Competition Football ➡ Representative Football**

Yes

No

Comments-

**2. Do you think that the CFA and ACTAS squads should play against the local competition sides as they have this season?**

Yes

No

Unsure

Comments-

**3. Do you see the games between the CFA or ACTAS squads and local clubs as beneficial to your personal/team football development?**

Yes

No

Unsure

Comments-

**4. In your age group are there enough opportunities to further your football development?**

Yes

No

Comments-

**This section of the survey is for CFA or ACTAS players only. Thank you for your participation.**

**CFA Players only**

**5. What is the next step in your football development after completing the Capital Football Academy program? (Please pick only one option)**

Club football

opportunities outside the ACT

ACTAS program

other

Comments-

**6. Does the Capital Football Academy program provide you with the facilities, equipment, opportunities, experiences and personal football development you expected from the program?**

Yes

No (please comment)

Comments-
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**Both CFA and ACTAS players**

**7. Please rate between 1 and 10 the impact on other aspects of your life (e.g. Social, education, family, rest time etc) from your involvement in the CFA or ACTAS programs. (Select only one option for each aspect)**

**Social**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Negative

Positive

**Family Life**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Negative

Positive

**Education**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Negative

Positive

**Rest time**

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

Negative

Positive

**ACTAS players only**

**8. Does the ACT Academy of Sport program provide you with the facilities, equipment, opportunities, experiences and personal football development you expected from the program?**

Yes

No (please comment)

Comments-
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**9. Do you feel that the CFA programs provided you with the skills needed to participate in the ACTAS program?**

Yes

No

Comments-
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**Thank you for your participation in this survey your responses are much appreciated.**



# **CAPITAL FOOTBALL ACADEMY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES SURVEY 2007**

This survey is a part of an independent review conducted on behalf of Capital Football. This review is seeking feedback from local clubs, players, parents and referees on the Capital Football Academy's and ACTAS youth squad's development strategies. We think you and your club can provide valuable information that will add greatly to this review.

**Please fill out and return this survey to [capitalfootballreview@gmail.com](mailto:capitalfootballreview@gmail.com)  
Return before: Friday, 14<sup>th</sup> September 2007**

**This survey is designed to gain opinions from local football administrators at the club level. Please fill the survey out to the best of your ability and give comments where possible**

**1. Do you feel that the Capital Football Academy (CFA) and ACT Academy of Sport (ACTAS) squads should be using the local clubs and the local leagues to gain game situation experience as part of their development strategies?**

Yes

No

Unsure

Comment -

**2. Has there been clear communication of the Capital Football Development pathways?**

Yes

No

Comment-

**3. Is there a clear, well known and understood development pathway for ACT football players?**

Yes

No

Comment-

**4. Has there been clear communication of the CFA and ACTAS programs selection criteria, development strategies and goals?**

Yes

No

Comment-

**5. From a club perspective are the games between the CFA or ACTAS squads and local clubs beneficial, motivating and competitive?**

Yes

No

Comment-

**6. Do you feel that the CFA squads should be playing against an opposition above their age?**

Yes

No

Unsure

Comment-

**7. Do you feel that the CFA should be participating in mixed gender competition?**

Yes

No

Unsure

Comment-

**8. Has your club benefited from players joining your club after gaining training and experience through the CFA or ACTAS programs?**

Yes

No

Comments -
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**Thank you for participating in this survey. If you would like to contribute further to this research we may be able to organise an interview time. To organise an interview please contact Brendan Lynch by Phone: 0417 682 641**

**or email: [brendan.lynch@exsport.com.au](mailto:brendan.lynch@exsport.com.au)**

**Thank you for your participation.**



## **CAPITAL FOOTBALL ACADEMY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES 2007**

An independent review is currently being conducted of the Capital Football Academy. The review is seeking feedback from local clubs, players, parents and referees on the Capital Football Academy's and ACTAS youth squad's development strategies. As a parent we think you can provide valuable information and any comments you wish to make will add greatly to this review.

### **The Review aims to:**

1. Examine the performance of the CFA and ACTAS squads in terms of:
  - Delivery of outcomes against objectives, such as performance in interstate events, national competitions and national representation.
  - Alignment with current stakeholder expectations of the elite development program outlined in the 2004 technical review and the new FFA Technical Development and Identification Review (TDIR).
  - Costs and funds consumed against budget expectations and sources including comment on achieving sponsor expectations (especially the Tradies Group) and parents.
  - Implementation of elite development pathways.
2. Examine the level of support given by the men's premier league clubs in providing appropriate and regular competition for the CFA 15s and ACTAS.
3. Examine the governance and management of the CFA program, including the delivery through the technical department and league services as well as allocation of resources and financial opportunities and risks, as well as compliance with competition regulations
4. Highlight strategies for continuous improvement as outlined in the 2004 Technical Review and in comparison with other similar programs

5. Determine the benefit from a management, operational and financial perspective of Capital Football's involvement as a partner with FFA and ACTAS in the national training centre agreement. Include:

- i. Assess the relationship between the CFA and the respective boys and girls ACTAS programs.
- ii. Assess the value of Capital Football's contribution to the ACTAS management plan and Capital Football's involvement, for example, in scholarship selection and technical direction of players, program planning and coach development
- iii. Assess the benefits to players as a result of involvement in ACTAS development programs

**As a parent you may want to also comment on the cost-benefit and value for money in being involved in the program and other alternatives you may have explored.**

**Please send your written submissions to Brendan Lynch at [brendan.lynch@exsport.com.au](mailto:brendan.lynch@exsport.com.au) by Monday 17 September 2007**

### 5.3 Stakeholders consulted

<b>Stakeholder</b>	<b>Representative</b>	<b>Interest (in the CFA program and ACTAS)</b>
Clubs	Clubs were invited to reply to the survey or make a submission *	CFA and ACTAS as competitors in leagues
Players	CFA and non-CFA and ACTAS were surveyed	Pathway, cost-benefit and value for training and development
CFA direction/management	Ian Shaw, Alex Butt, Bernie Evans, Paul Whittingham,	Strategic, technical and management improvement
CFA coaching	John Mitchell, John Gibson, Lino Fiorese	Technical and coaching direction and improvement
CFA parents	Parents were invited to provide a submission or comment *	Alternative options; cost-benefit and value for money
ACTAS program	Emery Holmik, Andrew Stainley, Mike Milovanovic, Robbie Hooker	Partner in NTC agreement; progress over years and future operational and strategic direction of ACTAS
FFA	John Boulton, High Performance Director	Partner in the NTC agreement; release of national technical review
CF Management	Heather Reid, League Managers, Steven McIntyre, Slav Koumdjiev	Management, operational and financial considerations
CF Board	Board Members were consulted as group and invited to discuss individually	Objectives of the program in relation to broader strategic goals of CF
Zone representatives	Kim Chapman	Representative of club and district opinion
Referees	Daniel Murphy	Appointments for games and referee development
Sponsors	Greta Evans (The Tradies Group)	Sponsor expectations
ACT Government – Sport and Recreation Services ACT	Sue Marriage, Director	Program meeting the broader goals of sport in the ACT

\*A number of individuals also requested personal interviews and contributed to the consultation process.

## 5.4 Documentation Reviewed

- Review of Technical and Coaching Development in the ACT Soccer 2004,
- Capital Football Academy Vision 2005- 2007
- Capital Football Strategic Plan 2005-2007
- Football Federation Australia Technical Development and Identification Review.
- ACTAS – Capital Football Agreement
- Draft review of elite football in 2007 - John Mitchell
- Draft CFA review outline 2007 - Ben Stephenson
- Discussion paper August 2007 - Alan Bradbury
- FFA talented player pathways outline 2007
- Copies of CFA/CF policies, duty statements and agreements
- Australian Sports Commission's Junior Sport Framework
- FFA National Football Development Plan

## 5.5 Project Management

### ***Brendan Lynch – Project Manager***

Brendan Lynch is a consultant specialising in strategic planning, program development, governance reform, organisational development, workforce planning and human resource management. He has worked with International, National and State Sporting Organisations as well as conducting major projects for the Australian Sports Commission.

Brendan was previously Manager of Corporate Services with Swimming Australia overseeing the organisational reform, operational management, sport development and commercial growth of the sport. Prior to that, as Program Manager of Volunteer Recruitment for the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG), he headed the team responsible for the successful delivery of the 60,000 volunteers for the Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games. He has since acted as an advisor to a number of Olympic, Paralympic, Commonwealth and Asian Games organising committees, as well as the IOC's Olympic Games Knowledge Service.

Brendan is a former Chair of the Advisory Council to the ACT Minister for Sport, a current executive member of the ACT Olympic Council, a member of the Advisory Council to Volunteering ACT and a Fellow with the Institute of Sport Management.

### ***Ben Stephenson – Research Assistant***

Ben Stephenson has completed a Bachelor of Sport Management at the University of Canberra and was formerly an International Exchange Student at George Mason University, Virginia, USA. He currently works as an operations assistant intern for Canberra Stadium and within the Programs Department at Sport and Recreation Services ACT, as well as a number of operational roles at the Australian Institute of Sport.

Ben has been involved in a number of major events including the 2007 Australian Youth Olympic Festival (Football), and the 2006 Canberra Stadium, ACT Junior Rugby Union Grand Final Weekend as well as the 2006 Werri Beach Surf Open. Ben has been involved in a number of activities for Capital Football, most importantly carrying out the initial component of this review of the Capital Football Academy.