



PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM REPORT

2022

SUPPORTING THE PLAYERS BUILDING THE GAME



Professional Footballers Australia

2/55 Walsh Street, West Melbourne VIC 3003
1300 650 497 / info@pfa.net.au

www.pfa.net.au



In the spirit of reconciliation, Professional Footballers Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia.

We also acknowledge and pay our respects to the Traditional Owners and Elders past, present, and emerging throughout Australia, and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters, laws, and culture. They hold the memories, traditions, cultures, and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia.



The PFA is a NoCO2 business certified by the Carbon Reduction Institute (CRI).



The PFA is a proud member of the Welcome Here Project, which supports businesses and services throughout Australia to create and promote environments that are visibly welcoming and inclusive of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) communities.



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FROM THE PRESIDENT

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For the first time in a long time, I was recently reminded just how fragile a professional career in football can be, and consequently the critical importance of support for players.

Having spent the whole off-season preparing for the 2022/23 A-League campaign, it took just 45 minutes into the season for me to go down with an injury.

Since then, I've faced a three month lay off from my career, and have yet to step foot back on the pitch.

I'm now contemplating the very real reality of this perhaps being my last season in professional football.

At 38, I'm not getting any younger and I'm yet to discover a time machine that will take me back to my youth!

Given that situation, I'm eternally grateful that through the PFA and its Player Development Program, I have been able to ensure I have taken plenty of steps to help me prepare for life after football.

Through the program I've been able to explore many interests off the pitch, receive support at various points of my career during hardships, as well as embark on a Masters of Sports Management, through Torrens University.

My studies outside of football have been so important to my education and understanding of both the business world and the sports industry.

I feel that despite the immediate uncertainty I'm facing over my career this season, I have comfort that if retirement - a reality that all footballers will one day face - arrives, I will be more

comfortable in transition out of the game and into the next phase of my life and career.

Hopefully I will still be able to play a role somewhere in football to help continue on my contribution to the game.

Unfortunately not all players are prepared for the inevitability of retirement and transition out of professional sport, nor are they as lucky as me to have such a long career in it.

Even though I count myself unlucky to have been injured this season, many others have faced far earlier exits from the game.

Whether through injury, missing out on a contract or other reasons outside of their control, you can easily face transition out of the sport and not be prepared when the time comes.

So it's vital that anyone considering having a successful career taps into the PFA - our player relations team and particularly our Player Development Program.

On the following pages of the report it is incredibly pleasing to see the level of engagement from players across the A-Leagues and our members based overseas with the PDP.

It will no doubt ensure they are equipped to handle the many and varied challenges that come with life as a professional footballer.

A handwritten signature in green ink, which appears to be 'A. Wilkinson'.

Alex Wilkinson
PFA President

FROM THE HEAD OF PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

R I T A M A N K O W S K A / P F A H E A D O F P L A Y E R D E V E L O P M E N T



2022 was a year for record breaking in the PFA Player Development Program.

Perhaps a reflection of the times, during the 2021/22 season the PFA provided over 467 confidential counselling sessions for our members through the Program, which was a remarkable 160% increase on the year prior - indicating the vital importance of providing mental wellbeing services to athletes.

We also allocated a new record of 167 education grants to ensure players could develop themselves off the pitch and prepare for the inevitable transition into new careers, as well as helping to facilitate coaching courses for over 50 current and former players to ensure they commence their coaching journey with the right credentials.

In addition to this, we welcomed over 300 players into our now established Past Players Program, hosting 10 events across all major cities, to ensure our game continues to give back to – and reengages those players who gave their lives to the profession.

In the past two seasons, we have added to the core delivery for the Player Development Program, increasing important training modules and also aimed to innovate.

This year, we shifted our learning to a new online learning platform the Players' Journey – which is the main means through which players now engage with the PDP.

The Players' Journey continues to focus on supporting players in relation to their careers, wellbeing and preparation for retirement, but does so through an

enhanced and more flexible platform where players can access these learnings' at a time that is convenient to them.

As Australian football continues to recover and evolve post-pandemic, player development has never been more important, and I am excited to share these findings with you in this report.

A handwritten signature in green ink, which appears to be 'Rita Mankowska'.

Rita Mankowska
PFA Head of Player Development

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Key Partners



STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

VALUES:

MISSION:

Supporting the Players & Building the Game

WHAT DOES THE COLLECTIVE NEED:

Clarity, Care and Support

HOW DOES THE COLLECTIVE ACHIEVE THIS:



COURAGE

We stand by what we believe in. Our greatest achievements have come in the face of opposition. Our position is sustainable because our cause is for the good of the game and the players.



RESPECT

We hold a deep respect for the game's institutions and profession of playing the world's greatest game for a living. We understand that the wellbeing of the game is a precondition to the wellbeing of the players.



INTELLIGENCE

We adopt a knowledge-based approach to finding solutions to major challenges facing the game and the players. We believe in continuous learning and development.



TRUST

Everything we do is based on the unique trust that exists with our members. The foundations for that trust lie in our deep commitment to our vision.



WORLD CLASS

We are a global body that has a major role to play in the world game. Our world view embraces the game and the players in our region. Through striving for excellence, we seek to advance football in Australia and our region.

PROGRAM MODEL

The Player Development Program (PDP) operates with an interactive system, culture, and communication model, with players sitting at the centre. In doing so, we aim to equip players with the necessary skills that enhance their wellbeing, offer the best chance of fulfilling their potential during their careers, and of course, prepare players for retirement.

The PDP acknowledges the demands of professional sport and is designed

to meet players where they are in their journey, both on and off the pitch. To ensure this is the case we, adopted a multi-channel approach to communication whilst also recognising the importance and impact of players' support networks by providing resources to their family members, agents and coaches.

In pursuit of the objective of being a world class program, we are fortunate to be able to collaborate and learn

from experts both internationally and domestically through FIFPRO, the World Players' Association and the Australian Athletes Alliance.

These partnerships, combined with our commitment to research and review, allow us to regularly benchmark our programs and services and support our commitment to consistent quality improvement.

The scope of the program is as follows:



**National Team
Players**



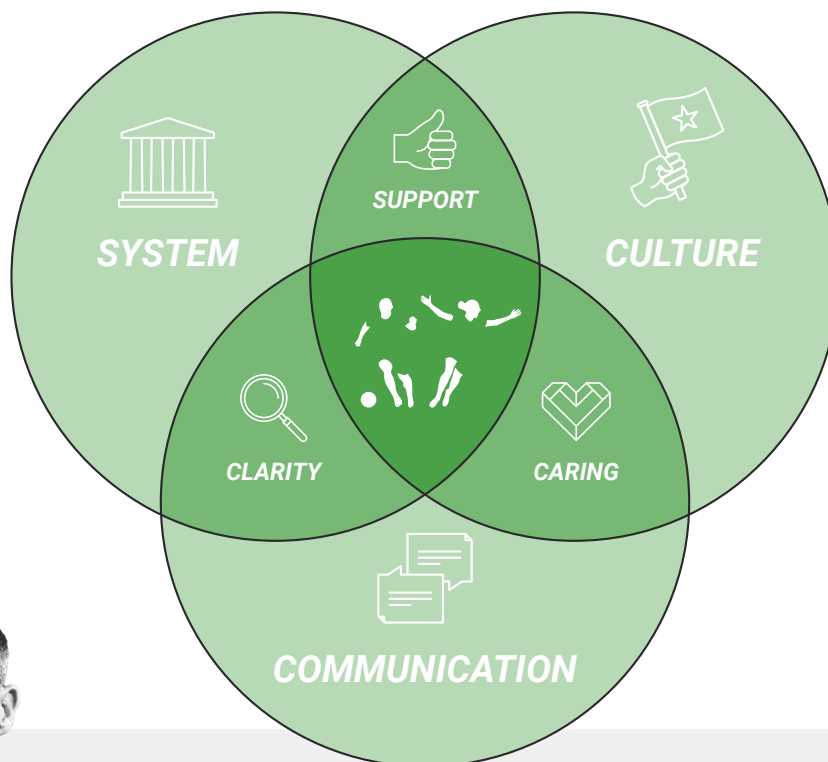
**Domestic Professional Leagues
- A-League Men and Women**



**Overseas based
Australians**



**Past
Players**



“

The Player Development Program ensures we can get the very best out of ourselves on and off the pitch and have support we can count on at anytime both during and after our playing careers.

- Mat Ryan, Socceroo and PFA Executive

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT TEAM



Rita Mankowska
Head of Player Development, Past Player Program and Matildas



Emily Figueroa
Sydney FC (W), Central Coast Mariners & Newcastle Jets and Lead PDM



Jake Timpano
Sydney FC (M), Western Sydney and Macarthur PDM



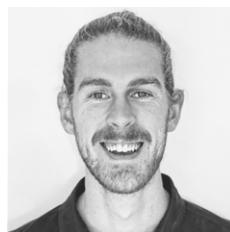
Erin Clout
Overseas Female and Melbourne City PDM



Jon McKain
Socceroos, Overseas Male and Brisbane Roar PDM



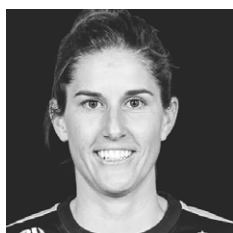
Jack Hannath
Adelaide United PDM



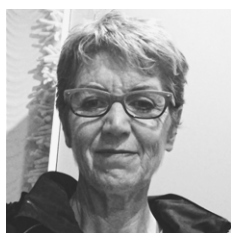
Alex Bevilaqua
Perth Glory PDM



Cameron Watson
Melbourne Victory and Western United PDM



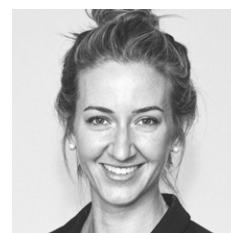
Caitlin Munoz
Canberra United PDM



Helen Regan
Wellington Phoenix PDM

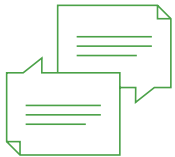


Brett Holman
Past Player Program Ambassador



Grace Gill
Past Player Program Ambassador

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2021/22



467

Confidential Counselling Sessions



23

Skin Cancer Checks for Past Players



167

Record Round of Education Grant Applications



300

Members in the PFA Past Player Program



97.5%

of players were either extremely satisfied or satisfied with the Player Development Program



96.5%

player satisfaction rating of their PFA Player Development Manager



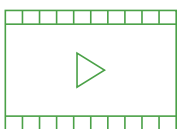
47

Players attended PFA Centralised coaching courses



3

players graduated from the PFA Deloitte Salesforce Work Placement Training Program



87

Players received Highlights Packages



10

Past Player Events were held across most major cities



3

Players' Journey Webinars interviewing Past Players



85

players undertook concussion, betting and match fixing reporting education



144

players attended PFA Wellbeing workshops



Rebekah Stott

received national recognition for her charity work for the Leukemia Foundation

WELLBEING

The PFA Player Development Program provides players with access to a variety of programs and services to support their physical and mental health and wellbeing. The PDM plays a vital role in identifying the needs of each player and as required will triage players to the most appropriate

support services or programs. These services have been developed with the necessary scope to meet each individual's needs, ensure confidentiality as required and that expert support is available at all times.

Psychological Support Network

All players and their partners/immediate family members have access to the PFA's Psychological Support Network. This confidential and nationwide service consists of psychologists, psychiatrists and psychotherapists, who provide players with support in a variety of areas. This includes:



Depression



Anxiety



Relationship Breakdown



Addiction



Grief

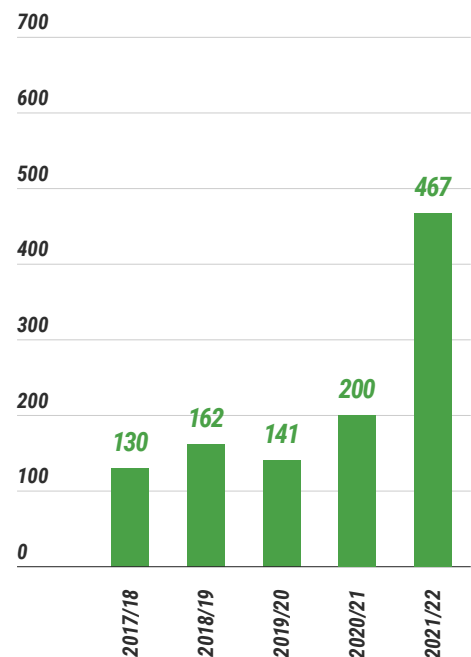


Body Issues



Performance Anxiety

Psychological Support Network Consultations over the past three years :



Physical Support Services

- Skin Cancer Checks undertaken for Victorian-based Past Players
- Game Ready recovery machines provided to 12 players to support their recovery from injury

Education

Concussion education workshops were attended by all A-League Womens and Mens Clubs. This focused on:



Signs of distress



Impacting factors



Self-care



Available support services



144

players attended PFA Wellbeing workshops



CAREER

Our Career program aims to ensure players develop a deep understanding of the industry as a whole, focusing on players rights and responsibilities, to help players maximise their time in the sport.

Acknowledging that every player is at different stages in their career, has unique goals, challenges and opportunities, we focused on delivering content that will help new players transition successfully into professional football and thrive in a new environment.

The 2021/22 season saw unparalleled growth with record numbers of players engaged in off-field development, accessing education funding, undertaking various types of study and gaining their coaching qualifications.



167

Record Round of Education Grant Applications



27

education modules were created and launched on the Players' Journey platform



85

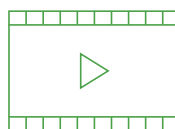
players undertook concussion, betting and match fixing education



ALL

new A-League Men's and Women's and Junior Matildas players participated in the PFA's Industry Understanding Workshop, which focuses on:

- The career path;
- Agents;
- Playing overseas; and
- Players' rights and responsibilities.



77

highlights and scouting packages were produced for players



“

It's a great chance to get an understanding of the processes coaches go through on a day-to-day basis.

- Mark Milligan on the PFA Centralised Coaching Courses

RETIREMENT

Helping players to prepare for the universal and inevitable challenge of retirement is a key aspect of the Player Development Program.

With this in mind we aim to empower and fully prepare players for their eventual retirement, while still giving them the time, focus and skills to perform well during their careers. We do this by building their understanding of the different ways in which they can retire, exploring post football careers and incentivising off field development and education. Our goal is to ensure that players continue to have the support of the PFA long after they retire through our PFA Past Players Program.



300

members joined the PFA Past Player Program



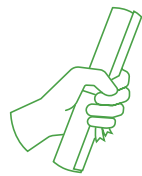
10

Past Player Events were held across most major cities



3

Players' Journey Webinars interviewing Past Players



Alex Wilkinson + Grace Maher

were awarded Torrens University Education Scholarships



3

players graduated from the PFA Deloitte Salesforce Work Placement Training Program, making them highly employable in the tech industry upon graduation



47

Players attended PFA Centralised coaching courses



PLAYER FEEDBACK

Before the conclusion of each A-League season, the PFA invited all members to give feedback on the PFA Player Development Program and staff.

Players shared personal feedback on all aspects of the program and program staff, with the objective of ensuring the PFA continues to deliver world class programs and services to Australia's elite professional players.

The findings encouragingly highlighted increased levels of engagement and high levels of satisfaction with the broader program and program staff. In addition the findings also outlined a number of measures that could be adopted to improve program quality, delivery and efficacy, with greater integration of the program into clubs being a high priority for the players.

What was clear from comments provided by players was that PDMs at a number of clubs face significant barriers in undertaking their work, including scheduling, restrictions of time and limited access to players.



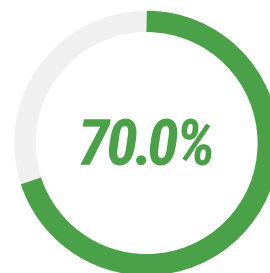
of players were either satisfied or extremely satisfied with the Player Development Program



of players said that the Player Development Program was either very or extremely important for players



of players were satisfied with their PFA Player Development Manager



of players feel they have had good or excellent development as a person this season



“

This is the players' own program, developed by them and run for them. It continues to go from strength to strength and is a vital part of a player's career.

- Jamie Young, Western United

PFA PARTNERS



Torrens University



AusTraffic



Beyond Bank



FIFPRO



World Players' Association



Football Australia



Australian Professional Leagues



Players' Trust

COURAGE
WORLD CLASS
INTELLIGENCE
TRUST
RESPECT



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