



## FUND FOOTBALL FAIRLY (ACT)

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# OPEN LETTER TO THE CANBERRA FOOTBALL COMMUNITY

To: Football players, coaches, administrators and volunteers  
Family members  
Football supporters and enthusiasts

Fund Football Fairly is a grass roots campaign group working with Capital Football and local football clubs to secure improved ACT Government funding for football in Canberra.

Football is by far the largest participation sport in Canberra but receives a fraction of the Government funding received by other sports. This is not fair.

There are 43,116 people who participate in football in Canberra on a regular basis. This is almost twice the number of people who participate in Rugby League, AFL, and Rugby Union combined, and more than the combined numbers of Cricket and Netball. Source: [AusPlay October 2023](#)

Despite the number of people participating in football regularly and passionately, the code has never been properly funded in Canberra. The historic lack of funding of football is reflected in the paucity of facilities available to the football community in 2024.

Fund Football Fairly is seeking to change this by drawing on the support of the local football community to lobby the ACT Government for fairer funding in 2024 and beyond.

### Three funding requests

In August 2024 Fund Football Fairly engaged in a consultative process with Capital Football and the local football clubs. Out of this process we identified three key and unanimously agreed upon funding requests.

These proposals are simple, and the football community is uniting around these aims. The three funding requests are as follows:

#### ***1. Deliver a significant capital works program to upgrade football facilities at local clubs***

- *Improved lighting.*
- *Improved playing surfaces.*
- *Immediate moratorium on ground hire fees until grounds and changerooms are up to an acceptable standard.*
- *Construction of all-weather synthetic pitches at all major playing hubs.*
- *Construction of modern clubhouses with administrative, meeting, function, and female friendly change rooms co-located at suburban playing fields.*



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### **2. Develop two dedicated football complexes, one northside and one southside**

- *The complexes are to be on a level with the new Regional Sports Complex at Jerrabomberra built by the Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council and are to include function, office, café, and meeting facilities.*
- *The facilities are to have a ground capacity of around 6,000 people fit for the purpose of hosting major games including local finals and the Australia Cup and Canberra United games.*
- *These complexes would match the physical facilities operated by the other codes and give football two physical locations to develop its activities. The complexes would be shared by local clubs.*

### **3. Implement a Sports Voucher scheme**

- *Create a sports voucher program and give each school age child \$300 per year to go towards sports participation costs.*
- *The cost of playing football is real issue in the community and many families struggle to come up with the thousands of dollars it can cost to have children enrolled in football programs. A sports voucher program would assist Canberra families with cost of playing sport.*

## **Costings**

On our estimate, the cost of delivering the proposals is in the vicinity of \$160 million. Of this, around \$140 million is infrastructure.

### **The proposed new football stadium**

Fund Football Fairly does not support the construction of the proposed billion-dollar stadium in the city nor upgrades to the GIO Stadium, at least, not at the expense of funding grass roots football infrastructure. Neither do we support ACT Government funding for a future men's A-League side. This is a separate discussion.

The discussion about the stadium indicates a future ACT Government may be prepared to invest a significant amount of money in football infrastructure. In our view, this investment should be directed towards developing better infrastructure at the grass roots level first.

To put this in perspective, the cost estimate for infrastructure outlined in the Fund Football Fairly request is around \$140.6 million, being 14.6% of the amount required to build the proposed billion-dollar stadium in the city.

### **Funding of other sports by the ACT Government**

There is no shortage of money when it comes to investing in other sports.



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The AFL receives \$28.5 million over ten years to host AFL games in Canberra. The Raiders receive \$2.6 million per year to support its men's and women's teams. The Brumbies receive \$1.78 million in annual funding to support its activities. The ACT Racing Club receives around \$8 million per year, amounting to funding of almost \$100 million over the last 13 years, to fund its activities, noting that horses do not vote.

These sports also receive significant funding support from the AFL, NRL, and Rugby Australia. Football does not receive this from its peak body or the A-League.

Even the Canberra Rowing Club with 200 members received \$1 million to build a new clubhouse. Cricket and the AFL received \$24 million to upgrade Manuka Oval with an immediate \$50,000 spent on upgrades. Netball received \$7.5 million to upgrade netball court surfaces at Arawang and Lyneham. Rugby Union received \$1.7 million to upgrade Phillip Enclosed Oval". Source: Media reports and ACT Sports and Recreation.

The ALP has just committed to give a future Big Bash Cricket franchise \$3 million a year and to build a 30,000-seat stadium in the Bruce precinct. At this stage, there is nothing for grass roots football in any of its proposals.

At the same time, the ACT Government would not spend a cent to support the location of a group in Canberra for the recent Women's World Cup, and despite lip service paid to women's sport, Canberra United will go under in 2025-26 unless the funding issue is addressed.

The historic lack of funding of football is reflected in the paucity of facilities available to football in 2024.

Other sports have excellent facilities that are the envy of the football community, including the National Hockey Centre, facilities at Phillip Oval and Manuka Oval for AFL and cricket, and marvellous facilities for the Raiders, Brumbies and Giants.

With the inappropriately located Throsby Home of Football off the agenda we believe it is time to fix the historic underfunding of football in Canberra and invest in the three funding requests.

### **Our campaign**

Fund Football Fairly is approaching the parties and candidates to seek their commitment for the three proposed funding items. We are looking to activate and energise the football community and draw upon our numbers to engage with the parties to secure long overdue funding commitments from Government.

Football in Canberra has never done this before, and with your support, we will be seeking to influence the outcome of this and future elections.



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### How you can help

Your support is critical for the success of our campaign. We would ask you to engage in the following activities:

1. Follow the [Fund Football Fairly – ACT Facebook](#) page and participate in our campaigns.
2. [Sign the Petition calling on the ACT Government to address the historic underfunding of football](#) in Canberra by committing to our three funding priorities.
3. Talk to your friends and teammates, your coach and your family, your WhatsApp group, and send this Open Letter and links.
4. Fund Football Fairly will be writing to the political parties and candidates to seek their commitment to support each proposal should they be elected. This response would then be circulated back to the football community prior to the election with a recommendation that you take into account those parties and candidates who support football in making your voting decision.

Without your engagement in this campaign and on election day grass roots football will continue to be ignored.

Thank you for your support.

Yours in football

The Convenors of Fund Football Fairly

Nick Houston: ANU Football Club, Director, VisAustralia Migration Lawyer.

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