

Football Northern Territory attend workshop on future of Indigenous Football with broadcaster and indigenous football advocate, Craig Foster and Australian Indigenous Football

Monday 19th August

Darwin, NT

Football Northern Territory's CEO, Bruce Stalder was pleased to attend a workshop with former Socceroo and well-known indigenous football advocate, Craig Foster alongside the Directors of Australian Indigenous Football (AIF) in Sydney, yesterday.

Following the success of the Australian Indigenous Football Championships under the auspices of AIF, held annually and with the third edition to take place from November 7-9 in Caboolture, Qld this year, FNT are strengthening their partnership with AIF and providing pathways for Indigenous players from youth to international representation.

'The Australian Championships is a superbly staged event with which we are delighted to partner and to provide opportunities for the representative teams chosen from the titles, the Indigenous Koalas and Indigenousroos, to participate in international competition', said CEO Bruce Stalder. 'We intend to facilitate these teams to play in the Arafura Games bi-annually following the phenomenal success of this year's event, where the Koalas won the Gold Medal and to seek additional international opportunities for them. Of course, our own talent is amazing, and the National Indigenous Teams provide the opportunity we are looking for to enable not just our players, but all Indigenous talent a chance to blossom and excel.'

FNT have taken a leading role in bringing Indigenous football to life and are making strong commitments to sustainable programs and strategic plans for the world game to provide opportunities for Indigenous nations to experience the beautiful game.

'Our Advisory Council have been an incredible support as we continue to build programs and commit to sustainable development and growth across the entire footprint of Northern Australia in collaboration with Football Qld and Football West. I was delighted to be invited to articulate our plans on The World Game platform with Craig and to have the opportunity to workshop the future of the indigenous game afterwards as we take important steps along the journey.'

AIF President, Ramone Close and former Futsalroo and member of the FNT Advisory Council, Bobby Wright also appeared on the SBS panel to discuss the collaboration between the two entities.

Wright pointed out the important steps being taken and that the new commitment to the Indigenous game and his passion for the cause: 'Since I first spoke with Bruce Stalder almost three years ago, we've come a long way and the Advisory Council has made an immense

contribution to strategic plans and the commensurate financial commitments as well as opening opportunities for funding to underpin our dreams which have been decades in coming to fruition. It's vital that we move forward step by step in a sustainable manner and deliver on the plans and commitments we make. AIF's commitment to #DreamingTheFuture is shared by all involved. The future of Australian football has a foundation that is respectful of our ancient culture and in which many more Indigenous players are lighting up the world.'

Close congratulated FNT for their advocacy and said that this year's championships were shaping up to break new ground: 'This year we have a youth tournament as well, for the first time, which is incredibly exciting and is another step to providing pathways for our people. Thanks go to SBS' The World Game for continuing to promote our game and to Craig Foster for being a strong advocate. Craig made a statement yesterday on our live chat which sums up our philosophy perfectly – "passion for Indigenous football is one thing, more important is passion for the empowerment of Indigenous people through football." Our aim is to see indigenous Australians not just playing, but administering, leading, coaching, broadcasting and across every role the beautiful game has to offer, and the Australian Championships are just one, but a central part of this mission. The workshop allowed us to further coordinate plans with Bruce Stalder and FNT, to discuss piloting other programs and to continue to strengthen the collaboration between the parties. The future is incredibly exciting and has the vibrant colours of the Indigenous nations proudly alongside the rich, multicultural tapestry of football.'

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