



By George Stavroulakis

# NEW D-DAY SET FOR A-LEAGUE EXPANSION

Football Federation Australia board will decide the future of A-League expansion on October 16 after the coup that swept chairman Stephen Lowy out of office

A-League clubs and Professional Footballers Australia, backed by state federations, NPL clubs and FIFA finally managed to wrest power from the Lowy family at an Extraordinary General Meeting of the FFA Congress on Tuesday.

And after getting a majority vote to change the constitution and open up voting to give clubs, players and women's football a bigger say, the Congress then voted to radically overhaul the A-League.

From next season in 2019, the A-League will split off from the FFA and become a standalone body working under licence from the FFA.

Congress voted unanimously for the A-League revamp to be ready to roll out by the end of March next year. But the massive shift has now put the planned expansion of the A-League in doubt.

A decision on the winning bids was set to be announced on October 31 - but in the immediate wake of the FFA Congress vote, A-League clubs privately admitted the announcement or even expansion itself could now be delayed.

Today FFA Head of A-League Greg O'Rourke admitted the expansion timetable is hanging in the balance. But he insisted expansion WILL still go ahead...but, at the moment, no-one quite knows when.

He is set to present his team's final report on the expansion options to a board meeting on October 16 where a final decision was expected to be made on which specific bids would get the green light.

Now though, the decision will be on whether or not the board should even make that decision.

With a new FFA chairman and likely new board directors to be voted in at the next annual general meeting, the current board may opt to leave the crucial expansion decision to the new directors.

However any new board may yet decide to put a halt on expansion until the new A-League body has been set up next year.



Or else the current board may still decide to go ahead with a decision which has been in the planning for the last two years, with clubs around the country investing heavily in their bids and proposals based on entering the A-League next season.

"You'll have other stakeholders suggest that it will be logical to wait for the next board to be constituted to go through the work the FFA management team has done and then make their decision based on that.

"I'm very clear on the options that face me - but I'm not very clear on what that board will decide."

According to sources close to the A-League clubs, a delay in the decision looks almost inevitable...which may then leave the successful bids with limited time to assemble a quality squad, forcing a further decision to push back expansion for yet another season to 2020/21.

"We should all know on October 17, and if it is that we are going to push ahead

and announce expansion then we'll do so," said O'Rourke.

"And if it's that we're going to delay the decision or delay expansion or whatever, then we will communicate that to the bidders very quickly.

"But at this point in time, I haven't heard anyone say that they don't want to expand.

"Even all the stakeholders that were in dispute with the existing board have said to me privately and also in our working groups that expansion of the A-League is a must."

He added: "What I would say is that it is not going to put expansion off.

"That is an option that is not even to be considered by anyone."

Listen to the full podcast for more on what O'Rourke is looking for in bidders, what went wrong with the A-League last season, and how he and his team are planning to fix things this season and who they have been working with - and the truth behind the infamous "music at corners" row!