



By George Stavroulakis

# Ikonomidis defies the Arnie boo boys

**Chris Ikonomidis has thrown his support behind Socceroos boss Graham Arnold after the Asian Cup, and believes the national team will only improve with more time under Arnold's reign.**

**Australia went** to the tournament in the UAE as defending champions, but were knocked out by the hosts at the quarter-final stage.

**Arnold copped** heavy criticism for the early exit, but Ikonomidis believes the Socceroos have a lot of potential with the coach at the helm.

**"It's the** start of a really exciting era under Arnie with the Socceroos, he brought in some great talent," the Perth Glory forward told FTBL.

**"There's so** much potential and we're going to get so much better as a group. The time the next qualifiers and the next things come around we're going to see a really exciting attacking brand of football that will put fear into countries when we come up against them.

**"It's always** as a player about working with top-quality people. I'm fortunate enough now to have two coaches, one at the my club and one with the national team, that are top quality and get the best out of me.

**"I just** found the system and the attacking style of play with Arnie in the Socceroos, I just thrive on that sort of attacking football. It was a bonus for me."

**Ikonomidis was** one of the standouts of Australia's Asian Cup campaign, scoring a goal and playing in every game as he made the left wing position his own.

**The 23-year-old,** who made his international debut under Ange Postecoglou against Macedonia in 2015, remembers his time at the tournament fondly.

**"I look** back at it as a positive month for me and also as a positive month for the team," he said.

**"It's something** special to play in your first major tournament and to feature as much as I did was fantastic for me. My family was very proud, everyone back at Perth Glory made me feel really, really nice about the month I had.

**"I look** back at the Asian Cup with fond memories and a really nice step for my career."



# FFA: Visa changes won't affect W-League

**International players will still be able to access visas to play in the W-League despite changes made by the Federal Government.**

**On Monday** morning, a statement from Immigration Minister David Coleman announced the changes being made to the Medium and Long-term Strategic Skills List.

**The changes** would allow professional footballers to be sponsored to work in Australia for longer periods of time but came with the minimum salary of \$120,000 being introduced.

**"Australia has** always been a competitive sporting nation, and these changes are a win for our local players, teams and fans," said Coleman.

**"Attracting top** international talent to Australian football clubs brings those players' skills and experiences from overseas and contributes to the knowledge and skills growth of Australian players. It means we can do even better on the international stage."

**This change** would've greatly affected overseas W-League players who earned a minimum of \$12,287 last season with a salary cap of \$300,000 in place. While it's rare for an entire salary cap to be spent, if it is divided equally between a 23-player squad, they would each receive \$18,549.13.

**But clubs** might not share funds around equally or use the entire salary cap.

**While the** Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), which indicates the minimum salary earnings of a player, came to an end with the 2018/19 W-League, significant changes would need to be made in order to reach the \$120,000



minimum on foreign players.

**However, after** further research and clarification, it was concluded a majority of the W-League's international players are here on Temporary Activity Visa (subclass 408) Sporting Activities. **This visa** allows for athletes to participate in "high-level sports training with a sporting organisation" and allows them

to stay up to two years. Following on from this, players must have a contract and a letter of support from a peak sporting body and not work outside their specified sporting activities to attain this visa.

**In a** statement on Monday afternoon in relation to the changes the FFA confirmed "foreign players will still be able to access other visa categories for entry into Australia as they have done so in previous seasons".

**However, players** could still be affected by the ruling depending on what visa they applied for but there are options to address this.

**The changes** introduced will likely have a positive impact on the A-League, however, it can't be ruled out that this wouldn't also be a positive if wages are increased for W-League internationals.

**Instead of** a Temporary Skill Shortage (TSS) Visa, which meant foreign players could only be granted a two-year visa, with the possibility to extend for a further two years, now an initial four-year visa can be granted, with an

opportunity to apply for permanent residency after three years.

**"Our clubs** compete in a global marketplace for players and the attraction of a long-term lifestyle in Australia is one of the significant factors in recruiting elite foreign players," FFA CEO David Gallop said.

**"This decision** also re-opens the pathway for foreign players to obtain Australian permanent residency, and the potential for them to become Australian citizens and available for selection for our national teams.

**"The mix** of foreign players with local players is important for the overall development and success of the competition."

## 2019 NPL NSW Men's 1. Next Games Round 2

### Round 1

16.03.2019

18:30 Sutherland Sharks - Hakoah Sydney

19:00 Marconi Stallions - Rockdale City Suns

19:00 Mt Druitt Rangers - Sydney Olympic

17.03.2019

15:00 Blacktown City - Sydney United

15:30 Manly United - Sydney FC Youth

17:30 APIA Tigers - Wollongong Wolves