

FOOTBALL FEDERATION AUSTRALIA (FFA) TODAY ADVISED THAT, IN LIGHT OF ONGOING DEVELOPMENTS SINCE ITS ORIGINAL ANNOUNCEMENT, INCLUDING STRICTER MEASURES IMPOSED BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19, THE TEMPORARY SUSPENSION TO SANCTIONED GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL COMPETITIONS AND ASSOCIATED TRAINING WOULD REMAIN IN PLACE UNTIL AT LEAST 31 MAY 2020.

EXTENSION OF THE SUSPENSION OF GRASSROOTS FOOTBALL IN AUSTRALIA



The decision is another in a series of measures taken by FFA in response to COVID-19 in consultation with its State and Territory Member Federations and the National COVID-19 Working Committee.

FFA Chief Executive Officer James Johnson said: "Since our initial announcement, there have been numerous declarations made by, and introduced, across all levels of Government. The measures have continuously tightened restrictions around community gatherings, and the measures announced by the Prime Minister recently increased these restrictions further. While we were not due to make a formal assessment until 14 April 2020, we felt it best to consider our position now in light of this most recent announcement.

"We have determined, with the full backing of all Member Federations, that the temporary suspension to sanctioned grassroots football competitions and associated training will remain in place until at least 31 May 2020. We will continue to stay in close communications with our Member Federations in the lead up to 31 May 2020, to ensure that

the individual circumstances of each state and territory in relation to the status of COVID-19 and the measures or restrictions imposed by individual State/Territory Governments are being considered.

"These are unprecedented times and at this moment, it is very difficult to predict what further measures will be introduced, or for how much longer current measures will be in place. As we have done with all our decisions to date, we will remain agile and responsive to the prevailing circumstances and still remain optimistic that our Member Federations, which are already considering what adjusted competitions will look like, will be able to complete the grassroots season this year.

"Any decision to resume grassroots football will be made in line with the Federal Government, taking into account the latest health advice at the time to ensure the safety and wellbeing of both the football and wider community, and in full consultation with our Member Federations and the National COVID-19 Working Committee. The safety of the

football community remains our priority.

"We recognise that our participants across the country are eager to understand what all of this means for them so we hope that the announcement today can give them some piece of mind and we ask that they remain positive during these difficult times. As a sport, we must continue to undertake our civic duty as a responsible citizen and do everything we can to contribute to the national efforts to slow down the spread of COVID-19. Football people are resilient, have a strong moral compass and, consequently, I am sure our community will understand this position.

FFA will continue to communicate material updates in the lead up to 31 May 2020.

In order to help the grassroots football community stay active and connected throughout the temporary suspension period, FFA recently launched an online Skills Hub, developed in association with each of Australia's nine Member Federations.

POWELL: "I MISS THE BANTER, CHANGEROOMS, SMILES AND MORE"

By Mark Stavroulakis

It was never meant to be this way for returning National Premier Leagues NSW Men's star and former Golden Boot award winner Blake Powell after his time in the A-League and playing overseas, signing for the Sutherland Sharks only to see his season stall.

Like everyone else across the globe, COVID-19 has had major impacts on the everyday lives whether it be their health, work and life in general has changed drastically. **For Powell**, the power of playing the game he loves has left a huge absence in his day to day routine.

"Personally, it has taken away football from me for now which is devastating.

"Football has been a massive part of my life and without being around that team environment four times a week makes it feel very strange.

"I am just taking all the precautionary measures to make sure my family and I remain safe.

"It's very sad to see just how many people's lives have been affected.

"I am feeling very grateful that I still have a job to go to."

Powell has been fortunate that his job with major electricity distribution company AUSGRID has continued amidst the postponement of the NPL NSW Men's competition thus far. **"As I** said, I am forever grateful that I still have a job to go to as it still gives me the opportunity to provide for my family as well as keeps my routine in check.

"I know that since the football lockdown I have been trying to self-isolate as best as possible whilst keeping up with my training schedule."

The Sutherland born attacker, who was given the honour of skipping the squad for the 2020 season, like so many teams, is following a rigorous training program set by the club.

"We have been given home fitness and football programs to keep us in check during this tough period which has been very helpful.

"I have also been able to transform my garage into a makeshift gym for strength sessions so that's been good in terms of changing things around as well as setting up drills in my backyard."

The 28-year-old stated that the absence of not being with his teammates has been a huge loss as well as missing the banter that is always healthy at the Shire based club.

"For sure the main thing I do miss is just being around the boys in the changeroom that is full of quality banter. **"Just hearing** the jokes, laughs and seeing everyone smile is a loss.

"Not training with them and not being able to put hard work with them all towards our objectives of winning matches is also another aspect I miss about not being able to play."

Powell believes that people's self-discipline with what is happening is what will get us through this tough period.

"My message to the football family is I want everyone to remain calm and to practice social distancing and good hygiene because if we all play our part, we can limit the spread of this disease and be back playing the game we all love a lot sooner."