



GRIDIRON AUSTRALIA STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-2019

“AMERICAN FOOTBALL – THE AUSTRALIAN WAY”

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Introduction

This strategic plan has been developed through consultation with representatives of the current member states of Gridiron Australia in conjunction with the board of directors. It is the hope that this document will provide some clarity on the direction of Gridiron Australia as the peak body for American Football in Australia over the next five years.

Brief history of the sport in Australia

American Football commenced in Australia in 1979 with the formation of the Waverly Oval Raiders. The Waverly Oval raiders were started by Stephen Jones with school and work mates.

In 1983 Teams from both New South Wales and Victoria started to form and play each other in a social competition.

In early 1984 an advertisement was placed over a Sydney radio station advertising for American football enthusiasts to assemble. The response was remarkable and seven teams formed in Sydney teams comprising enthusiastic amateurs who had been throwing the ball around on Sunday afternoons were formed.

The first season saw all games being played at a disused rubbish tip. There were no goal posts, no medical supervision and no insurance. The early pioneers did not wear helmets but found kick boxing protective headgear useful.

1984 also saw the first interstate clash when a team from Melbourne travelled to Sydney to play. NSW won the match 30-7. American Football had arrived in Australia.

Fred and Melba Burson were the first people that imported football equipment into Australia to use. They also did things like bring coaches out from the University of Hawaii for clinics at their own expense. Luckily for Gridiron in Australia Fred had the money to actually have the equipment on stock in Australia. Their efforts helped lay the foundation for the sport to develop in Australia so that other leagues could start up around the country

Also in 1984 the Australian American Football Conference was founded (later renamed the Australian American Football League).

In November 1989, the Grand Prix Challenge was held in Adelaide, a four-way competition involving Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and New South Wales. New South Wales went on to win the Challenge.

In 1990 the Down Under Bowl concept arrived in Australia and is still going strong. Each year individual American States are invited to field High School all-star teams, travel to Australia and spread the growth of the game down under. Games are played against local Australian teams and between US teams. These games are run by International Sports Specialists Inc. (ISSI), a company based in Utah, USA. 1998 saw the most successful year yet with 36 teams travelling to the Gold Coast in Queensland to compete in the Down Under Bowl.

Trans-Tasman competition came to Melbourne in January 1991 when Victoria played the visiting South Auckland Raiders from New Zealand, finishing in a thrilling 19-19 draw.

A series of interstate Bowl games were to be played between all major States in October/November 1991. The Victorians were rewarded with a good win. The following week saw the NSW state team go down to the Victorian Eagles at Olympic Park. This left Victoria as the National State Champions for 1991.

The National Gridiron League of Australia (NGLA) was formed in January 1991 “to govern and promote American football on the national level and to represent Australian gridiron on the international scene.”

Gridiron Australia (GA) was formed in 1994, with the aim of replacing the old National Gridiron League of Australia.

By 1995 American football was being played in every State and Territory in Australia, a total of approximately 100 teams.

In 1995 Darren Bennett became the third Australian to play in the NFL when he was selected as the punter for the San Diego Chargers. The first Australian to play in the NFL was Colin Ridgeway, who played Aussie Rules for Carlton in the 1960’s before being picked up by the Dallas Cowboys as a punter. After him came Colin Scotts, who went to college in Hawaii before being drafted to play with the Phoenix Cardinals and then the Houston Oilers in the middle to late 1980’s.

Gridiron Australia’s First National Championships were held in the national’s capital, Canberra, in January 1996. Both senior and junior teams from New South Wales, the ACT, Victoria and South Australia attended. South Australia won the Senior Championship 34-0 and New South Wales won the Junior Championship 12-8.

In 1996 24 US teams toured Australia and New Zealand as part of Down Under Bowl VIII. Both Victoria and South Australia recorded wins over US teams.

In 1997 the Australia Day Championships were held in Sydney, with Queensland taking the Championship.

In 1997 Australia resumed its international campaign, against New Zealand. On 1 August 1997, the Australian Bushrangers played the New Zealand Haka in Auckland, New Zealand. The game, the inaugural Anzac Bowl, was a great success.

On 7 January, the Australian American Football League (AAFL) was formed. On 31 January 1998, the Bushrangers played Team Hawaii in Honolulu during the National Football League’s Pro Bowl week. Trips to Europe and Japan are also planned. Australia also participated in the inaugural World Cup, to be held in Italy in June 1999.

In May 1998, the AAFL was dissolved, with Gridiron Australia becoming the only National body involved in the management of Gridiron matters in Australia.

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There are currently six active member states and one affiliated body – Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Western Australia, and the Australian Gridiron Officials Association.

Gridiron Australia is a member of the International Federation of American Football (IFAF).

Gridiron Australia currently has approximately 3,000 members nationwide across approximately 70 teams.

The Australian Gridiron League is a national tournament run by Gridiron Australia. The event is held biennially. The event consists of Men’s and Women’s games and is held in a fly in fly out - home and away format.

The Junior Nationals is an in-camp tournament held biennially for under-19s.

The Outback Gridiron Team is the Australian Representative Team which competes every four years in the International Federation of American Football World Cup. The IFAF 2015 World Cup was Australia’s most successful to date with Australia finishing 5th. The next World Cup is slated for 2019.

The Women’s Outback Team will compete every four years in the IFAF Women’s World Cup. Australia will be attending for the first time in 2017.

The Junior Outback Team competes every 2 years to attend the IFAF Junior World Cup. In 2016 the Junior Outback competed at the World Cup in China.

Our Vision

Realisation of the true potential for American Football in Australia

Our Mission

Provide a strong inclusive framework for the development and growth of Gridiron in Australia



GRIDIRON AUSTRALIA GAME PLAN

How We Play

Governance

Promoting robust governance practices at club state and national levels

Respect

Respect for all stakeholders through education and behaviour

Opportunity

Opportunity for all to participate in the sport and provision of elite pathways

Working together

Cooperation and for the betterment of the game.

Stakeholders

Players

Access to representative football and elite pathways

Coaches

Access to learning and development

Volunteers

Encouragement of participation

Officials (AGOA)

Access to learning and development

State Bodies

Support through governance and national programs

ASC

Governance & source of support

Programs

National Competitions

Australian Gridiron League (AGL)
Women's Australian Gridiron League (WAGL)
U19 Nationals

National Teams (Outback)

World Championships
World Qualifiers
Development Tours

Skill Development

National Coaching Framework
National Officials Framework
Outback Outreach program
National Coaching Conference

Pillars

Communication

Development

Governance

Elite Pathways

Scoreboard

Communication

Marketing Budget
Online brand refresh
Increased traffic on platforms

Development

Total member numbers 5000 by 2020
Coaching Accreditation Framework
Officiating Programs

Governance

Review & update of GA policies
Transparency with member states
Maintain ASC recognition

Elite Pathways

Outback Outreach Program
2018 AGL/ WAGL
2017/19 Junior Nationals
National Coaching conference

American Football – The Australian Way

Pillar 1 – Communication

We will provide robust communication channels to engage our members and other stakeholders. We will promote our great sport to all Australian’s so that the presence of Gridiron is known across the country.

KEY STRATEGIES

- Engaged membership base through transparent communication
- Increased communication with external stakeholders such as government agencies, sponsors and the community
- Resources allocated to the active promotion of Gridiron in Australia
- Digital rebranding and asset consolidation
- Transparency through correct and reliable communication channels

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Financial allocation to advertising in yearly budgets
- Engaging an external partner to assist in the branding of Gridiron Australia and the consolidation of digital assets
- Regular reporting accessible to all members and the public
- Member survey results

Pillar 2 - Development

We will support and deliver modern coaching and officiating development systems to give our members the best quality of training available for the sport. We will continue to build on our programs, developing a national framework which will give access to our sport from early ages through to elite national representation for both male and female participants.

KEY STRATEGIES

- Develop and implement a modern Coaching Accreditation process in conjunction with USA Football
- Allocate resources to develop Officials across the country
- Making gridiron accessible to a wider demographic by developing the variants of the game (Youth/ Women’s/Flag Football)
- Supporting current state leagues and clubs so that they can offer more programs to prospective members
- Creating a framework which encourages members to stay actively involved in Gridiron after they stop playing

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- National Coaching Accreditation framework rollout
- Investment in AGOA officiating programs
- The development of programs which appeal to all age groups from young children through senior adults
- Providing leagues and clubs with tools to administer flag, youth contact, junior, senior programs
- Creating attractive opportunities for those who wish to get involved in a non-player capacity
- 5,000 Members by 2020

Pillar 3 - Governance

We will promote robust governance practices at club, state and national level through education and policy development. We will ensure that our sport reaches the specifications set out by the Australian Sports Commission so that our sport may receive national

KEY STRATEGIES

- Review and update of Gridiron Australia policies
- Nationally shared financial outcomes and aligned financial systems that allow a whole-of-sport financial overview to support transparency, viability and sustainability
- Systems that allow for the creation of an overarching commercial framework in the future
- Moving towards an administrative business-model

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Review of all GA Policies
- Transparency with member states
- Meet the obligations of Australian Sports Commission to achieve full recognition and build towards federal funding

Pillar 4 – Elite Pathways

We will continue to facilitate and improve our elite pathway opportunities for our members by providing national tournaments and development opportunities.

KEY STRATEGIES

- Deliver elite coaching exposure to the player’s doorstep through a remodelled Outback Outreach program
- Ensure quality National tournaments are delivered
- Formation of an elite player register

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Outback Outreach delivered to each member state annually
- Increased participation and gameplay quality at National tournaments
- Successful hosting of a National Coaching Conference
- Outback Outreach (Junior and Senior) '17, '18, '19
- AGL 2018
- Junior Nationals '17, '19
- National Coaching Conference '17, '18, '19

Conclusion

This sport can positively influence so many people, and has perhaps one of the highest ceilings in the sporting world in terms of pathway opportunities. Few other sports can provide this.

It is time to band together as a community and finally realise the potential this sport has. A call-to-arms is being made by the board of Gridiron Australia for all current members to positively contribute towards the future.

- Put the future and growth of the sport as your personal priority
- Approach your nearest club or league association
- Volunteer your time or resources
- Engage others and contribute in any way possible towards #GROWTHEGAME

Operational Plan – Horizon 1 (6-12 months)

Pillar	Action	Comments	Who	When
Communication	Member Survey	Develop, Deliver & Report on Member Survey	Communication Director	Oct 2017
Communication	Website/ Social Media	Develop & Release RFQ to external providers to support GA marketing plan	Communication Director	April 2017
Communication	Strategic Plan	Publicly share strategic plan & budget	Communication Director	March 2017
Communication	Internal Communication	Update website & social media platforms and appoint content manager	Communication Director	April 2017
Development	Coaching Accreditation	Level 1 Framework	National Coaching Director	April 2017
Development	Coaching Accreditation	Level 2 Framework	National Coaching Director	Oct 2017
Development	Mentoring	Development of coaching mentor program	National Coaching Director	Oct 2017
Development	National Coaches Register	Development of coaching register	National Coaching Director	Oct 2017
Development	National Coaches Conference	Provision of a National Coach’s conference	National Coaching Director	Nov 2017
Development	AGOA Support	Provide financial support to AGOA to develop officials training programs	AGOA Commissioner	March 2017

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Development	Online learning System	Development of online officials learning platform	AGOA Commissioner	Sep 2017
Development	Mentoring Program	Development of officials mentor program	AGOA Commissioner	Sep 2017
Development	National Officials Register	Development of official’s register	AGOA Commissioner	Oct 2017
Governance	Policies	Review of all Gridiron Australia Policies & Constitution	Chairman	June 2017
Governance	ASC Requirements	Comply with Statutory Requirements of ASC	Chairman	Mar 2017
Governance	Framework	Review current board structure and membership	Chairman	July 2017
Governance	Accounts	Have accounts audited and up to date	Financial Controller	Jun 2017
Elite Pathways	Framework	Development of elite pathways program (outreach program)	National Programs Director	Jun 2017
Elite Pathways	Outback Outreach Program	Rollout Outback Outreach Program	National Programs Director	Jun 2017
Elite Pathways	Elite Player Register	Development of Elite Player Register	National Programs Director	Jun 2017