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SOUTHERN WELCOMES A-LEAGUE EXPANSION PROCESS

Southern Expansion, the Group bidding for A-League and W-League licenses for the Southern Region, has welcomed today's announcement of the formal process for expansion, saying the new Club will meet the FFA's criteria to lodge an Expression of Interest (EOI).

The Group's Chair is former NSW Premier Morris Iemma, who was appointed after the death of inaugural Chair, "Mr Football", Les Murray AM; its CEO is the highly-regarded former Chief Executive of NSW PCYC Chris Gardiner and its Head of Football is former Socceroo and well known champion of the game, Craig Foster.

Mr Iemma said that Group had already worked to establish:

- A solid framework for the Club's operations;
- Strong financial backing to support the Club's operations and inject \$15 million into new training infrastructure and facilities;
- Support of the Region's three football associations; St George; Sutherland and South Coast;
- Development of youth and talent ID programs under Craig Foster;
- A commitment to women's football under the guidance of W-League Ambassadors, former Matildas Julie Murray and Di Cleary (nee Alagich).

"We are all very excited by the formal expansion process being announced today and we are confident we meet the FFA's criteria in lodging our Bid for an A-League licence for the Southern Region," Mr Iemma said today.

"Southern unites three proud football associations in a rapidly-growing Region, which is still without our own professional football Club. It is logically the right geographical location for a new A-League Club.

"Our Head of Football Craig Foster is planning coaching and development programs that finally provide our very best boys and girls with free academy coaching and direct pathways to the A-League and W-League competitions.

"We have already located an interim local training site and we will play our home games out of three high-quality venues, Jubilee at Kogarah; Southern Cross Stadium and WIN Stadium in Wollongong, so that our supporters in each of our associations get top-flight football played regularly in their areas.

"Our business case shows that Southern Expansion will bring enormous commercial benefits to the A-League, delivering six new derbies, with projected home attendances and Club membership placing us in the top half of the League. With our leadership, expertise, governance and strong financial backing, we have a compelling case for Southern's plan to bring A-League to the Southern Region."

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