

14

SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
ANNUAL SOCCER NATIONAL PLAYER OF THE YEAR AWARDS
MELBOURNE - 14 NOVEMBER 1983

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

I AM PLEASED TO BE HERE TONIGHT FOR THE NATIONAL SOCCER LEAGUE AWARDS AND TO PRESENT THE TROPHY TO THE PLAYER OF THE YEAR IN THE TOP SOCCER COMPETITION IN AUSTRALIA.

THE PRESENTATION OF TROPHIES IN SOCCER AS IN OTHER SPORTS IN RECOGNITION OF ACHIEVEMENT AND PERFORMANCE SHOULD HELP TO MOTIVATE AND TO ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE AND ASPIRE TO THE STANDARDS SET.

THE OCCASION OF SUCH PRESENTATIONS ALSO PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE REST OF THE TEAM 'BEHIND THE SCENES'. THEY MAKE MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SUCCESS OF THE TEAM ON THE FIELD - THE SUPPORTERS, THE ADMINISTRATORS AND THE VOLUNTARY WORKERS WHOSE SERVICES ARE INVALUABLE TO ALL CLUBS AND SPORTING BODIES.

SOCCER IS A TRULY INTERNATIONAL SPORT, WITH INTERNATIONAL APPEAL, AND IN AUSTRALIA HAS MANIFESTED A TRULY MULTICULTURAL CHARACTER.

SOCCER'S INITIAL GROWTH IN THE POST WORLD WAR II PERIOD WAS AS A SOCIAL GAME WITHIN OUR MIGRANT COMMUNITIES.

WITH THE URGE TO PLAY THE GAME AT A HIGHER LEVEL, THESE COMMUNITIES BANDED TOGETHER TO PLAY EACH OTHER IN REGULAR COMPETITION.

SOCCER HAS NOW SPREAD WIDELY THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE.

BECAUSE OF ITS INTERNATIONALISM, SOCCER PROVIDED A UNIQUE 'MULTICULTURAL BRIDGE' WHICH FOR MANY NEWCOMERS HELPED MAKE A LITTLE EASIER THE CROSSING FROM THEIR HOMELANDS TO THIS UNFAMILIAR ISLAND CONTINENT.

IN THIS PROCESS SOCCER FUNCTIONED AS AN IMPORTANT SOCIALISING MEDIUM HELPING MANY NEWCOMERS SETTLE IN AND ESTABLISH THEMSELVES IN THE AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY.

THE IMPACT ON SOCCER BY THE MIGRANT COMMUNITY WAS MOST CLEARLY FELT IN THE IMPROVED STANDARDS OF THE GAME
- WHICH LED TO OUR ENTRY INTO THE WORLD CUP FINALS
NINE YEARS AGO.

IN RECENT YEARS THE EMPHASIS HAS BEEN ON ESTABLISHING SOCCER WITH ITS OWN IDENTITY AS A NATIONAL GAME IN AUSTRALIA.

THE IMAGINATIVE AND CRUCIAL STEP TAKEN IN 1977 TO FORM A NATIONAL SOCCER LEAGUE, BRINGING TOGETHER IN COMPETITION CLUBS FROM MAJOR CITIES, PROVIDED MAJOR MOMENTUM TO THIS TREND.

THE NSL'S PLANS FOR TWO NATIONAL DIVISIONS IN 1984, INCREASING THE NUMBER OF TEAMS PARTICIPATING IN THE COMPETITION TO 24, WILL FURTHER REINFORCE THIS DEVELOPMENT.

THIS IS HELPING THE GAME GRADUALLY TO WIDEN ITS BASE OF APPEAL AND BECOME MORE CLOSELY A PART OF THE AUSTRALIAN ENVIRONMENT.

WITH FURTHER UPGRADING OF SKILLS AND IMPROVED COACHING METHODS AND ADMINISTRATION, STILL WIDER SUPPORT FOR THE SPORT CAN BE EXPECTED.

THE GAME NEEDS TO BUILD ON ITS POPULARITY AT BOTH THE GRASS ROOTS LEVEL AND TO PROMOTE AND ENCOURAGE THE PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE BY ITS STARS:

- THESE OBJECTIVES ARE IMPORTANT AND ARE MUTUALLY REINFORCING
- THEY ALSO REFLECT THE BASIS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S SUPPORT FOR SPORT IN GENERAL AND SOCCER IN PARTICULAR.

IN 1983/84, UNDER THE SPORTS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM THE GOVERNMENT PROVIDED THE AUSTRALIAN SOCCER FEDERATION WITH \$100,000 FOR ADMINISTRATION, INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION AND FOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS.

THIS IS IN ADDITION TO THE ASSISTANCE TO SOCCER PROVIDED THROUGH THE COMMONWEALTH FUNDED AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF SPORT WHERE SOCCER WAS ONE OF THE ORIGINAL EIGHT SPORTS INTRODUCED

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- PART OF THE \$10.2 MILLION PROVIDED THIS YEAR FOR CAPITAL WORKS AT THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF SPORT WILL BE USED TO COMPLETE AN INDOOR SOCCER HALL
- THIS FACILITY WILL ENABLE YEAR-ROUND COACHING AND COMPETITION FOR THE INSTITUTE'S SOCCER PROGRAM, INCLUDING THE YOUTH TEAM.

THE NEED TO INVOLVE THESE YOUNG PLAYERS IN THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SPORT IS OF CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE.

IN CONTRAST TO OTHER CODES AND NATIONAL SPORTS, SOCCER HAS PROBLEMS IN PROVIDING CONTINUITY OF PROGRESSION OF YOUNGER PLAYERS THROUGH VARIOUS LEVELS OF SKILL THROUGH THE CLUBS AND COMPETITION NETWORKS AVAILABLE.

ACCORDINGLY, I AM PARTICULARLY PLEASED TO NOTE AMONG THE AWARDS TONIGHT THOSE FOR THE YOUNG LEAGUE PLAYER OF THE YEAR AND THE UNDER 21 PLAYER OF THE YEAR; THE FEDERATION ALSO PLANS TO INTRODUCE YOUTH PROGRAMS INCLUDING THE YOUTH CHAMPIONSHIPS.

THIS WILL HELP BUILD ON AUSTRALIA'S ACHIEVEMENT IN REACHING THE FINAL ROUNDS OF THE 1982 WORLD YOUTH CUP AND STAND US IN GOOD STEAD FOR OUR BID TO ENTER THE 1986 WORLD CUP FINALS.

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LOOKING AHEAD, I BELIEVE WE HAVE EVERY REASON TO BE CONFIDENT
OF SOCCER'S PROSPECTS IN THE FUTURE.

A DISTINCTIVE AUSTRALIAN STYLE IS BEING DEVELOPED.

IT SHOULD CARRY US A LONG WAY.

IN LINE WITH THIS, IT GIVES ME PARTICULAR PLEASURE TO PRESENT
THE NATIONAL SOCCER LEAGUE PLAYER OF THE YEAR AWARD TO
AND ON YOUR BEHALF OFFER HIM OUR
CONGRATULATIONS AND BEST WISHES FOR THE FUTURE.
