

Eastern Suburbs AFC and Fencibles United AFC announce an innovative resource partnership model

Fencibles United AFC and Eastern Suburbs AFC are delighted to announce the establishment of an exciting collaborative resource partnership between the two clubs.

This partnership has been created to meet the ever-increasing challenges that football clubs are facing in delivering quality programmes and experiences for all of their members and stakeholders. The innovative partnership is aimed at utilising shared resources to enhance all aspects of the club from social football through to recognised player and coach pathways. Whilst the partnership will bring the two clubs closer together, a large focus will be placed on preserving and respecting each other's unique identities.

NZ Football have introduced the FIFA Club Licensing system in recent years with the overall aim of raising the level of club football. One of the key goals in that process is to increase the level of professionalism in club football through strengthening their technical and sporting development.

A significant component of this criteria is the recruitment and development of a suitably qualified Director of Football supported by qualified coaches in each age group. By successfully meeting these standards clubs are awarded licencing status which provides quality assurance and other benefits to their members in terms of consistent access to certain levels of competition.

Successfully meeting and sustaining a Club License requires a significant amount of human and financial resourcing in the short and long term. The sustainability of these resources and programmes is a huge challenge for all clubs and requires fresh thinking and a different way of approaching the business demands of club football.

The financial impact of the COVID virus has added greater relevancy to developing new practices and strategies to not only ensure the long-term viability of sporting organisations, but also to allow clubs to keep evolving and delivering improved programmes and experiences. The resource partnership model being embarked on between Eastern Suburbs AFC and Fencibles United is part of the long-term visions of both clubs and sustainability plans.

As part of the first steps in forming this resource partnership, ESAFC Director of Football Tony Readings will be appointed to jointly carry out this key leadership role for both clubs, overseeing all football matters from July. This role will be pivotal across both clubs in establishing the partnership and the sharing of resources. Whilst this partnership will grow and evolve over time, the initial focus will be on knowledge sharing at different levels, distribution of qualified coaches and community coach education.

“At Eastern Suburbs we have provided substantial investment to develop well-resourced player and coach pathways, strong administration, targeted community and female development. We are excited to extend the reach of our learnings and resources to help benefit even more players and coaches by partnering with Fencibles United in a way that will positively impact approximately 4000 players between both clubs. We are very much looking forward to working with Fencibles United AFC to collaborate to find improved solutions, develop enhanced opportunities for our members, and continue to grow football and playing numbers in our respective catchment areas. This new resource partnership model is a fresh chapter in club football and will enable both clubs to contribute more significantly to the growth and development of football in New Zealand.”

(Simon Hilton, ESAFC Chairman).

"I am very excited about the opportunities that the resource partnership between Eastern Suburbs and Fencibles United Football Clubs presents. This collaborative partnership will have a greater positive impact on a larger number of players, coaches and other important club members and stakeholders. Whilst the clubs will work together to enhance the experience of their respective members, it will also be a key priority to preserve the unique identities of both clubs and build on their proud histories to help lay a strong foundation for both the current and future generations." Tony Readings (Director of Football ESAFC and Fencibles United).

"This new model is an exciting and innovative way of working which will allow both clubs to leverage off each other's strengths and to learn collaboratively. To enable this relationship to flourish and for the good of football in both our local region and New Zealand, there needs to be a mind shift from viewing a neighbouring club as a competitor to embracing them as a supportive partner that can enable both clubs to provide better quality experiences for all of our members."(Aaron Carson, Fencibles Chairman)

"Northern Region Football is supportive of any initiative in the club space which aims to deliver a sustainable and high-quality experience for club members of all ages and stages.

"We certainly applaud and support this joint approach which better utilizes the high degree of expertise and resourcing available to deliver an increased level of service in a far more efficient model. The collaborative thinking in breaking free from traditional club structures for the good of the region is a superb outcome for our sport." (Steven Upfold, NRF GM Football)