



Andrew Barr MLA

MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING
MINISTER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
MINISTER FOR PLANNING
MINISTER FOR TOURISM, SPORT AND RECREATION
MEMBER FOR MOLONGLO

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A fair go for local footy fans

Minister for Sport, Andrew Barr, said today that he will demand a fair go for Canberra footy fans from the AFL in negotiations for future games in Canberra. Ministerial discussions will begin this weekend.

"I am meeting with Gary Buchanan, the AFL's Business Development Manager for ACT and Southern NSW and Dale Holmes, the AFL's General Manager NSW/ACT before tomorrow's game at Manuka Oval and I'll be making it clear the AFL cannot take Canberra footy fans for granted," Mr Barr said. "We Canberrans love our AFL footy but we must get a fair go from the league."

Earlier this year, when the North Melbourne Football Club expressed an interest in returning to playing games in Canberra, Mr Barr said Canberra fans had seen enough of North and their return would not be a popular move here.

"I am aware the Western Bulldogs are interested in playing games in Darwin from next year. I will be asking the league to outline their plans to keep the game strong in our region before the introduction of a second team based in western Sydney and Canberra."

Discussions will cover the proposals to play matches at Manuka from 2010, and the long-term relationship with the second Sydney team, expected to join the competition in 2012.

"The ACT Government is undertaking a major master planning exercise for Manuka Oval and the Canberra Stadium. This would involve major, long-term investments of hundreds of millions of dollars by the Canberra community, and a new AFL team with Canberra as one of its bases would gain enormously from these plans," Mr Barr said.

"So before we can make these big decisions, I have some hard questions for the AFL. How many games in Canberra can we expect? What will be the identity of the new team? Will the Canberra community have a stake in the new club – like Canberrans on the team's board and major sponsorship opportunities for local firms?"

Reports have also suggested that a second Sydney team would play in a special Canberra "home jumper" for its games in the capital.

"I am keen on a Canberra jumper. But my message for the AFL will be simple. I want a proper traditional footy jumper, with stripes, a sash, a v-neck or hoops, not one of the messy concoctions that so many new teams in all codes of sport have adopted. A strong footy club needs a strong identity here. Only a proper footy jumper can deliver that."

Statement Ends

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