

AFL PLAYERS DIG DEEP AND BACK ORIGIN RETURN

Thursday, January 9

The AFL Players' Association Board will donate \$250,000 on behalf of AFL and AFLW players from the AFLPA's AFL Players Care charity fund to support those Australians impacted by the bushfire disaster.

Players will also work with the AFL to raise additional funds through a showcase game between Victoria and the All Stars on February 28 at Marvel Stadium, and will also explore opportunities for AFLW player involvement in the fundraising effort.

AFLPA President Patrick Dangerfield said the players pledged their support for the match, and donation, without hesitation.

"It was an immediate 'yes' when the State of Origin concept was put to players by the AFLPA. We, like everyone, are heartbroken and desperate to help. We're committed to putting on a great event for fans and hopefully raise a significant amount of money," he said.

"In addition to committing to this match, we're proud to be able to make a \$250,000 donation on behalf of all male and female players, which will be split among various charities to support those affected.

"We know this is not something that will be instantly fixed by a donation and a game of football, so AFL and AFLW players will continue to identify ways to make a difference where they can, as communities look to rebuild.

"We're in awe of those on the front line of this disaster and we take great inspiration from the bravery, spirit and sacrifice that's been shown by our emergency service workers and volunteers, and want to acknowledge those Australians in particular."

Further discussions will be held at the AFLPA's AFLW Directors and Delegates' Conference on Saturday to capitalise on opportunities that emerge within the AFLW game, in addition to donations for entry at matches during the AFLW season.

The players' contribution to bushfire relief was among a number of key topics for discussion at the inaugural AFLPA Player Leadership and Induction Camp, which was held at Marvel Stadium on Wednesday and Thursday.

The event merged the annual AFLPA Induction Camp for all new players and annual AFLPA Directors and Delegates Conference, bringing together more than 130 AFL players.

Across the two days, first-year players mixed with their senior peers from all 18 clubs and received an introduction to important topics, including: finance, mental health, workplace rights and the Telstra partnership, as well as integrity and anti-doping (run by the AFL).

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The AFLPA Board members, and delegates representing all 18 clubs, discussed a number of issues, including: length of the halftime break, player development, mental health, broadcaster access and future strategies priorities of the AFLPA.

AFL Players' Association CEO Paul Marsh said the camp was crucial to building member engagement and guiding the AFLPA's future strategic direction.

"It was valuable to have both cohorts of players together for two days because there's no more influential voice than that of a senior player to help educate the first-year players on the value of the AFLPA," Marsh said.

"There was a lot of energy in the room over the two days, whether that be from the new players who are learning something new every hour or the leaders who are passionate about ensuring the players' voice is heard on key issues in the game.

"As a member-led organisation, player feedback is central to everything we do and this camp helps to set up many of the projects we tackle throughout the year.

"We've got outstanding player leaders who are passionate about delivering outcomes for all players and we're excited about the year ahead."

AFLW Delegates will gather for the inaugural AFLW Directors and Delegates Conference on Saturday afternoon.

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