

Professional Footballers

Australia (PFA)

# Retired and Transitioned Players Report 2015





Supporting the players.  
Building the Game.

# 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## What you need to know

• **45.2%**

participants rated their transition as **difficult to very difficult.**



1/5 of players reported **chronic health problems** caused by football. +

• **16%**

of all past players had **five or more surgeries** during their playing careers.



**22.4%**

indicated **marriage or long term relationship breakdown** since retiring from football.

• **57.1%**  
of the cohort acknowledged their **involvement in football contributed** to the breakdown.

• **19.5%**

of past players experienced **mental health and wellbeing problems.**



• **43%**

of past players were **interested in assisting elite development squads and giving back to the game.**



**65.7%**

of past players indicated that football commitments had a negative impact on their ability to study.

**1/3** of players retired involuntarily.



Players indicated that frequent **schedule changes were a major hurdle to their study continuity.**

“ I felt like I was no good to anyone,

like I was nothing. ” - Past Player on transition

## 2 ABOUT THE STUDY

Professional Footballers Australia (PFA) commissioned the study with the underlining objectives to:

Gain a clearer picture of what life is like post football for players.

Take this knowledge and build appropriate programs and services to assist in the transition of a footballer.

Take the learnings from the past players report to build quality programs to assist the current players.

164 past players completed the survey, of which 87 were professional footballers and 77 were semi-professional players. 53.1% played at an International Level. The survey consisted of 87 questions over 22 pages, which explored themes such as:



Transition (retirement)



Employment



Financial Situation



Past players advice for the current generation of players



Education



Health and Wellbeing



Current Involvement

The number of respondents equated to a return rate of 45% of those invited to participate.

The study and final reporting of the data was overseen by Ms Donna O'Connor (PHD) Associate Professor, University of Sydney, World Congress Science and football.

## Study Background

Australian professional footballers are unique in both a global and local sense. By virtue of being the world game, players are often required to relocate overseas to further their careers. Whilst this brings great opportunity, it also results in significant upheaval and anxiety. In a highly competitive market, players are confronted with:

- Short-term and precarious contracts;
- High workforce turnover;
- Frequent schedule changes; and
- Widely varying standards of workplaces.

When combined all of the above add additional and unnecessary stress to players trying to compete at the very highest level.

# 3 HEALTH & WELLBEING

**1/5** of players reported they suffer from **chronic pain due to football.**

59.2% indicated that injuries sustained whilst playing had a negative impact on their post football health, with restricted physical activity being the main consequence.

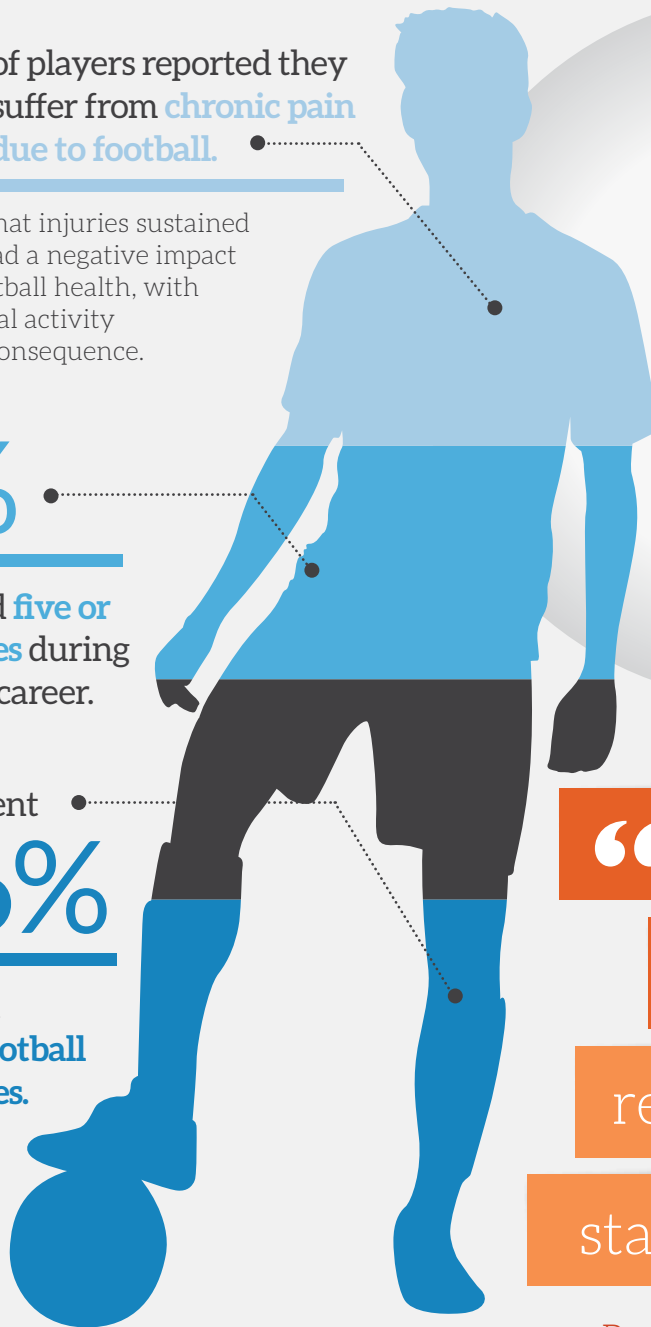
**16%**

of players had **five or more surgeries** during their playing career.

Since retirement

**29.6%**

of players had **surgery for football related injuries.**



## Mental health and wellbeing

was the main health concern reported by past players.

“ We just want to be valued, remembered and stay connected. ”

- Past Player on transition



There was an overwhelmingly positive response rate to the potential availability of a number of health checks, including: football related costs, health screening days, skin cancer checks, subsidised health insurance and gym membership.

# 4 TRANSITION FINDINGS

**45.2%** of past players rated their transition as **difficult to very difficult.**

The length of playing career was not associated with the past players' perception of the difficulty of their transition from football, however **players who had played overseas and/or involuntarily retired, found transition more difficult.**



## Key reasons why many found transition so tough:

- Not emotionally prepared
- Loss of contact with teammates
- Financial uncertainty
- Involuntary retirement

## Key reasons why many found transition easy:

- Well-developed network
- Emotionally prepared
- Had a transition plan
- Financial certainty



**47.9%**

preferred life as a professional footballer.



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## EMPLOYMENT STATUS

**47.1%** of past players were

**not in satisfying employment**

12 months post retirement

Of the those who involuntarily retired

**60% are still not satisfied**

with their employment 12 months post retirement.

Employment of past players is predominantly in the fields of business, sales and retail and trade and construction.

# 6 FINANCIAL STATUS



12%

unsatisfied with their current financial situation.

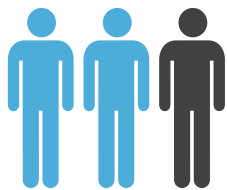


highly dissatisfied

Past players who **involuntarily retired** were **much more likely** to be highly dissatisfied with their financial situation.

18.8%

of past players reported that football had a **negative financial impact**.



1/3

of players reported that they had made decisions that **negatively affected their financial position**.

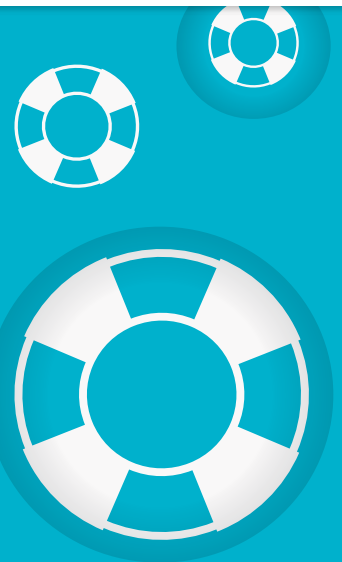


## Most common reasons for financial difficulty:

- Lack of financial acumen
- Poor advice from financial planner
- Business investment/purchase went bad
- Overly risky investment strategy

## Past players funding suggestions for financial services:

- A football pension
- Money management service
- Finance training
- General tax advice
- Investment advice
- Superannuation advice
- Workshops on how to start a business
- Financial support services for when a player is out of contract or injured




# 7 EDUCATION

**65.7%** of past players indicated that football commitments had a negative impact on their ability to study.

**17%** 

of past players are either **unsatisfied or highly unsatisfied** with their level of education, with 43% of this cohort aged 30 -39.


**frequent schedule changes**  highlighted as the major barrier to study.

“ I had to miss some exams and defer units due to football. ”

- Past Player on transition

**1/3**  expressed interest in speaking at schools and clubs.

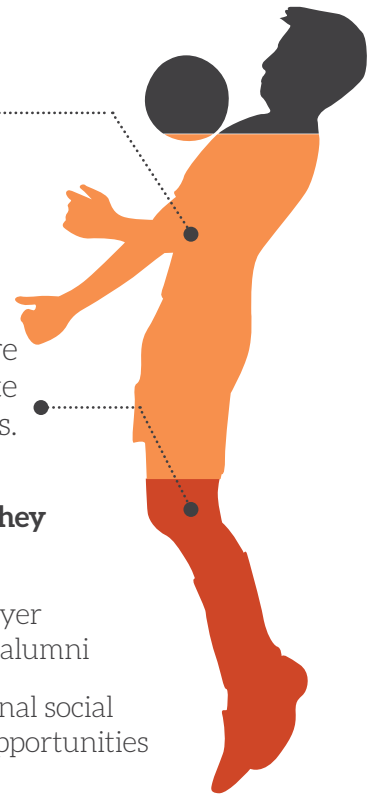
# 8 CURRENT INVOLVEMENT

**63.2%** 

of past players are still involved in football.

**43%** of past players are currently involved in football in a coaching capacity.

**43%** of past players were interested in assisting elite development squads.



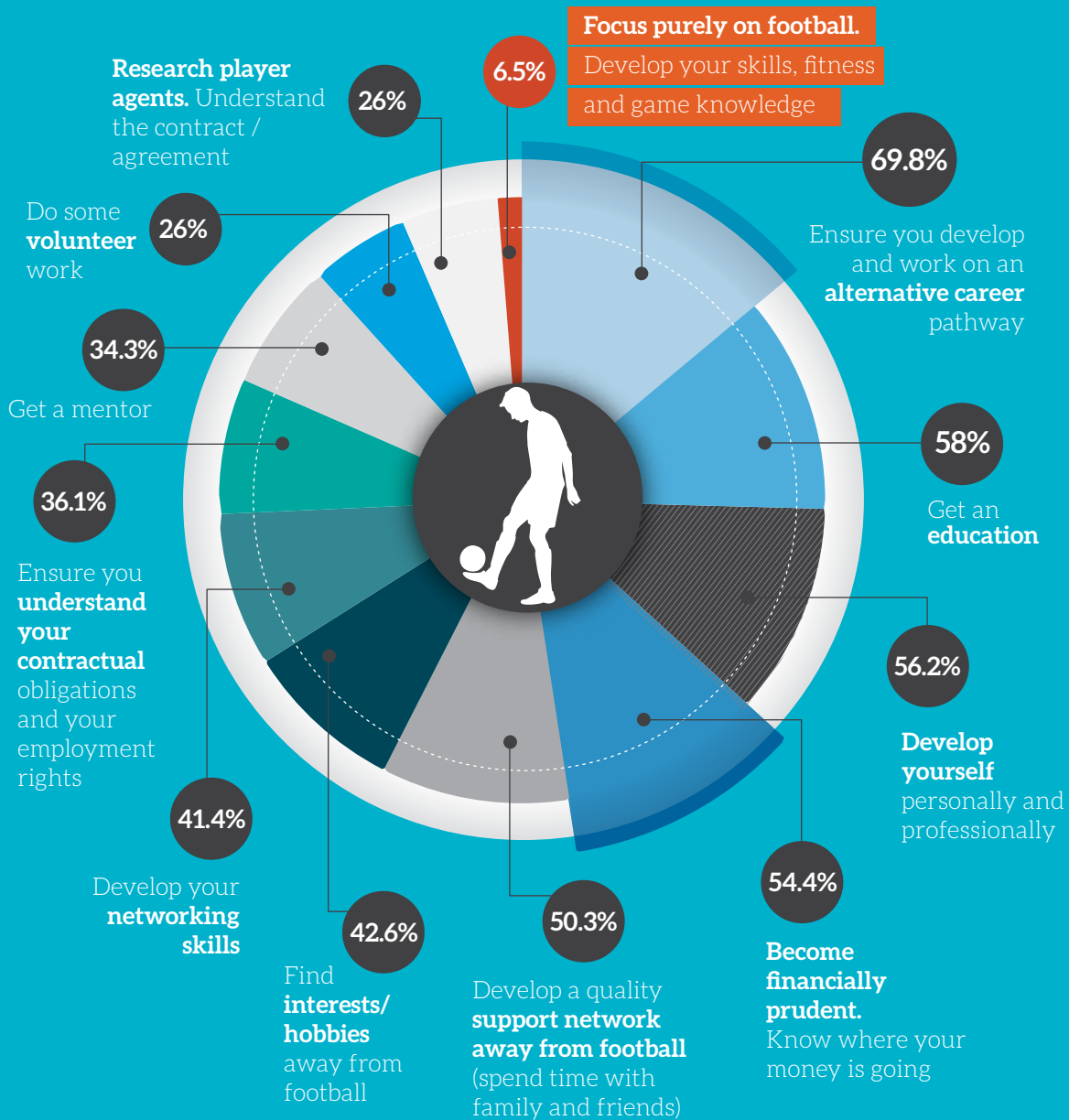
### Past player suggestions for how they could be involved:

- Past player sport mentoring program
- Past player business alumni
- A transition camp for out of contract players
- Additional social events/opportunities



# 9

## PAST PLAYERS' ADVICE FOR THE CURRENT GENERATION OF PLAYERS



“ Clubs always want players undivided attention to what they are getting paid for, playing football, but unless you're on mega bucks the average Joe has to plan for life after football, which clubs should recognise as players get older and support. I missed certain training sessions in order to attend lectures/exams etc as that was my future after football. Players have to recognise that clubs won't support them when they become surplus to requirements or incur a career ending injury etc. Clubs didn't like it when I was playing, but that is the reality of being footballers in Australia, players have to be able to prepare for their lives after football as the rewards here are not as lucrative. Not every player ends up being as successful as a Viduka, Kewell etc.

- Past Player on transition



# 10 PFA ACTION PLAN

Football's support for its past players and the development (and support) programs for its current players sits well behind other Australian mainstream sporting codes. **The results of this study, when combined with other PFA survey data, have been the nucleus for the PFA's blueprint for future programs.**



Future PFA plans include (when appropriate funding and resourcing is secured) the establishment of a **Past Player Alumni**.

There is significant support in a program that provides past players the opportunity to **give back to the game, reconnect with teammates and opponents** alike.

A comprehensive program, that offers an array of **wellbeing and health services, business and social networking opportunities** and allows players to **give back to the game**.





The future plans will also include ongoing **education regarding the importance of personal and professional development** of players amongst the game's key stakeholders, which include but are not limited to:

- Coaches/ high performance staff;
- CEOs and club staff;
- National body administrators;
- Player Agents; and
- Player families and partners.

**Increase the resourcing of the current Player Development Program** to ensure we have world class programs and services, that will empower the players to make informed decisions regarding their current situation and future endeavors.

A comprehensive Player Development Program that caters for the specific needs of footballers, past and present.



In closing we need to learn from the past to build a better future for all players and the game.

COURAGE  
WORLD CLASS  
INTELLIGENCE  
TRUST  
RESPECT



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