Western Futures – Out of Africa into football

With the smell of liniment, football players warming up, enthusiastic fans yelling and screaming supporting their team, Western Futures and the West Adelaide Football Club launched a programme called “Out of Africa into Football, which aims to integrate young refugees and migrants into the club. The launch attended by the President of the football club, the Mayor of West Torrens Council, Western Futures Board members, family and friends of the young men. West Adelaide coach Andrew Collins spoke about the opportunities for the boys to be involved in training drills, support coaches and other staff and act as water boys during games. They will also gain Certificate III in fitness. He welcomed the boys and families to the football club and spoke of the multicultural environment they will be joining, with players from South Africa, Croatia, Italy and Ireland.

Andrew Worrall, Western Futures Executive Officer spoke about receiving a call from Andrew Collins who was from Cricket Victoria. Andrew Worrall’s first thought was finally “they’ve discovered my cricketing talents”, he was going to pack up his bags, take his bat and ball and leave Western Futures to his work colleague Helen Nowosilskyj. However luck wasn’t on his side that day. Andrew Collins was coming over from Victoria to coach the West Adelaide football club. He rang after coming across the Western Futures website and wanted help making contacts in the Western region.

Interviews were held in numerous schools to identify young Africans who would be suited to the programme. After a long process the final six boys were chosen from St George College, William Light R-12 School and Underdale High School.

At the launch the boys received a gift bag from the club that included a program, hat and club jacket so they would feel part of the team straight away. The Advertiser and Messenger attended the event and took numerous photos of the boys with Damien Cupido, the first South African to play AFL who made his debet at Essendon. There wasn’t a face in the crowd that didn’t have a smile and was happy to witness the Out of Africa into Football launch.

Overall the feedback from the boys, their families and West Adelaide football club was excellent. It turned out to be a great event and we wish the six boys all the best for their duration with the club. I think it can be said this program is going to be a great success not only for the African boys but also for the club so they will become more culturally aware. On the whole a perfect day to launch the Out of Africa program, two thumbs up and go Westies!