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Khawaja- a force to be reckoned with beyond the rebuilding of the National side

The Sydney Junior Winter Cricket Association, a leading Association in promoting cricket among migrant communities across the Sydney Metropolitan area, is urging cricketing administrators to make the most of the inclusion of Pakistani born Usman Khawaja into the Australian side to promote and grow cricket at the grassroots especially among migrant communities.

While it is very early for Usman Khawaja and admittedly his beginning has been a humble one though promising, considering his background the Sydney Junior Winter Cricket Association believes Khawaja's debut is significant enough to be capitalised on in a way that can see youngsters playing the game who would have never ever otherwise contemplated doing so. Providing much needed growth for grassroots cricket across the Country at a time when cricket can ill afford to fail to attract another generation and wave of migrant children with participation levels on the decline in part due to changing demographics.

Association president and founder, Sam Almaliki said "Cricket in Australia needs rebuilding not just at the top level but also at the grassroots where participation numbers in one too many Association's are decreasing as cricket has struggled to reflect changing community demographics and changing family lifestyles. In Khawaja, cricketing administrators have a great asset to utilise, to close the gap between the sport and the many communities that make up our culturally diverse society, a must do for our great game to prosper and thrive in coming years".

He added "If Shane Warne inspired many young cricketers to take up Leg-spin, Khawaja will attract many youngsters to the game itself and cricket in Australia is bound to prosper at the grassroots if the administrators make the most of this opportunity".

He went on to say "the thinking of administrators must be that an investment in promoting cricket to all sections of the community especially among migrant communities even if it might not produce the next Khawaja's, it will play a role in the successful integration of communities into the mainstream community as the power of cricket to facilitate integration cannot be underestimated. Considering it is a cause so important to Australia's future cricket it is instinctively and traditionally positioned to take the lead and make a contribution it can be proud of on this front in years to come".

The Sydney Junior Winter Cricket Association Inc. is the only junior winter cricket association in NSW offering 9-a-side, outdoor Twenty20 winter competition. The Association evolved from a social competition organised by Association founder, Sam Almaliki, an Iraqi refugee, and friends in 2004 in the St. George region of Sydney. In 2004, 33 players took part and since its incorporation in 2005 the competition has expanded rapidly with 800 players taking part in 2010 and has had the support of KFC as naming rights sponsor along with Kingsgrove Sports Centre as major sponsor. The association covers the Sydney metropolitan area with three geographically based competitions, covering Western, South Western and Central Sydney respectively.

The Association takes a proactive approach in promoting cricket within migrant communities. For this year's winter season it has plans for a number of programs aimed at encouraging participation in organised cicket among young people from Aboriginal, Chinese, Sub continental and Arabic background with support from Local Government Authorities including Liverpool City Council and Bankstown City Council. The Association has a strong culture of ensuring an equal opportunity for all players and that all cricket is played in the right spirit.

For further information, please contact Sam Almaliki on 0404 56 44 65 or visit www.sydneyjuniorwintercricket.org.au