

31 July 2020

The Principal Research Officer
Public Accounts Committee
Legislative Assembly Committee Office
4 Harvest Terrace
West Perth WA 6006



President:
Peter Christie

No. 1 Ticket Holder:
Eileen Bond

We write in response to the call for submissions to support the *"Inquiry into the use of State Funding by the Western Australian Football Commission"* ("WAFC").

The South Fremantle Football Club ("SFFC") is a 120-year old, iconic WA sporting Club. Competing in the West Australian Football League ("WAFL") Men's and Women's competitions, SFFC possess a rich and storied history, whilst enjoying wide-scale support from a broad-section of the WA community.

SFFC's primary intent, and our responsibility to our members and wider community, is to ensure that Australian Rules Football ("Football") in WA is managed professionally, resourcefully and perhaps most critically, sustainably. The SFFC strongly believes that matters pertaining to Football in WA must continue to be, how and wherever possible, the responsibility of stakeholders representing the Football industry.

WA Football has a generally long and proud history, enjoying a serviceable record at managing game growth and participation, whilst advocating for issues and needs of communities. It is to be noted that the WAFC, in the eyes of SFFC, have done a commendable job in some key areas of their role of governing the sport in this State, performing as to requirement across some complex matters and issues. However, there are areas for improvement.

Improvements are suggested to be positive – it's about shaping the future of the game and pursuing best practice outcomes, again, for the game. This submission is not about undue judgement, nor unreasonable critique or dismissal of role and intent. It's about care and growth.

As a 120-year sporting entity, SFFC has a well-developed and carefully honed understanding of what we can do, and what we should do, well. This extends to the delivery of football to enrich and grow communities, plus, evidently, the enduring and sustainable management of a Football Club with a large profile and reach.

The ability for WAFL Clubs to have an open, effective and meaningful relationship with their communities and country 'zones' has become more complicated, complex and at times, encumbered, by the current, WAFC controlled Football delivery model.

Whilst there are aspects of the current delivery model that are undoubtedly positive, consideration of review and reform is both necessary and timely. It is paramount, not only from a position of sound governance, but also for reasons of greatest representation of the Football community, that there continues to be an open, accessible and subjective Commission governing Football - for all of Football's interests.

We recognise that recent events, most notably the global COVID-19 health pandemic, have greatly impacted upon Football, creating stresses, and revenue reduction, to a degree that Football as an industry has probably never seen, or has previously had greater immunity to.





The survival and recovery of Football requires strong leadership, and this responsibility extends to all Football stakeholders, inclusive of the WAFC Commission, WAFC Management but also WAFL Club leadership. Our role, at SFFC, is to lead and inspire.

The Football Industry Future

We at SFFC believe that Football resources including funding must remain predominantly controlled and managed by the key WA Football resources, and WAFL Clubs, such as SFFC, are a critical and long-term feature of this resource/delivery landscape.

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The decentralization of the Football delivery model, and by virtue the greater distribution of the Football economy, is necessary to create greater effectiveness and efficiency, creating improved outcomes for the WA community and all end users.

It is our belief that the role of the WAFC must change; adaptation will permit the changes that are considered necessary for the health, and growth, of the game. A return to WAFL Clubs of our 'Communities', inclusive of the ability for us to nurture, guide and benefit from the playing 'Talent' cultivated from within these communities, is essential, and must be provided back to WAFL Clubs.

A WAFL Club's community, that being, our 'District' zones and encompassing relationships and networks, are a fundamental component and lifeblood of our existence, and these rich associations, built over many decades, need to be re-established and re-invigorated.

Resource and support are both required from the WAFC to achieve this, but so is trust.

To that intent, a return of 'Talent' and 'Community Development' program delivery responsibilities, with requisite funding, is sought by SFFC. Any return of these essential components of the Football industry and economy must be financially self-sustaining and aided by an appropriate level of finance to ensure that WAFL Clubs can achieve outcomes for the game.

The WAFC should continue to provide a governance framework, along with funding and compliance, however, the delivery of programs, to a large extent, should be the responsibility of those downstream within the delivery network, namely WAFL Clubs.

With appropriate funding, guidance and an over-arching regulation and compliance function of the WAFC (which remains essential for WAFL Club performance delivery to set KPIs), WAFL Clubs can re-engage and re-inspire their communities, growing interest, profile and maximizing outcomes for Football within WA.

We are seeking a careful review and reconnection amongst Football stakeholders, together guiding the game in a collegiate manner and with a high-performance mindset. Trust, transparency and accountability must be the fundamental pillars that lead our game, successfully and sustainably, into the future.

Yours Sincerely,

Peter Christie

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