

RE: Inquiry into use of State funding by the Western Australian Football Commission

Dear Sir / Madam

Thank you for considering this submission as part of your inquiry.

My background and links to Football began over 40 years ago as a player, they continue today as both a parent and a volunteer.

My personal football journey is not one of any significance, but the game, the people I have met and the outcomes of being part of a football community, has shaped and influenced the person I am today. I am driven by the desire for my children, their friends and our entire community to experience all that our great game has given me, as with football there is a place for us all.

This submission is not intended to provide any input in regards to the “elite” AFL or WAFL pathways, those are reserved for very few. What I feel is important and I hope is recognised by this Committee, is the important role the WAFC plays in community and what some may refer to as “grass roots” football. That area and how the WAFC impacts and supports us in the front line, I believe is critical not just for the game but for our broader communities and importantly our children.

In my time of junior football the WAFC have taken on a significantly more active role in oversight of competition and structures. The focus has very much been moved towards one of retention and participation as being the #1 priority.

This is key for football, and for that matter, all junior sport. In years past some elements of junior football measured their success on one thing and one thing alone. A Premiership or win. Sadly, some in our community still think this “must win” focus is still justified.

Thankfully, those views are slowly being eradicated through strong leadership, guidance and oversight that we have had through the WAFC.

If we fail to retain this important oversight and provide the tools to enable them to provide us in club land the support we require, we risk heading back to the days when the “Bullies” or loudest voices in the room get their way. We cannot allow that to happen, as the ones who suffer are our children, and that would be nothing short of a disaster.

With one clear voice and authority providing consistency, leadership and a unified approach to the rules and structure of how our game runs, the Junior football competition has most certainly improved for the better.

Support for the Volunteer community has also increased markedly in many areas including;

- Coach Education and mentoring
- Volunteer support and training
- Competition oversight
- Administration support

It is not to say things are perfect, but they have certainly moved forward from the days of very well meaning, but overworked volunteers trying to oversee all of these same tasks and more.

I would like to see further investment and modernisation of process and systems from the WAFC. Investment in Electronic reporting structures to reduce the load on volunteer resources is an area requiring focus and further investment.

These improvements can only be achieved through a single governing body, suitably resourced to oversee and administer the game. This in turn ensures volunteers such as myself are sufficiently supported to undertake our own roles.

It is important to understand much of the change enacted in recent times is still very much a work in progress, it takes a lot of time and resources to change what for many have been embedded cultures. The win at all cost approach which some in our community grew up with, will take time, resources and education to weed out, but it is important we stick the path.

I trust the committee realises we as volunteers cannot do this alone. Whilst we will always be here for our children and our communities, we need that support provided by the WAFC to equip us with the tools and critical structures that only a central governing body can provide.

Thank you for your time to consider my submission and perspective from a Junior community standpoint. I have also attached correspondence from 2019 that I feel highlights much of above. It is just one example of the critical role the WAFC play in delivering our sport to communities all across WA.

Regards,



Rob Geersen
President
Coolbinia Bombers JFC