

## PUBLIC

### THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS MET IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, HOBART, ON MONDAY 21 OCTOBER 2013.

#### FOOTBALL INQUIRY

**Mr MICHAEL HOLMES** WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** (Mr Dean) - Welcome. Before we commence there are a couple of things I need to say. This is a public hearing, it is being recorded on *Hansard*, and in this environment you have parliamentary privilege but outside here you have no parliamentary privilege so anything you say out there is from you. If we get to any stage during your evidence that you would like it to be taken in camera then please make that known to the committee and we will make a determination on where we should go with that if it should reach that stage.

You have seen the terms of reference which are reasonably clear albeit there is a catch-all one at the end but it is fairly clear and it relates to the funding the state government provides to AFL Tasmania and how that is expended throughout the state and how the clubs benefit from it and what they are getting out of it, et cetera.

You have made a submission, Michael, and we have read that so I will leave it open to you and if there are expansions you want to make or emphasises you want to place or any additional information you might have I will leave that to you at this stage and then we will ask questions. We have Kim Booth -

**Mr BOOTH** - Hello, Michael.

**Mr HOLMES** - I have not talked to you for a while.

**Mr BOOTH** - No, not for a while but you have been on this subject for a long time.

**Mr HOLMES** - I have.

**CHAIR** - We will have Brenton Best on the line in a short time and as soon as that happens we will let you know. Peter Gutwein is also a member of the committee but Peter is, unfortunately, not able to be here this afternoon. He was here this morning.

Michael, I will leave it open to you to make any comments that you would like.

**Mr HOLMES** - I thought I would start with my qualifications and motivation.

**CHAIR** - Yes, if you would and your background is an important part of it.

**Mr HOLMES** - I was an 'attempted' player, a spectator for a long time, a parent of four children - three boys and one girl - a committee member of the Sorell Junior Football Club and then president of the Sorell Junior Football Club, and then board member at the same time of the Southern Tasmania Junior Football League which at that time had

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700 clubs, about 2 600 kids and 850 games played per year. We used to joke that we had more clubs than the AFL at that stage. It was all run by volunteers.

I also worked for the commonwealth government for 32 years and particularly in the last 15 years of my employment negotiating acquitting and recovering taxpayer grants to similar bodies to AFL Tasmania. I use the word 'similar' advisedly but I do not want to bunch the other people with these people necessarily and if they did not do what they delivered I would want to know why and I got your money/our money back numerous times. I sort of joke that is probably why I do not work there any more.

I am a graduate of the University of Tasmania mainly in history and political science. I did a bit of law but ran out of time and steam.

I can tell you from personal experience - this is relating to football directly, my club, Sandy Bay - and my mother passed away six weeks ago - Sandy Bay went first. I was a bit hurt and it still hurts, both of them. My point is there is a bit at stake for our audience and once you lose your club, basically the heart of your community, it is too late, you have to jump in now and start making noises.

I will switch to funding the AFL, subsidising the AFL. I see them as going together and I was disgusted by this on Saturday in the *Mercury* article and I found it rather contemptuous and disrespectful of this committee. Bureaucrats hate accountability and I would suggest the public service will not hold them to account because they know the AFL or whoever they give the money to will run to the politicians and of course we have seen where some of them went to AFL grand final. I will make some comments later on to suggest how to get around that. I have taken statistics and I will hand them to you in a minute but I want to talk to them first because of an interest in history per se. Essentially, my point is the more money you give to AFL Tasmania, the less community football clubs you are going to get and it is inevitable.

I question why struggling taxpayers should subsidise a \$1 billion plus industry - that is their television rights last time around. When it hit \$600 million I thought, I cannot beat this, I will give it a good shake but how can one individual or a bunch of individual people get that sort of power and money? That is why I am not involved with clubs anymore. I already questioned why we give taxpayers funds, allegedly to the benefit of community football, to an organisation such as AFL Tasmania which deliberately has no community representatives in its government structure and some of them are fly-in players. They need not live here - they used to live here but they live in Melbourne or elsewhere.

I believe AFL stands for Anti Football League. I am not being sarcastic. I am being accurate. The AFL is only interested in the elite, top stand approach, and all we end up with that approach is the elite. We need that but we need from the bottom up. It seems to me their motto is, the customer is always wrong because they will not listen and this consistent at least.

I question where is the independent socioeconomic assessment of subsidising the AFL compared to subsidising community football. I cannot believe that there is not at least the same, if not more, economic activity generated by the hundreds of games they have played for 24 or 28 weeks a year throughout the state, not just Hobart and Launceston.

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Community football is everywhere, it involves more, it generates returns everywhere, especially in the non-metropolitan areas where economic and social activity is most needed.

At the moment, and this is why you have not heard from me for awhile, Paul, I am researching a book into ghost towns in Tasmania and there are far more than I ever thought there was going to be. I pictured about a dozen and I have 286 so I have had my work cut out for me. I have been doing a lot of travelling and I can see the signs of decay in certain parts of the state and their football teams are going backwards as well or out of existence. Probably best I do not name the areas.

I believe the entourage that went to the grand final should not be allowed to happen. Why was it not just the Sports minister? I suggest that you put the rest of the seats that are up, and there were three: Deputy Premier, Leader of the House in Legislative Council, and Leader of the Labor Party - why can you not put that up to a public raffle and have, say, four seats - one from each of the regions - for the mug punters who are paying for all this. Give the benefits of that to these community clubs - a nomination of your choice, like they do on the *Footy Show*. It's not exactly the same scenario. Any questions at that point?

**CHAIR** - If you have questions, Kim, or any other member, you could ask them as we go through with Michael. I should imagine they are thinking about questions at this stage.

**Mr HOLMES** - I have been at this for a long time. I have a copy of a letter I wrote on 9 April 1995 and it is headed 'TFL commissioners have lost the plot'. So yes, I have been at it a fair while, and so have other people. This is the late, great Darrel Baldock, who I have never spoken to, expressing the same concerns. On 24 September 2003, I commented about the community aspect, and Daniel Smedley, state development manager, AFL Tas responded, 'Typical AFL Tas - attack the messenger and don't listen to the message'. But it is an issue - in community football anyway.

I have plenty of others, but I thought I would just stick to the basics.

**Mr BOOTH** - Michael, as I mentioned before, you have been on this for many, many years - well before the AFL arrangements were put in place. I suppose there are two questions. You were talking about the collapse of community football - the grassroots football - as a result of focusing on the elite side of the game. To what degree was that happening before this AFL arrangement happened - specifically with regard to the AFL funding, which is really core to this inquiry? What has changed as a result of the money being given to the AFL in this way?

**Mr HOLMES** - Football is a dynamic activity - no pun intended - and I have only tracked it from 1993 onwards which is when AFL-type arrangements and the elite focus started, with the Mariners and the Football Foundation. The real alarm bells started ringing when a team from Queensland came down here to Clarence and thrashed Clarence on their home ground in a preseason game. I thought, 'There's something not right here.' The other half of that is my interest in juniors - the kids and all the kids, not just the elite but all the kids, because of the social benefits. The elite will always rise to the top.

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I have measured the progress from 1993 approximately every five years - I am talking about the adult teams because the juniors get much harder to measure because they chop and change more. I am about to table some stats.

**CHAIR** - We will hand that out, thanks, Michael.

**Mr HOLMES** - It is all taken out of the respective newspapers and the rosters and their fixtures and all that, at the right time of the year.

**CHAIR** - That is a tabled document. Thanks, Michael, for that.

**Mr HOLMES** - As you can see, we measured clubs and teams. Typically a club has two senior teams, certainly at the high level - or had. I split it into south and north/north-west for simplicity. In 1993, we had 115 senior clubs and 232 teams. In 2013, I believe we have 86 clubs and 147 teams. I have tried to track each respective league or association.

Let someone contradict the figures. Let AFL Tasmania come out and say to me, 'You're wrong', because they can play all their games with the number of kids signing up and there are various ways of manipulating the stats, but these are out of public documents.

Also, when I wrote my letter on 9 April 1995, I said, 'Look, don't take any notice of their official statistics - attendances and gate takings. Divide the gate takings by the number of people who were supposed to have been there, and then work out how much the adult entry fee is. That will tell you how many paying people are going.' After that they stopped publishing all figures, and certainly the gate takings.

I was going to TFL games where I just about knew everyone. That set alarm bells off. This is an important part of our heritage, and we should not let it go. It's the greatest field team game in the world.

**CHAIR** - So what you are saying there, Michael, is that state government funding to AFL Tasmania is doing little to improve football in the state, or going into the right areas?

**Mr HOLMES** - Without seeing the agreement, we don't know what they are agreeing to - the  $x$  for  $y$ .

**CHAIR** - I can go through those areas for you. There are eight focus areas for this funding. The first one is participation programs. The next one is coach and official education/development. The next area is governance initiatives. Next area is communications. The next ones are marketing and promotion, club development, inclusive participation and ethics/harassment-free sport. They are the eight focus areas for the state government funding. AFL Tasmania, as I understand it, is to provide all that as a part of this funding.

**Mr HOLMES** - Do they provide progress reports and such on those eight points?

**CHAIR** - They provide an annual report. There is an annual report, and I need to read through that more closely. We will want to hear from Sport and Recreation in due course as to how they measure up with that funding.

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**Mr HOLMES** - I would question the integrity of the whole process.

**CHAIR** - From what point of view?

**Mr HOLMES** - I just don't trust these sorts of situations. I have explained about how people who are giving out the dough are also getting the benefit of going to the football grand final and having a bit of fun there - watching the footy or giving someone a back-hander or whatever they are up to. They are the people handing the dough, so they are not going to question what is going on, are they? Because they will miss out on the next sweep of goodies.

**CHAIR** - I could probably ask another question - AFL Tasmania now has 50 per cent ownership, don't they, of four state league clubs?

**Mr HOLMES** - It is not going to work. It is going to be a disaster - it will be an absolute disaster. You need volunteers in our football. They have already said, 'No thanks', to two groups of them, North Hobart and Hobart. North Hobart is one of the oldest clubs in Australia. Where are they going to find the new ones, unless they pay them? They have no idea of running football clubs. They think they do, but they don't. It's an absolute waste of time. But is that linked to the community football grants, that funding?

**CHAIR** - This is the area the committee wants to look at - where the government funding is going through AFL Tasmania. We are anxious to know what it is funding, what it is providing and what the community is getting for it. Clearly that is why the committee was set up. We will be going down that path in due course, the way it is moving forward now.

**Mr HOLMES** - Reluctantly I would give them, say, \$10 000 - 20 000 per year, just to have a part-time person liaising with the government. But frankly, I wouldn't give them a cent beyond that. I would rather go -

**Mr BOOTH** - To clarify that, those eight KPIs were the areas where the money was supposed to be handed over and agreed to. In fact, the evidence we have is that they have not progressed with a lot of the KPIs and have delayed the progress towards them. So there are issues with the response from the AFL at the moment to Sport and Recreation with regard to the KPIs. Michael, do you now have a direct involvement with any clubs?

**Mr HOLMES** - No, I am licking my wounds emotionally because of the frustration -

**Mr BOOTH** - In terms of whether any of this money is hitting the ground at a club level officially then, you do not have any -

**Mr HOLMES** - Not recent experience. I have experience at the junior level where the foundation at the time was getting something like \$50 000 or \$70 000 a year and not for about how they were helping the kids. The only funding that year, at the start of the southern Tas junior footy week, which is about half the kids in the state, was \$500 to send the kids on a bus to Launceston and four footballs at the four grand finals.

**Mr BOOTH** - What role do you see with AFL in terms of the whole mix of football? Do you see it as being a completely different entity or benefit to the state as opposed to the kind

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of community football you are talking about? Is the AFL - and I do not want to put words in your mouth but I am interested in what you are saying about them being a corporation or something - they are now just a commercial business?

**Mr HOLMES** - I would have to check their articles of association but I checked once before and they had not even registered their business name. I suspect they may be just a registered business name - you would not know - and they have no representatives on their board. They are all hand picked - even at the senior level - and that is deliberate to stop anyone getting a look in.

**Mr BOOTH** - Is it induced for its own benefits, or does it exist for promoting football in Tasmania? Can you comment on that?

**Mr HOLMES** - It exists for its own benefit. I will give you another example of how they help the kids. They will probably say, 'We do a lot for Auskick. There are lots of numbers in Auskick'. They used to get a percentage of the fee for participation in Auskick, it went to the AFL, so they have a vested interest in promotion. Auskick is a great facility and kids have a lot of fun and they are a little swarm of bees running around but often those numbers are inflated by people dropping their kids off so they can go shopping. It is a pretty cheap child minding arrangement. I know because Sorell was about the second biggest 10 or 15 years ago. Do those kids play on into the system? They get to about under 12 and then it starts to get tackle and hard and the females really cannot play beyond 12, not in male leagues. They drop off and all the concentration is on the elite - the best player at that time - and 'I'm not important' and the kids go away. I have three sons and they have gone away - two of them are pretty good and had potential.

There is numbers and there is numbers. They are only there for their own benefit. Why do you think people are not going to the football? You do not feel welcome. You do not feel appreciated. I used to go week-in, week-out, it did not matter what the weather was like, I would be there - freezing cold, whether we got flogged, or whatever - and now I have been to the two North Melbourne games this year for certain reasons and I occasionally go to the grand final and those crowd numbers have dropped alarmingly - Clarence/Glenorchy, 6 500 last time I went and before that it would 15 000 to 25 000. Where have they gone?

Then you lose your goal umpires, boundary umpires, the gate keepers, the time keepers -

**CHAIR** - Kim, did you have any further questions?

**Mr BOOTH** - I think Michael has pretty well covered it. He mentioned that you would possibly give the AFL \$20 000 and why would you do that? Do you see any role for the AFL to be in receipt of this funding, in channelling it down to the community clubs, or do you think that there is no reason they should get any funding?

**Mr HOLMES** - Preferably none at all but they are the governing body. They are the licence and crediting body for these better kids and umpires and maybe officials, but I am not sure about that, who want to go onto the so-called Australian Football League, which is not a national league. We all know that that is the only pathway. If you want to go and have a bit of fun and be with your mates, that is community football to me.

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**Mr BOOTH** - You see a role for government to be funding that in any event?

**Mr HOLMES** - The community football?

**Mr BOOTH** - Yes, and how should they do that? It is \$500 000 a year at the moment, allegedly, that it is going through AFL. Do you see it relevant that it should be going and if so where should it be directed?

**Mr HOLMES** - Yes, that is the important, tricky question. To the leagues would be the only practical way of doing it, in the respective regions. You would have to nut that through very carefully. You are not going to end up with a perfect result but at the moment because the stats show, and particularly in the south, the closer you are to AFL Tasmania, the more likely you are to go out of existence. That is what my figures show, so why would you help someone who is doing that to you? You are wasting your money and even by their measures, they say it is producing so many kids to go to the AFL.

I used to attract those as well. There used to be about 20 to 24 Tasmanian players playing in the seniors every week through the team lists. Now there might be one or two, three or four, and they have far more teams, far more opportunity, and statistically have gone backwards. I would like to know what measures that they put up that would say there has been progress.

**CHAIR** - Michael, were you aware that the state government was providing \$500 000 to AFL Tasmania? Is it right to say you are not sure what the state is getting for that? You have done the statistical data and the background that you have had in here so, what sort of return are we to start getting for that?

**Mr HOLMES** - A negative return. The easiest way to run a system probably is to put it out of existence and that seems to be what they are trying to do. I remember now that I did write, in 1999, to the sport and recreation minister, I think it might have been Mr Bacon, saying all this stuff and it was seven or eight pages, saying you are backing the wrong horse and they did not even answer me.

**CHAIR** - Have you ever queried AFL Tasmania?

**Mr HOLMES** - Yes, it was probably more the predecessor to AFL Tasmania.

**CHAIR** - And what did they call themselves?

**Mr HOLMES** - Football Tasmania. I had big arguments with the manager of the football foundation. I will not name him, but he treated me like a little kid because he was an ex-school teacher and I put him in his place. I heard rumours they were going to send the boys around to belt me -

*Laughter.*

**Mr HOLMES** - I am serious.

**CHAIR** - This latest funding commenced, I think, in 2011 when \$2.5 million was made available to AFL Tasmania over the next five years.

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**Mr HOLMES** - It is a continuum.

**CHAIR** - To promote. Yes, I see, it was continuous.

**Mr HOLMES** - The organisation is a continuum. They keep changing the name, tightening the rules so no one get a look in but they are still same mob.

**CHAIR** - A name change.

**Mr HOLMES** - But the culture is the same; the culture is terrible. You will hear it from other people that I have never spoken to.

**CHAIR** - Is there anything further that you would like the committee to be aware of?

**Mr HOLMES** - That is their own words, quoted by the *Mercury* of their culture - how dare you ask us where the money is going, we will tell you behind closed doors, no public scrutiny. If they are so confident about doing the right thing, say it out in the open. Say it to the people whose sweat produces that tax revenue.

**CHAIR** - That is a determination for the committee to make in due course so, is there anything further, Michael?

**Mr HOLMES** - I think I have said a fair bit.

**CHAIR** - Any other questions of Michael?

**Mrs TAYLOR** - It is very clear.

**Mr BOOTH** - I am interested to have a look at the information that Michael has tabled. I understand that you have tabled some documents.

**CHAIR** - Yes, he has, Kim, provided statistics in relation to the clubs now and the number of participants, clubs and teams and the number of participants.

**Mr BOOTH** - Michael, can you paint a picture of where you see community football going in the next 10 years, in the AFL?

**Mr HOLMES** - Backward. It is moribund. The more AFL we have, the lower the figures are going to be, for a number of reasons. Partly, people just get sick of flogging the same raffles, standing in the cold, not being appreciated. They are just like me, they say, 'Well, I'm going to die one of these days. I'm walking away - I'm going to do something else, I'm going fishing.' And it's very, very sad. This is even more important to communities outside Hobart and Launceston. I was talking to one of your colleagues - I don't know if she is still with you - who came from Smithton and I was banging on, probably about approaching you or Jeremy, and she said, 'I see what you mean now. I am from Smithton, and the footy team is the heart of our bloody community. It would be different if we did not have it, wouldn't it?'. That is what I am on about. Once you have lost it -



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**CHAIR** - Yes, they make the community in fact - football team and cricket teams.

**Mr HOLMES** - They bring people to the area. Apart from the social aspect, they spend money in the area. I really question what benefit we are getting out of \$3 million to Hawthorn. It is an absolute joke, and then paying them to win the premiership. That's their job - to win the premiership. That's their bonus. They don't need another \$300 000, and they should not be paid for losing. And now North Melbourne - people know why they're here, they are just about broke.

**CHAIR** - Michael, if there is no other new evidence, no other questions from any members - Kim, you've no further questions?

**Mr BOOTH** - Thanks, Michael.

**CHAIR** - Michael, thank you very much for coming in and giving evidence to the committee. We appreciate that very much. If there was anything else that you felt was relevant to the term of reference, then you can certainly always pass that in through Jennifer.

**Mr HOLMES** - I still have that information. Who is on next?

**CHAIR** - The next witness is Mr Curtain.

**Mr BOOTH** - Just for the record, Chair, Michael Holmes has been a very strong advocate for community football for many, many years. He has made a lot of representations to me. I have had a lot of discussions with him and I wish that something could have happened along the lines you have suggested a long time ago, Michael.

**Mr HOLMES** - Thanks, Kim.

**CHAIR** - Thanks for that, Kim, and as Michael was talking a lot of it was coming back to me of his involvement as well. I appreciate that.

**Mr HOLMES** - And this is only the stuff they didn't censor.

**CHAIR** - Thanks very much, Michael. You're welcome to stay, if you would like to do that.

**Mr HOLMES** - Yes, I will.

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### **Mr PAUL CURTAIN WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED**

**CHAIR** - Before we commence, Paul, there two things I need to advise you of. This is a public hearing, open to the public. We have *Hansard* recording all the evidence that is taken. If, through your evidence, you reach a stage where there might be something you would like to give this committee in confidence, in camera, please raise that issue and the committee will make a decision as to whether we should do that. Also I need to advise you that parliamentary privilege applies whilst you are in here and giving evidence to the committee but once you leave you no longer have parliamentary privilege and anything you say is a matter for you. You need to be aware of that.

You have made a submission to us and we have read that. The submission has been made in relation to the term of reference so I would ask that we stick to the term of reference as best we can. I know we can get a little bit outside of that from time to time but if we can stick to that term of reference, it is fairly important. At this stage, I will give you an opportunity to go through anything additional you would like to tell the committee, or anything you would like to emphasise, then we will have questions, if that is okay with you?

**Mr CURTAIN** - That is fine, and thanks for the opportunity to come along and have a discussion with you.

My major concern is that in Tasmania for years and years we have had very strong representation and community interest in Australian Rules football, and in the past 15 to 20 years this has been challenged quite severely on a number of occasions.

**CHAIR** - Paul, could you give us some of your background, and how you fit into football? Information about any involvement you might have had in football would be very helpful for the committee.

**Mr CURTAIN** - As a player, I played back in the early 1970s with New Norfolk in the Tasmanian Football League. In 1976, I started Dominic Old Scholars Football Club and I have been actively involved there for many years. In the late 1990s, I was heavily involved with the North Hobart Football Club because of my eldest son's participation, and from 2002 to 2009, I was the chairman of the North Hobart Football Club. Following my retirement from work I was no longer directly involved, however, I have been a keen participant in what has been going on. I am also currently the vice-president of the Old Scholars Football Association.

**CHAIR** - Thanks, Paul.

**Mr CURTAIN** - As I say, football has always been very much community owned and oriented. My major concern is that over the last 15 to 20 years we have seen a concentration of the ownership of football into privatised hands and there has been no real social licence given to AFL to take over community-based football in Tasmania. It has been done by stealth. It became clearly evident to me in my time as chairman of the North Hobart Football Club from 2002 to 2009, that there are some great challenges facing Tasmanian football. Unfortunately, a lot of those challenges are imposed rather than created.

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I was very pleased for the opportunity to have this discussion. At the end of the day, probably what sums up where we are at with football was in the press on the weekend, when the CEO of AFL Tasmania said that he doesn't have to be publicly accountable - or AFL Tasmania doesn't need to be publicly accountable - for taxpayers' funding. I find that quite disgraceful. It is not unexpected - that type of attitude - considering some of the actions that AFL Tasmania has undertaken, especially in the last seven or eight years that I have been directly concerned.

With regard to the terms of reference, I found they were sufficiently broad to be all encompassing. My first contact with regard to funding from the state government was with junior development. It was a standing joke at the time about how there was double counting going on with the number of participants at junior level, mainly because it was based on observations rather than to screen participants. There was double counting of kids at school and kids turning up at weekends, so they counted two instead of one. A bit of gross exaggeration went on and that was widely known by people within junior football ranks.

What happened when we had the introduction of the latest version of state-wide football, we finished up with 10 clubs after starting with eight, which was the club's preference, that we got forced to have 10 when we were told that their preference was to have 12. It was a moving feast all the time. The upshot of that was we were given \$50 000 each, each of the clubs, which was basically a straight transfer of funding from state government, either by state government by AFL Tas to clubs to undertake functions that they were currently doing. It was doing nothing to enhance football within the Tasmanian community.

There were a couple of other areas that we needed to be aware of, about umpires. With due respect to umpires, we cannot do without them, but if we were to look at performance indicators and things like that, it is a bit like football. Some people might say it has not improved all that much. That is a challenge that AFL Tas has not been able to address. As I point out in my submission, there is a glaring weakness in Tasmanian community footy, which AFL Tas could have really impacted upon, and that is the provision of sufficient processes and support people around sport medicine. Everyone is struggling to get support in those areas. There is no easy fix, but it would be something that I would have thought AFL Tas could have put a focus on, and they have not. I suppose -

**CHAIR** - Paul, will you take questions on the way through?

**Mr CURTAIN** - Okay, otherwise we will be all over the shop.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - It was relevant to those two things. Were you here this morning?

**Mr CURTAIN** - No.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - We have a document from the Department of Economic Development, a letter from the secretary, that tells us what the \$500 000 a year, or the \$2.5 million, the KPIs they had for those. I am interested in your understanding of what that funding is for - and not just yours, I might add, is different to what the KPIs say.

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For instance you, and other witnesses before you, have said that you understood that this was to provide \$50 000 of funding per annum to each club to undertake non-game day tasks previously done by paid employees of AFL. Where did you get that information? What led you to believe that?

**Mr CURTAIN** - I think we are both reading into that too much, in that there was \$500 000 given to junior football development from Sport and Rec.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Yes, that is the Sport and Rec money we are talking about.

**Mr CURTAIN** - That is the Sport and Rec money. It just so happened that when we started the new state-wide league there was \$50 000 provided to each club. That \$50 000 was not \$50 000 multiplied by 10 equals \$500 000, which was the \$500 000 for junior development.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Right.

**Mr CURTAIN** - Forty per cent of that \$50 000 allocation was to be spent on junior development. The 10 clubs had a responsibility of \$200 000 and carriage of that, because that was the transfer of functions from AFL Tas support staff, who would normally carry those out and they were handballed to the clubs and the clubs took those on. How successful that had been in the last number of years - I have been out of it for four years, but you hear there are varying degrees of success, and you even hear some of the unfortunate comments that some of the money is used to prop up player payments. I think that is pretty ordinary.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - If I can read you the eight focus areas that they say are there, and you might answer yes or no as to whether you think that the clubs are benefiting from this. These are negotiated and agreed specific key performance indicators.

**Mr CURTAIN** - I might say this is another demonstration of the lack of transparency in the activities of AFL Tasmania.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - You do not know what these are?

**Mr CURTAIN** - No, and they are not openly reported on.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Yes. The first one is participation programs. The \$500 000 is supposed to fund participation programs.

**Mr CURTAIN** - Yes, I am aware of that and \$20 000 is given to the clubs to do that. The other participation programs are programs that AFL Tas has -

**Mrs TAYLOR** - We have not heard from any other clubs that they are given \$20 000 a year to do that.

**Mr CURTAIN** - If we go back to the Tasmanian state league business plan, and if we look through there - which I probably cannot find the reference to now - it says \$50 000. Participation, \$20 000.

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**Mr BOOTH** - Paul, is that \$50 000 across all the clubs, or an individual club, or are you aware of any club receiving any specific money?

**Mrs TAYLOR** - We have not been told by any club. This is the funding from 2011 to 2015, the \$500 000 a year.

**Mr CURTAIN** - In the \$500 000 a year, each club is given \$50 000.

**CHAIR** - Are you right, Kim? Each club is given \$50 000.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - That is not what we heard from the clubs.

**CHAIR** - No, sorry, I am only repeating what Paul is saying.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - That is what you're saying, yes.

**Mr CURTAIN** - In 2009, Kim, each club was given \$50 000. During the journey over the next five years it has changed. Clubs were given additional moneys. I understand there were only four clubs that, over the journey, have not received additional moneys. Now, with the new licence, AFL Tas is committing \$100 000. But in 2009 the \$50 000, 40 per cent of it, was to be spent on participation.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Right.

**Mr CURTAIN** - That was the footy in schools programs, Auskick, other school-based programs.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - And the date of that document, Paul?

**Mr CURTAIN** - AFL Tas business plan, this would have been 2008, when we negotiated the new state-wide league and \$15 000, 30 per cent, was to conduct a series of district talent games. That was because each club had a development zone on school holidays to play some district talent games so each club got \$15 000. Then there was \$10 000 for coach education, which was for the club coaches or club resources to go to their designated districts and do some coach education. The remaining \$5000 was for the clubs to strive towards what was called a quality club program, where the club committed to achieve a gold rating of AFL Tas quality club program. It is all from the Tasmanian state league business plan of 2008.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - I think that might have changed since 2008.

**Mr CURTAIN** - No doubt it has been a moving feast, but to try to find a copy of a current one, let alone find a copy of the 2008 one - this was sourced, as I understand, from the Burnie Dockers website. It is still there -

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Could we ask whether that might be able to be tabled?

**CHAIR** - We have already had a copy of that, but we have not had a chance to look at it because it was received this morning amongst a heap of other things.

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**Mr CURTAIN** - I think the other thing too -

**CHAIR** - Sorry, Paul, before we go on, you are saying that to your knowledge that is the latest document, there is no other document that supersedes that. Is that what you're saying, Paul?

**Mr CURTAIN** - I would imagine with any business plan it would be a fairly dynamic document. I am not aware that it is in the public domain anywhere, or if there have been any other actual updates on it.

**CHAIR** - Sorry, Adriana.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - My questions probably have no relevance then, because what it appears to me in this letter is that the criteria here are not for each club, they are for the whole \$500 000 to be administered by AFL Tas.

**CHAIR** - Unless Paul has up-to-date information on that, yes.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Yes. Thanks.

**Mr BOOTH** - Adriana, have you finished that line?

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Yes, I have. I don't know what else to ask really.

**Mr BOOTH** - Okay. I am still a bit confused, Paul - that document says that the clubs got it all - whether the clubs got it and whether they are continuing to get any funding in the period our inquiry is about.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - I think that's the point.

**Mr BOOTH** - For clarification, you're saying that every club got \$50 000 in 2008, and you are sure they actually got that.

**Mr CURTAIN** - In 2009. For the life of the old licences - for five years - each club was to receive \$50 000 to undertake those four functions, so the money was not to go into player payments or facility building or something like that. It was to go into those four particular areas, and supposedly there was some regular reporting back to AFL Tasmania about expenditures on those four items.

**CHAIR** - That was through to about the year 2013, or 2012?

**Mr CURTAIN** - That was \$50 000 a year to 2013. The clubs were financially challenged during that period and, as I understand it, six of the 10 participating clubs were given additional funding for various things. As I put in my submission, I understand that some funding went to one of the league clubs here in southern Tasmania, so it could attract one of its players back from the AFL competition.

**Mr BOOTH** - I was going to ask you about the amount you had in your submission. Paul, you made the point there - and I will quote - 'and, unfortunately, it would appear that

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AFL Tasmania is attempting, and has done so, at TSL level, to privatise what is essentially a community-based sporting activity in Tasmania'. What do you precisely mean by 'privatise it'? Can you expand on that? Are you saying the AFL effectively now is a private business that exists for its own sake or -

**Mr CURTAIN** - That's right. Back in the 2008 state league business plan, the whole emphasis was that clubs were being invited to join in this new competition, of which AFL Tasmania would be competition managers, and they would work with the community clubs to enhance and grow community product. Over the journey of the last five years, there has been a change in the language, especially from Scott Wade, that says that AFL Tasmania owns the competition. Where that negotiation occurred, or where they got the social licence to say that they own a competition that has community clubs participating in it, beggars belief.

Scott Wade openly admits now that it is a privately-owned competition. He does not care if people don't come along and watch. They might as well play at 9.30 on a Sunday morning over a Geilston Bay and, quite frankly, the fact that he is using community clubs to provide competition for a very few elite, aspirational footballers is pretty damn disgraceful. The pressure that is put upon our volunteers, upon the financial resources of clubs, is just not realistic.

I might also say, while I am on a bit of a roll with this, that if you go into the TSL business plan of 2008, AFL Tasmania quite clearly states in there - and Scott Wade has recently stated on local radio here in Hobart - that AFL Tasmania's preferred model is a TAC cup model. For those people here who don't know what a TAC cup model is, it is a competition played in Victoria where there are single teams that represent regions. They are not ongoing community-type entities like we have had over here, like the North Hobart Football Club, which has been going for 130-odd years, but it is one team representing a region with the sole purpose of raising the cream to the top so that kids can get drafted. I suggest the demographics in Tasmania are such that you don't have a strong enough concentration of young elite players in that target age group, so AFL Tasmania is using community clubs to provide that environment, to the detriment of the clubs.

**Mr BOOTH** - Are you saying that AFL Tasmania is some sort of private corporation that exists for its own benefit, and it is a peripheral or incidental benefit that you end up having people playing football and kicking balls around? Its real benefit is to provide the corporate structure, to sell advertising, to make money for the people on the board and the proponents of it, as a business? A bit like a car dealership or a second hand franchise or something?

**Mr CURTAIN** - You only have to look at gridiron in America, where it is only played at an elite level rather than with a strong underpinning of community activities in that sport.

**Mr BOOTH** - You might end up having the team AFL Tasmania, for example. Are you saying it could be bought by a person and run as a club for their own benefit to make money - is that where it could lead?

**Mr BOOTH** - We have seen what has just happened with the allocations of licences for the new state league - some clubs have not had licences continued, they have had them taken

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away. We have seen clubs being re-badged - they are trying to re-brand clubs. If we go back to the privatisation, AFL is a private business and it came out of the establishment of the commission back in the 1980s in Victoria. Now we have these satellite operations that operate under the auspices of the AFL and it is all about providing elite, young aspirational players for a mainland-based competition. Over here, the vehicle they are using to give these kids the opportunity to show their wares is a community-based competition, which they have decided they now own.

**Mr BOOTH** - Do you think in the long run that is going to provide more opportunities for community football, or less?

**Mr CURTAIN** - It is certainly going to move community football down the pecking order in that the AFL would seem to see itself as the peak body. We are seeing some mad scrambling by AFL Tasmania to try to give themselves some community focus with the establishment of the Tasmania Football Council but, in effect, that is just a smoke screen to put a bit of distance between AFL Tasmania and the Tasmania football community.

We also have an exercise that community clubs and competitions have been invited to attend in November, where one of the keynote speakers is Scott Wade. I notice the main address from Scott is titled 'The Plan for Tasmanian Football' - another plan done without any consultation with community clubs that are, once again, going to be told about football in Tasmania according to AFL Tasmania.

**Mr BOOTH** - In your submission, you mentioned that four of the 10 state league teams are now effectively owned by the AFL. Is that right?

**Mr CURTAIN** - We basically have four new franchises that have come in, where AFL Tasmania will be underwriting any operating losses they have for the first number of years. It started off that the Hobart City franchise was going to have any operating losses underwritten for one year and I think they negotiated that out to three years. It was widely known that the Kingborough franchise was going to have any operating losses underwritten for three years. Now we have Devonport being forced to play in a privately-owned competition, and I assume its losses will be also underwritten for the period of time it is locked into playing in a competition it does not want to be in. And of course we have the fiasco with South Launceston/Prospect, where the same things will happen. The reason these activities need to be underwritten is because of the structure of the competition - the unattractiveness of the competition. It is just not viable for clubs to participate in their own right, in an economic sense.

**Mr BOOTH** - So, you are concerned that the \$500 000 a year might be directed to underwriting those clubs' lack of viability, against the interests of the rest of the clubs?

**Mr CURTAIN** - The \$500 000 is probably the only thing AFL Tasmania could tip its lid to - to say that it comes close to the mark on delivering. Because we acknowledge that there are a number of junior activities out there that allow for young kids who want to participate. As to AFL Tasmania, and how it attracts its money, Andrew Demetriou gets more money in his back pocket than the state of Tasmania gets for its football. That is some of the disconnect that goes on there. It is quite clear that the AFL sees Tasmania as a captive market and they have little regard for it.



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I would make a plea on behalf of the Tasmanian footy community to say that if there is going to be taxpayers' money put into a private organisation to deliver social outcomes for Tasmanian residents, then we need to be very careful about how that is done and how that is monitored. I would also say that if AFL Tasmania needs additional funds to underwrite the activities of their privately-owned competition, they should get it from the AFL. Take it out of the \$194 million they are putting into Western Sydney, or something like that.

**Mr BOOTH** - What place do you see for the AFL in Tasmania in terms of the future of football in general, as well as the community-football aspect? Where do you see this leading us, as a state, with community participation in football, if this current model continues?

**Mr CURTAIN** - Unfortunately I don't hold out much hope at all, but the issues I see are not unsolvable. One of the issues we have with AFL Tasmania is a demonstrated lack of capability and the appropriate skill sets to deal with stakeholders involved in footy in Tasmania. This obviously leads to things like a lack of trust.

There also seems to be a lack of accountability, or willingness to be accountable, and we certainly have a lack of transparency in how AFL Tasmania operates. Do we ever see any public advertisements for nominations to the board? I can tell you some stories about how some of those nominations occur, which beggar belief.

To answer your question, Kim, for a population of 515 000 or 520 000, or whatever we are now, and considering the way it is spread out around the state, to give young, aspirational, potentially elite players the best opportunity, we should be focusing on regional competitions. That is certainly the position that I have come to now. I was an advocate for state-wide football for this last generation but certainly not now, because the model is wrong. We need it to be community relevant.

Our footy has to be community relevant in our regions, so that clubs can attract volunteers, and so that there can be family-friendly environments and so forth. Some of the things I hear these days from Launceston are fairly shocking, like where they get 87 people paying to come and watch a game of footy. In another game up in Launceston they had 92, and when North Hobart played South Launceston about three weeks before the final series commenced I did a quick count, and without underestimating, I think South Launceston brought along about 12 supporters - people not actively involved in the running of the game.

For AFL Tasmania to put in \$50 000 or \$100 000, but not having a competition that is community relevant - only having two teams per club - all they are doing is cannibalising community clubs of their financial and human resources. I would suggest, Kim, that if AFL Tasmania wants a competition, they should go to their TAC cup model, probably have half a dozen teams and leave community-based football to the regions. We could bring back intrastate games and things like that and give people in the community some ownership again of the game.

**Mr BOOTH** - Back to the 1970s or 1980s or something.

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**CHAIR** - Kim, I will go across to other members at this stage. Paul, any points there that you would like to ask?

**Mr HARRISS** - If I could pick up, Mr Chairman, on a couple of matters. Paul, I am linking this specifically to the possible impact of the \$500 000 state government funding to AFL Tasmania, because that is where we are going - you have indicated that AFL Tasmania has recently been approaching some local government entities about leasing grounds currently used by community clubs. If that is the case, and if that puts pressure on those community clubs, that further erodes the notion of community participation, if you like. Can you identify the local government areas that are being consulted by AFL Tasmania or, indeed, the clubs that it might impact?

**Mr CURTAIN** - I am aware of two instances - one with the Glenorchy City Council where AFL Tasmania approached the Glenorchy City Council about leasing King George V Oval. That inquiry was made around the time that a group called Save Tasmanian Football was fairly active. It was acknowledged by a board member from the Hobart City Football Club at a meeting of North Hobart members that Hobart City Football Club had discussed the idea of leasing the North Hobart oval. Just for the benefit of people here, these grounds are traditionally let out on a game-day hire basis. So inside the fence is on a game-day hire and councils have operated that way at Glenorchy and most definitely at the Hobart City Council since 1923 in the Hobart City Council's case. But some clubs do lease facilities around the perimeter, just to discern there.

In essence, I was very concerned that here was AFL Tasmania through its franchised clubs and privatised competition wanting to get a hold of community facilities owned by councils where they would have the sway over who could actually participate at those grounds.

**Mr HARRISS** - From what you have indicated to the committee both today and in your submission, am I correct in concluding that you can't pinpoint any direct trail of the benefit of the \$500 000 state government funding to AFL Tasmania as to how it might benefit community football? Am I right in concluding that?

**Mr CURTAIN** - No. As I said, the \$500 000 is probably the most traceable of any of their activities. As to quantify whether that is a bang for the buck for the community, I would think we would get better carriage. As I say, \$200 000 of the \$500 000 has been directly allocated to clubs through their annual grants so the clubs are out there working pretty hard doing -

**Mr HARRISS** - Which clubs are you talking about?

**Mr CURTAIN** - I said, 'the clubs'.

**Mr HARRISS** - Being statewide clubs?

**Mr CURTAIN** - The statewide clubs. One of the challenges I know that the statewide clubs certainly have now is, how do they do that ex-metropolitan, like out of Hobart, Launceston, Burnie or Devonport? I suspect that not much of it happens but I am aware that it varies between the clubs. I will give some feedback I had the other day from the Brighton Football Club when they asked the Clarence Football Club to provide one of

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their development officers, a particular one, to come and do something for Brighton which is in their development zone. They said, 'No, he couldn't come because he lives in Launceston'. Read into that whatever you like.

**CHAIR** - The only difficulty I have with what you have been saying is this: the \$500 000 which this committee is investigating is specific money provided by the state to AFL Tasmania, but there is no direct correlation between that \$500 000 - it just is coincidental that the \$500 000 which AFL Tasmania provides to state league clubs is the same -

**Mr CURTAIN** - It is \$200 000 that they give to the clubs. The other \$300 000 is retained in-house for other type activities that may be related to -

**CHAIR** - Yes, but what I am getting to is this: it is entirely possible that if the state government did not give AFL Tasmania \$500 000, the clubs would still get the \$200 000, because it is just coincidental that one figure equals another.

**Mr CURTAIN** - Yes, well, I am not correlating between the two. What I am saying is the clubs are getting \$200 000. As for the fact that the state government gives them \$500 000, I don't know what they do with the other \$300 000 as regards junior development. If it wasn't there, would they still do the same programs? I don't know; they ought to go to Mr Demetriou and ask him to cover the shortfalls. As a corporate citizen, I don't think they are the responsible people to be giving a quantum of money to undertake these activities.

**Mr HARRISS** - That answers a question which I was going to ask you along that exact line: why should the state government even give AFL Tasmania a single dollar, because if they are short \$500 000 - if that was taken away - in performing their functions, they would just go to AFL headquarters and get the required money. So you have answered the question.

**CHAIR** - The money that's provided to the clubs, the \$20 000 referred to, that was AFL buying from those clubs a service. Am I getting this right? They were to provide that each club was to provide a certain service as a result of that payment.

**Mr CURTAIN** - Well, if there was \$50 000 given -

**CHAIR** - So what was AFL Tasmania buying from the clubs?

**Mr CURTAIN** - They were buying \$20 000 worth of participation - improving game participation through footy in schools program, Auskick programs, school programs within districts, and some umpiring programs for the district. There was another \$15 000 for talent identification, which you could say was \$35 000 going towards junior footy. Then there are the ones about coach education and the quality club program. That's two bob each way as to how that impacts upon junior -

**CHAIR** - Are you aware of whether or not the clubs were then required to satisfy AFL Tasmania of the fact that they had done exactly that?

**Mr CURTAIN** - Certainly in my time, in 2009, the schools program was run past AFL Tas for scrutiny and support was given to club development officers to ensure that they were

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getting appropriate coverage. As I say, whether that same rigour still exists in the last few years, I don't know.

**CHAIR** - And the other point I make from that - this has come out from what Paul has said - is that we don't know where that \$20 000 to each club, the \$200 000 funding came from, from within AFL Tasmania.

**Mr CURTAIN** - AFL Tas might well turn round and say it was \$350 000 that was going to clubs.

**CHAIR** - But if they said that funding was actually coming from some other area, we wouldn't know, would we? We would have no idea where it came from. We are told in fact that the \$500 000 that the AFL Tasmania is receiving was going into consolidated revenue, and simply just becoming one large part of their funding bucket.

**Mr CURTAIN** - Adriana said there were eight performance indicators, which I am not aware of, so the comprehensiveness -

**Mrs TAYLOR** - It says nothing about giving a percentage to each club; it sounds like it is a bucket and -

**Mr CURTAIN** - I would assume they are probably getting information and aggregating up and, I would assume, rounding up in a big way.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Perhaps.

**CHAIR** - My other question has come from a matter of interest. You refer to the survey results that show - and that was done fairly recently - that 92 per cent of respondents do not think that AFL Tasmania is doing a good job of managing football in the state; 72 per cent of respondents support a return to regional football competitions; and four in five responses indicated that AFL Tasmania should focus on junior development and leave the administration of competitions to participating clubs.

Can you add to that and the survey and whether it has had any impact or what has happened as a result of it?

**Mr CURTAIN** - Nothing has happened as a result of it.

**CHAIR** - When was it?

**Mr CURTAIN** - It was conducted a couple of months ago. It was hardly an overly rigorous survey. It was a quick on-line six-question survey that we knocked together, the Save Tasmanian Football Group that I was a part of. It was to get some public feedback. One of the unfortunate things is that with football we are all struggling for membership so you call a members' meeting, you call 50 or 60 people together to get some feedback. At least with social media you are capturing a wider population. It is the fact that over 90 per cent of those respondents have concerns about AFL Tasmania and how it goes about doing its thing. I think that is significant.

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I think it is significant there is support for regional competitions and it was acknowledged in the fact that four and five responses did acknowledge that if AFL Tasmania have these resources, then junior development should be the primary focus, and not running mature-age competitions.

**CHAIR** - Thanks, Paul. Are there any other questions?

**Mr BOOTH** - I have heard everything I need to hear.

**CHAIR** - Is there anything else that you wanted to raise?

**Mr CURTAIN** - I would like to sum up by saying, as a passionate football participant, supporter and volunteer, that it is very disappointing that football has got to the stage it has in Tasmania from when I remember the vibrancies of the 1960s and 1970s and even into the 1980s and that it is sad that it has reached this stage but it obviously reflects other issues in society and how things move on.

But I don't think AFL Tasmania has helped themselves, through the lack of transparency in its processes. Its lack of accountability, it is a lack of trust through some of its key personnel, and mostly it comes down to lack of capabilities and skill sets in those people charged with those responsibilities. And I do not think that a community-based sport like football should be privatised. There has certainly been no sight of a licence to AFL Tasmania to do so.

**CHAIR** - Paul, thank you very much for coming along. I thank you for the way in which you have presented today and we appreciate it very much. We can see very clearly the passion that you have for football in this state and that it goes in the right direction. We thank you very much for that.

**THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.**

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**Mr BRETT HALL** WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** - Welcome. There are a couple of things I need to advise you before we start. This is a public hearing. If at any stage we reach a stage where you would like to give some evidence in camera we will listen and the committee will make a decision on that and normally we help you out in that regard. While you are giving evidence here you have parliamentary privilege but once you leave this environment it no longer applies. It is being recorded on *Hansard* for public information at the end of the day. Our terms of reference are clear and you have read through that and put in your submission in accordance with that. We have your submission here. I will ask you to outline your background in football, where you stand with football right at this moment and then you can go through any additional information you want to pass on or emphasise any points to all of that, and at the end of that or through that we will ask questions.

**Mr HALL** - My background in football is as a player for about 10 years and, like most unsuccessful players, you then turn your hand to administration.

*Laughter.*

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Which club, Brett?

**Mr HALL** - St Virgils, and I helped run St Virgils for six or seven years and then became one of the Old Scholars as vice president for two years. I have been president for the last 11 years. They are always trying to find the next president but they are very hard to find. I have been heavily involved in Old Scholars football for 30 years.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Brett, if you want to emphasise any points or to add anything to your submission in any way, additional new information, please feel free to do so.

**Mr HALL** - I am reasonably comfortable to let the submission speak for itself. There was not really a lot to provide. We don't receive any funding from AFL Tasmania and, as such, there are no outcomes linked to the funding. Unfortunately, there is not a lot further I can go with that.

**CHAIR** - What have you seen from AFL Tasmania as a result of the state government funding they get, the \$500 000 a year?

**Mr HALL** - I suppose we are talking about the last 10 years - I am just trying to get a time frame.

**CHAIR** - In 2011, the state government made \$2.5 million available to AFL Tasmania over a five-year period, and it is \$500 000 a year with \$200 000 paid at one stage and \$300 000 at another stage during the year. There was funding before that but I am not quite sure what the payment was for that.

**Mr HALL** - My understanding of the funding prior to that was that it was linked to AFL Tasmania and there was a series of development officers at AFL Tasmania who were assisting the clubs with issues. At the same time, I think the Devils were going, so my

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understanding is that a lot of those development officers happened to be aligned to the Devils, and in various guises since that funding are still being provided, but as far as the Old Scholars are concerned there has never really been any utilisation of the development officers or offers for tangible support from them.

**CHAIR** - So you have not seen any of that support from AFL Tasmania in the long time you have been there?

**Mr HALL** - Pretty much. In the submission there was a couple of areas where they had provided some assistance and one was when the DOSA football club moved from the Cadbury oval to North Hobart and they provided some logistical support and a cash grant to assist them in that move.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - That was AFL Tasmania who provided that?

**Mr HALL** - Yes. Also in the last few years the Richmond Football Club has started a junior program starting up with Auskick and then moving to under-8s, under-9s and letting that cohort go through together and AFL Tasmania has provided logistical assistance with that and also the Clarence junior development officer, Jeremy Webberley, has assisted there in running clinics.

I went out to the clubs because I wanted to make sure that what we were saying here today was correct, so I asked them if they had anything that perhaps I wasn't aware of and they were the two issues that came back to me.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Thanks. The letter we received from the department says:

In 2011 the state government committed funding of \$2.5 million per year over a five-year period to AFL Tasmania

and this is the important bit -

to support football in Tasmania through partnerships that drive significant economic and social change to the community, provide a direct benefit to football at all levels in Tasmania, and increase support for grassroots football. The purpose of the funding is to assist AFL Tasmania to deliver football participation, club development, and coach and official education initiatives.

That sounds to me as though OSFA should fit into that because it doesn't say only to clubs, does it? It actually says 'to support football in Tasmania'. Hence my question is have they assisted you to deliver football participation, club development, and coach and official education?

**Mr HALL** - No. I suppose there is an education program run by AFL Tasmania to teach trainers. That is certainly advertised -

**Mrs TAYLOR** - The Old Scholars can tap into that?

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**Mr HALL** - Yes. I think in November AFL Tas has something planned which is a sort of club development day. As far as my understanding it is the first of its like, and involves getting everyone together for one day.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Do you have to pay for that or is it free?

**Mr HALL** - The letter they sent to us said we get two free attendees at the conference per association and per club and then there is a dinner that night which you have to pay for.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Good, thank you.

**Mr HARRISS** - While on that matter, you might not have been here, Brett, but -

**Mrs TAYLOR** - I think Brett has been here all day.

**Mr HALL** - No, I snuck in in Paul's last 20 minutes.

**Mr HARRISS** - In that case you probably would have heard Paul refer to that very planning conference where he contends that Scott Wade is one of the keynote speakers who is speaking on the plan for football in Tasmania and, of course, Paul's contention was, 'Here we go again, with AFL Tasmania telling us how football will be run rather than consulting us.'. Do you understand that that particular forum or seminar is intended to provide feedback opportunities for all the participants?

**Mr HALL** - All I know is that we have been given an invite to that event and that is, as you say, on the agenda, but don't know a lot more about it other than that. I am not too sure what format that might take.

**Mr HARRISS** - Have there been other forums that AFL Tasmania has conducted in terms of governance, communication, marketing - all those things they are supposed to deliver for the \$500 000 of state government funding - where your association has had an opportunity to have input to the outcomes rather than being directed as to what is the plan for football in Tasmania?

**Mr HALL** - Not for some time. Not in the last few years, I would say, although there was a push a couple of years ago to create an AFL South that was going to look after football in the south and that was going to be spearheaded by the SFL. To be honest, that seems to have fizzled out, I suppose; I haven't seen anything on that for some time.

**CHAIR** - As we have referred to the other witnesses, Brett, there are a number of areas that AFL Tasmania are funded for in football in this state and I will just run through each one with you. They are participation programs; coach and official education/development; governance initiatives; communication; marketing and promotion; club development; inclusive participation; and ethics/harassment-free sport. They are the eight focus areas for AFL Tasmania relative to the funding that they receive from the state government. Looking at each of those areas, where has your association benefited from that? You have given us a couple of examples but are there any others?

**Mr HALL** - Would I be able to have a copy of that just to look through it?



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**CHAIR** - Is there any reason to do that? The document has been tabled. Maybe we had better do it this way I think in fairness to the government. There are eight different areas.

**Mr HALL** - Perhaps you could ask me in turn about each area.

**CHAIR** - The first one is in participation programs.

**Mr HALL** - No, nothing for the OSFA as the senior clubs. However, the assistance to Richmond in establishing their underage and Auskick -

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Do you remember what year that was?

**Mr HALL** - It is over the last two or three years. They start off with Auskick then go up to under-9s and then under-10s next year.

**Mr HARRISS** - Did that arise as a direct result of a request from the Richmond Football Club to AFL Tasmania, or was it done through the Old Scholars?

**Mr HALL** - It was done directly from Richmond to AFL Tasmania, I would expect. It wasn't an Old Scholars-driven thing. Tony Ryan runs the underage at Richmond and I am sure he would have approached AFL Tasmania for their support, and Clarence, and sought their assistance.

**CHAIR** - Is that financial support, Brett?

**Mr HALL** - I am led to believe, no, but I only know what the club has told me. I think it is logistical support and availability of the Clarence Junior Development officer.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. The next point is coach and official education/development.

**Mr HALL** - Yes, back to what I spoke to earlier about the trainers. There is also a coaching program that goes round level 1, 2, and 3 coaching but that is on a fee-for-service basis.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - You have to pay for that?

**Mr HALL** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Governance initiatives?

**Mr HALL** - Not, in my memory.

**CHAIR** - Communications?

**Mr HALL** - No.

**CHAIR** - Marketing and promotion?

**Mr HALL** - No. Marketing is sponsored by CUB. Three years ago AFL Tasmania wanted to help us with our contract for the year and went away and spoke to CUB on our behalf

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but I ended up taking the reins on that one. Once we saw the deal, we negotiated a different deal. They were happy to be involved but it didn't meet what we were after.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Might have been a good idea that you did it yourself.

**CHAIR** - Did you approach the club for sponsorship?

**Mr HALL** - Yes, CUB. They have been sponsoring us for some time. If we go back several years CUB used to sponsor football in Tasmania. AFL Tasmania would negotiate a deal and we were coming under that. The SFL, us, and there were probably some other, not underage, with CUB. The statewide league has fallen over a bit. They were hoping to resume something similar. But when they did have a deal and presented it to us, it wasn't what we were after.

**CHAIR** - The reason I raise that is that we were given evidence this morning that AFL Tasmania has a number of protected sponsors. In other words, they sponsor AFL Tasmania and that is it. They are not to sponsor any other club in relation to any matter. But you were able to negotiate a position?

**Mr HALL** - Yes, but that is the continuation of the position we had for some time. We have been sponsored by CUB for 10 to 12 years.

**CHAIR** - Club development?

**Mr HALL** - Apart from the training courses for trainers and coaches. The occasional, when Hawthorn come down every year, there is an opportunity for trainers to go along, learn from their trainers, and for their sessions on certain club administration. I am not too sure how much AFL Tasmania has to play in that.

**CHAIR** - The other one is inclusive participation and ethics/harassment-free sport?

**Mr HALL** - Last year some information came out on that, an email with some attachments. There hasn't, to my knowledge, been any sessions on it.

**CHAIR** - How much feedback does your association get from AFL Tasmania as to what they are doing and what is happening, how they are progressing things and the changes they are making? How often do you get an opportunity to have any input into AFL Tasmania in their directions and what they are doing?

**Mr HALL** - It does vary. This year, for example, there was very little involvement but if you go back prior to that, Scott gives me a ring if there is something coming up or will get me involved if there is something happening in the football world that we need to be aware of. When they were talking through the restructures of AFL South there was a couple of meetings held with football stakeholders, but the day-to-day operations of the two organisations are pretty much at arm's length.

**CHAIR** - Paul?

**Mr HARRISS** - No, I do not think so.

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**CHAIR** - Kim, any questions arising from that?

**Mr BOOTH** - Your submission is pretty clear, whether you can paint a picture of what role AFL should play in the future in Tasmania as opposed to grassroots, whether they have had evidence from other people that it is more of a privatised corporation than a community operation, and it follows from being self-funding rather than taking money from the public purse, and contributions to the grassroots perhaps going directly to them. Do you have any comment on that sort of approach?

**Mr HALL** - I did hear Paul, who was in here before me, and he asked, 'Who owns football in Tasmania?' That is a really interesting question. It appears to me that AFL Tas owns football in Tasmania. Whether that is because they are the only professional body in the state and are well funded to be the professional body and that is probably the appearance that comes across. That said, I would think that AFL Tas is here to do what the AFL tells it to do, so I am not sure if that means you own the game or you own what is underneath the umbrella of AFL Tas.

As far as football goes in Tasmania, for me, grassroots really talks about the underage and the community-based clubs, and that is where I would see grassroots-type funding belonging.

**Mr BOOTH** - If there was public funding then it would go potentially directly to clubs that fell under that grassroots club mantle?

**Mr HALL** - I think there is always a need to have some overarching body. Whether that's a national body as in most other sports, or a state body like Football Tasmania, the soccer guys, or something like that, I am not sure. I think a lot of people assume AFL Tas is here for the betterment of football in Tasmania and a lot of people's frustrations come from that. My view is that AFL Tas is here to do what the AFL require and they are funded to provide outcomes for AFL.

**Mr BOOTH** - Right.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - That is a distinct dichotomy, whether they are for AFL purposes or whether they are there for community football purposes.

**Mr HALL** - There is no reason the two cannot coexist.

**CHAIR** - Could coexist with the right structure.

**Mr BOOTH** - At the moment, it appears that the \$500 000, which is part of our terms of reference, looking at where that goes, is not reaching what you would describe as the grassroots of the football community?

**Mr HALL** - For me it is not reaching the Old Scholars, but I also probably would see underage as a more deserving area for funding than the Old Scholars Football League. For us, our competition would benefit from a few dollars to put on some part-time administrators or something like that to assist the full-time working volunteers who pretty much run things day-to-day. I wouldn't see us deserving much of the \$500 000, we would mainly want participation, people involved in the game, underage, and

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providing some support perhaps for those clubs above the underage, so that people can move into them.

**Mr BOOTH** - Your club effectively provides a repository and a lifelong interest in football by people who have been engaged at perhaps a higher level previously and would provide that opportunity for currently grassroots younger players to come into that later on. Is that the prospect?

**Mr HALL** - Certainly. If you are a club looking for players, you are looking at most of our clubs, five of them at least, are old-school based, so that is your first call for players. Then you are looking at guys who were perhaps at that school dropping back from the senior level. In the state we need a strong top level of footy and that should be by far the strongest level of comp in the state, in my opinion, and we see ourselves sitting somewhere under that.

**Mr BOOTH** - Thank you, that is the only question I have.

**CHAIR** - Thanks, Kim. The Tasmanian Football Council - where is that? What is the position on that?

**Mr HALL** - My understanding is AFL South and AFL North, and it might be AFL North-west as well, sit in underneath the Tasmanian Football Council. Our interaction with them has been minimal for the last couple of years.

**CHAIR** - Right.

**Mr HALL** - We go back to when AFL Tas tried to set up the AFL South concept. There was some involvement with the Tas Football Council.

**CHAIR** - So they would go the Tasmanian Football Council who would then represent them to the AFL in Tasmania. Is that right?

**Mr HALL** - Who is that - the AFL?

**CHAIR** - The Tasmanian Football Council - what is the relationship?

**Mr HALL** - I am not 100 per cent sure what the arrangement between AFL Tas and the Tasmanian Football Council is.

**CHAIR** - I don't know if you can help me out there.

**Mr HALL** - Sorry.

**CHAIR** - There are a couple of other things in your statement. You referred to the Southern Football Tribunal. As I understand it from your submission, AFL Tasmania was facilitating that, wasn't it?

**Mr HALL** - Yes, basically it holds it at its rooms at Argyle Street, and there was a convener who convened it on behalf of the AFL. I am assuming that was a very low-paid job.

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**CHAIR** - Right. But this year, 2013, the clause in that agreement or the position -

**Mr HALL** - That person has had enough, I think, and has stepped down from it. We were then told - SFL and Old Scholars - that we would have to provide that convener.

**CHAIR** - That's now a service you have to fully provide without any other explanation from AFL Tasmania as to why that was occurring? What discussions did they have with you?

**Mr HALL** - Yes. I think that the person that they had doing it had been there for a fair while and had stepped down and they didn't want to appoint another person into the position. That is my only take on it.

**CHAIR** - Right. Did AFL discuss it with you - openly or not?

**Mr HALL** - I think I was told the week before it happened.

**CHAIR** - The only other matter I had refers to your penultimate paragraph where you say, and I will quote it to you -

In the last few years a restructure of football in Tasmania has seen the role of looking after football in the south fall to the SFL. While this seems to have stagnated, I don't see this as the way forward when there is a funded body of paid full-time staff available to fulfil that role.

Can you expand on that for me?

**Mr HALL** - Yes, I think that is what I was talking about before. AFL South basically pushed a lot of the responsibility for looking after AFL in the south to the SFL.

**CHAIR** - Right. Are you saying it should be a function of AFL Tasmania? I don't want to put words into your mouth.

**Mr HALL** - As I said, the SFL is very similar to the Old Scholars - basically run by a bunch of volunteers. There may be a couple of people on honorariums, et cetera, to keep business rolling over. I would think the responsibility for running football in the south belongs more with a full-time body of employees than it does with a group of people on honorariums doing volunteer hours. I suppose that comes back to what I said before about the role of AFL Tas; that is how I would like to see the role. I would like to see them looking after football in the south and not passing that to AFL South/the SFL. But it comes down to what their role is; their role is in accordance with what their funds require.

**CHAIR** - Brett, in your association, how frequently would you have someone from AFL Tasmania come along to your board or committee meeting and talk with you about issues that are occurring?

**Mr HALL** - At the start of last year or maybe the year before, AFL Tas came out and gave us an understanding of what they saw as the structure of football. That is about it for the last few years. Occasionally, they will come out, and I have no doubt that if we required someone to come out for a specific purpose, they would provide someone.

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**CHAIR** - Have you ever been asked to have any input into the structure of football in Tasmania, from AFL Tasmania?

**Mr HALL** - Yes, but let's also realise my involvement goes back 30 or 40 years, so there have been several reiterations along the way.

**CHAIR** - Recently?

**Mr HALL** - No, not in the last couple of years.

**CHAIR** - Okay, Brett. Are there any other questions, Paul?

**Mr HARRISS** - Just one please, Mr Chairman. What is the link between the Old Scholars Football Association and being authorised to play under the brand of AFL? Do you operate with any deed of agreement with AFL Tasmania in order for you to use the brand?

**Mr HALL** - Yes, I think we signed an affiliation-type agreement with them,

**CHAIR** - That sounds like it.

**Mr HALL** - About 10 or 12 years ago.

**CHAIR** - Did that have an end date to be re-negotiated?

**Mr HALL** - I can just remember doing it; I cannot remember the exact details of it. I do not think there would have been an end date to that.

**CHAIR** - Were there any particular concerns or restrictions in there which caused the Old Scholars any difficulty along the journey?

**Mr HALL** - I cannot remember the details of it. I do not think there were at the time; no, not that I could think of.

**CHAIR** - Has your association had administrative assistance using AFL Tasmania staff? I think I am right in suggesting that the SFL at some stage during its life had administrative support directly from AFL Tasmania.

**Mr HALL** - You are correct.

**CHAIR** - Through that process, I think AFL Tasmania - and I need to clarify this with AFL Tas - retained some sponsorship which would have otherwise gone to the SFL in terms of a quid pro quo.

**Mr HALL** - I am unsure of any contra arrangement like that but at one stage AFL Tasmania looked after registrations for the Old Scholars - roughly 10 years ago until about three or four years ago. Then that stopped and was replaced by an online system called SportingPulse. So that support did not continue and the responsibility was then pushed out to the clubs and associations to administer.

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**CHAIR** - So, for that administrative support, did that cost you in any way? How was that funded, or was it just gratis from AFL Tasmania?

**Mr HALL** - Yes, that was my understanding. There certainly was not any contra arrangement as far as sponsorship goes that I was aware of.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Are you all right, Paul?

**Mr HARRISS** - Yes, thank you very much, Mr Chairman.

**CHAIR** - Brett, has there much talk about this committee and the hearings that are taking place?

**Mr HALL** - Yes, a little bit. Paul, whom you spoke to before, is the vice president of the Old Scholars, so he and I have had discussions on a few things. Our executive has discussed it - certainly the submission we talked about last Wednesday before it came in to make sure everyone was comfortable. I certainly do not want to paint the picture that we are at loggerheads at all with AFL South. We are just almost at an arm's length-type arrangement. The one thing this has brought home to me is the fact that we have never really sought anything from them as far as funding is concerned, but maybe that might change in the future.

**CHAIR** - Any other questions, Kim?

**Mr BOOTH** - I am satisfied, thank you.

**CHAIR** - Brett, is there anything you want to say in conclusion?

**Mr HALL** - No, thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much, Brett, for coming along. Thank you for your submission and for the manner in which you have given your evidence. We appreciate that very much and we wish you well.

**Mr BOOTH** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - That is all the witnesses today, thank you. I do not think we have any need to keep going. We have finalised business this morning; there are meetings again on Wednesday. I can now simply adjourn until Wednesday morning at 9.00 a.m. at Aurora Stadium.

Sorry, there are two things that I have got to say quickly now. We have received some late submissions - 18 October was the close-off day - so, can we resolve to receive late submissions? That is all I need.

**THE WITNESS WITHDREW.**