

PUBLIC

THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SELECT COMMITTEE INQUIRY ON AFL IN TASMANIA MET AT HENTY HOUSE, LAUNCESTON, ON TUESDAY 20 AUGUST 2019.

TIM WILLIAM MacMICHAEL WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR (Mr Dean) - Welcome, Tim. This meeting is a public hearing so the public is entitled to come in at any time. It is being recorded for *Hansard* and will be published online in due course. While you are here you have parliamentary privilege, so any comments or statements you make here are protected by parliamentary privilege, but once you leave you will not be covered. I need to make that clear to you. If at any stage during the hearing you feel you want to tell us in camera - in other words, not in public - the committee can make a determination on whether we receive that as well but I shouldn't think we will get to that stage.

I think the terms of reference have been made clear to you. We sent out correspondence to you which hopefully you read and have some understanding of that.

Mr MacMICHAEL - Yes.

CHAIR - You have made a submission to us. What I will do in the first instance is give you the right at this stage to expand on that submission and give any additional information or evidence you would like to the committee, and then we will go to questions from members. Do you want to have questions on the way through? Would you be comfortable with that?

Mr MacMICHAEL - That would be good.

CHAIR - It might be easier for members.

Mr MacMICHAEL - What I submitted was something I penned around 12 months ago, so about this time last year, heading into the AFL bye round. I posted on social media about my dealings with AFL Victoria and AFL Tasmania and I felt pretty passionate. I had just finished the state under-15 carnival in Adelaide. Lots of my observations and first-hand evidence drove me to put something to paper. What you've got in front of you is an edited version from that post 12 months ago. I saw in *The Examiner* there were calls for submissions and the deadline was extended. I was lucky to read *The Advocate* that morning and had some time to tidy up my submission. That's all stated there.

I have basically given you a brief background of my footy life. I have played since I was five, came up through the junior ranks and played state footy, which was pretty good. I loved it. I then played with the Tassie Mariners. It will come into it sooner or later but I was lucky enough to play 30 Tassie Mariners games, and that was when it was in the TAC Cup.

I suppose I should probably make note that when there was a panel of Scott Wade and Brian Rowe going around the state - I think it was 2004 or 2005 when I was at Wynyard - they had a similar panel of finding out what footy needed. I remember clearly being a Wynyard Football Club representative then and it was like, 'Whatever you guys do, don't give it to the Tassie Mariners program', because I was lucky enough to go every second week to Victoria to play against the best.

PUBLIC

My draft year was 2001 and if you know a little bit about that, 2001 was the super draft and a lot of great players came from that pool.

The Mariners disbanded in 2004 or 2005 to make way for the Tassie Devils and what we've got now is the Devils program. It is something that they've rebranded obviously but it was definitely a diluted form of underage footy for the last decade, and that's being honest. To be able to play a full underage competition against the best TAC clubs in Victoria, 50 per cent of draftees are taken from Victoria, so for us to have ever have lost that and now we're playing catch up is a real shame.

Ms SIEJKA - Can I ask a quick question to clarify what you mean by 'diluted'? You said it was a diluted form.

Mr MacMICHAEL - The program or the competition I used to play in was a full roster. I can't remember how many games we played but in my first year as a 17 year old I played 13 games for the Tassie Mariners and in my second year as an 18 year old trying to get drafted it was 17 plus the state under-18 championships in the middle of the year. It was basically a full-time competition. When I use the word 'diluted' I just mean less games. The Mariners still operated and existed but there was not the full-time TAC club competition.

Mr FINCH - Six or eight games?

Mr MacMICHAEL - Six or eight games, yes.

Ms SIEJKA - So that obviously made it difficult for people to progress through - is that what you're saying?

Mr MacMICHAEL - Yes, 100 per cent. Like I said, I was lucky enough to go over every second week on a plane - a Wynyard boy - just go straight to the Burnie Airport, and this is a little bit political but to go to the Wynyard airport and fly out of there to be playing against the Bendigo, Ballarat, inner-city, metro clubs that are strong - and I won't give you too many examples of that apart from one. I remember my first Mariners year playing against the Sandringham Dragons and I was lucky enough to play on Chris Judd on the wing.

Mr FINCH - You would have towelled him up surely, Tim?

Mr MacMICHAEL - I had 15 touches and I think he had 35. Anyway, he should have been number one draft. My point is that he then went on to school football and that's where their competition or their alliances align. Then he would come back for the finals, or their better players - Luke Ball was similar at Xavier College. That shows the strength of their programs. For Tasmanian boys in particular to be not playing against them every week is a real shame. I'm glad they've brought it back but it needs to be a full-time competition.

Mr FINCH - Being an administrator at that time as I was, it was interesting that with the dilution of the Mariners program then there was the problem of trying to fit those players back into club football and how it threw the clubs out trying to manage these players coming back and then going off, and then of course with school football as well. Players at that time were thrown every which way in respect of that development of their involvement with footy.

Mr MacMICHAEL - Yes. Luckily enough in 2001 - that was my under-18 year - Mick McGuane was the coach at Burnie, so he had the understanding that I was full-time with the Tassie

PUBLIC

Mariners, and that was all boys across the state at the time. Club footy knew that if there was a weekend off they were available for senior footy or whatever, and we just had to qualify for finals at the end. That's obviously what I did. The club footy and the school footy, so there's three. There is a talented area, a community area and a school area and how the three communicate.

Mr FINCH - Did you have a sense of the reasoning behind the diminution or the diluting of the Mariners? Was that to finance the Tassie Devils?

Mr MacMICHAEL - Yes, 100 per cent. The Tassie Mariners and the senior Tassie Devils were never going to be able to coexist so I think the decisions were made whenever the Tassie Devils VFL side came in. I don't think both were ever going to exist. With funding, the under-18s made way for the senior VFL team when they were established in early 2003-04. They had some success. I was part of the Devils program as well at one stage, travelling as a north-west boy down to Hobart or Launceston for training, so I understand some of the logistics there. It was obviously to try to get a Tasmanian team in the VFL first of all but to capture that market of having a brand of footy that was the best footy in Tasmania and playing against the VFL, and they had some success. The Devils played finals there one year but they are obviously now defunct - in 2007 or so - and we're picking up the pieces 10 years later with the Mariners and where they're at now.

Mr FINCH - With the suggestion that we have to walk before we can start running with respect to having a national team, do you think that we've tried it once with the Tassie Devils and it didn't work then, to go down that route to try to establish that VFL team, so we weren't able to get that traction, that might have led us to develop players to go on to form a national team?

Mr MacMICHAEL - Yes, the structure clearly wasn't right. When I was involved with the Devils you had North Melbourne players flying from Melbourne and then you had boys from the north-west, north and south of the state trying to come together. An appointment in 2007 was Daryn Creswell, and Matthew Armstrong was before that. There were some coaching appointments there and whether they would revolutionise the program led to what happened in 2008 when it fell over.

CHAIR - Christian names are okay, Tim. It's reasonably informal in all of the circumstances; it's to be relaxed.

Mr ARMSTRONG - In talking about the Mariners going by the wayside to make way for the Devils, do you think it is possible to have a Mariners competition and a Devils competition? What is your ideal make-up for Tasmania to progress into a -

Mr MacMICHAEL - I suppose that comes back to my submission. Leading to Ivan's point, I gave a brief introduction of where I'm at. Going to point 2 about the college -

CHAIR - Before we do that, I want to ask you a question on the issues you're currently talking about with the Mariners and the VFL side. If we are to move into the national competition, what do we need to do as a precursor to that? What level do we need to play at? Where do we need to be involved to ensure we can maintain our position in the national competition?

Ms SIEJKA - In addition to that, I am interested in a related area, which is what supports are needed? From what you said earlier, that perhaps it wasn't ringing bells in the way it should have been and things like that. In your mind, what supports would be required to make it sustainable?

PUBLIC

Mr MacMICHAEL - The precursor is to get the tier 1 programming right in Tasmania. At the moment we have the Tasmanian State League with two teams in Launceston and five teams in Hobart. Whether that's the greatest product Tasmania has ever produced is probably questionable. For Devonport and Burnie to drop out of the state league and South Launceston before that is a real shame. So before we launch into the national stage we need to get tier 1 right in Tasmania. We need to have the best competition, and that leads to some of my points.

Mr FINCH - Would tier 1 be a state league or would it be back to the regions?

Mr MacMICHAEL - The best players in the state would have to be coming together and playing each other at some stage. There would have to be that. I think there's room for the regions. I think there's some scope there. We definitely need to get tier 1 right. The mechanisms for the support is needed, I thought I'd outlined it there. I think AFL Tasmania's role is the development and the grassroots of the code. I strongly believe that AFL Tasmania and the AFL need to focus on Auskick right through to under-18 to under-19 level.

I have mapped it out there in point 3 of Tasmanian state football. I think they're doing some things right. Clearly now they're doing some things right. That next stage is when a player becomes 18, 19 and they don't get drafted, where are they going to be playing? I suppose that is where - going back to your point, Jo - the support is needed. AFL Tasmania gets the funding and does some things right. I was in the lucky position of being employed for AFL Tasmania for 2001 and 2002 as a trainee, so I could actually concentrate on being drafted and playing football. Part of my role was going around every school from Smithton to Strahan to Sheffield, and that is the way I map it, that big triangle, and giving a two-week program. It was called Aurora Footy in Schools. I would leave some footballs and Aurora would give out some paraphernalia.

We have the Sporting Schools model now and teachers are given funding to lead that and that's all very good. I still think we need an AFL representative going out. It does happen. Emma Humphries on the coast does that role. There needs to be more of a presence in schools. School football is almost irrelevant. That's been taken over by club footy.

Ms SIEJKA - How would it look? You described a program that you are involved in. If somebody is getting to that drafting stage or getting ready to develop and go to the next level, what other aspects, almost physically, would be needed to make sure an AFL Tasmanian team would work? It is obviously that continuity, with young people going elsewhere. In the Tasmanian context what specific thing do you think would make it work, if we had a team?

Mr MacMICHAEL - I think AFL Tasmania with their supports. I don't know where their resource allocation is at. Staffing. Gill McLachlan came down last year, so there's been some more staffing. There are obviously some more physical resources. I think AFL Tasmania from Auskick to under 19 level get it really right, it is just that next step. If these players aren't getting drafted they need to go to a tier 1 competition in Tasmania that is very well respected. That's where the state government with the University of Tasmania would be an ideal partnership. That is part of my proposal.

Industries change a lot in Tasmania. Education, tourism, and agriculture are still really prominent in Tasmania, but to tap into the University of Tasmania which has branded the stadium along the road as UTAS Stadium, that is where I really started getting the idea. They are on the doorstep of what was Aurora Stadium. Burnie is trying to get a presence next door to West Park Oval. There's been a big presence in Hobart over the years.

PUBLIC

We're looking for funding and we're looking for grants. At AFL Victoria we had to beg, borrow and steal to try to get some of our programs up and running. Tasmania and the University of Tasmania are in such a unique position. The ideal model would be the state government in collaboration with the University of Tasmania. I would almost have AFL Tasmania as a third party to that development. It really needs to be state and university driven, with AFL Tasmania and AFL support.

Ms HOWLETT - Tim, in relation to school football, you mentioned the kids deciding to play club football as opposed to playing football for their school. Can you elaborate more on that?

Mr MacMICHAEL - Once upon a time, school footie on the coast involved playing that Saturday morning, training Tuesday and Thursday night with your school, and you always had a link in with your community club. In recent years, the drive for community football grew. It started out as an under-17 competition, Darwin or country backed. It was for boys who probably worked or did something Friday and Saturday to have a kick year on the Sunday. It was for year 11 and 12 kids as well. It was a leisurely kick on a Sunday.

The model when I was an AFL Tassie employee was cradle to grave clubs. There were those links from Auskick and primary school to high school footie. Then it would flow into the community club. Now what the AFL or the footie clubs are trying to do is get them really young. Auskick is based at the footie club. They play under-aged footie. We used to have mini league back in the day, but now it is under 12 representative football at your club. It started off as under-17s on a Sunday, but if you go to any ground on a Sunday there is under-12s, under-14s, under-16s, and under-18s club footie. School footie, to be honest, is seen as a participation program. It is midweek - Tuesday or Wednesday. There is a bit of a push for gala days.

It is a bit different in the south with colleges and private schools. In Launceston as well. On the north-west coast, if it wasn't for two or three schools putting their hand up and pushing, school footie would almost fall over.

Mr FINCH - The point I was going to make was with the tier 1 competition you are talking about, how do we progress from where we are now to an AFL team? Not all the players are going to come from Tassie; they are not going to be nurtured from Auskick through the program and then be there cherry ripe to play at AFL standard, if we are able to get a team. The Tasmanian players, I would imagine, are still going to need to go into a draft and that would be open to Tasmania to recruit those draft picks to play for Tassie. It is not all about just the players being Tasmanians.

Mr MacMICHAEL - No, that is right. When these players get to 18 years of age we need a carrot to keep them in Tasmania. It could be some of those industries I have already mentioned. For the mainland we need to be saying, 'We have a really good program down here. If you don't get drafted from your state's, Tasmania could be a really viable option for you to pursue your dream of playing at the highest level of AFL, but doing your study as well'.

Some boys from Tasmania have gone to the VFL. They started in Tasmania but they have got drafted. Robbie Fox comes to mind. He is now at Sydney. I think he started at the Burnie Dockers and won a state league premiership, then was drafted to the VFL. Brody Mihocek at Collingwood got drafted from the VFL. We need to be able to say we have a great tier 1 structure for these players. From 23 to 25 is your window. We need to get that right.

PUBLIC

Mr FINCH - Is your tier 1 suggestion playing in the VFL or playing in the statewide competition?

Mr MacMICHAEL - I've done a little bit of research. With the university brand, I did some research after being on ABC radio last night. If you were to google 'AFL England', they've obviously got a competition there but they've got four university teams that started last year, playing and representing the universities in England. The University of South Wales plays against the University of Cambridge, University of Oxford and the University of Birmingham. I don't know what the standard of footy would be but I would say they would be younger men, and there is also a female competition as well. That is something that I would be wanting to research more, myself.

I came up with this proposal this time last year, and then to know that AFL England has a four-team model, I think we are in a unique position. If you think about all the other states in Australia, Tassie is very geographically similar to England, I suppose. I have googled some of the distances that these four universities are from. Hypothetically, if there was a university team - I have used the Red Lions banner - when I originally came up with this I thought there would be one under-23 team playing against the University of Melbourne or the University of Sydney.

If we were to have a program, it could be a pre-season type of event. The AFLW have sort of got it in February-March. If there was a four-team university state league playing in February, March, April, whatever it may be, one from the north-west coast, one from Launceston and two from the south, with the population, that would be a four-team university, under-23, tier 1 competition that would really put Tassie on the map in terms of the talent. Like I said, if you somehow incorporated it in the interim as a pre-season competition you would get some of the best under-23's coming down. A lot of players go to the NT or Darwin to play in the summer. Why couldn't that not be an option down here in Tassie?

Mr FINCH - Would the players not need to be university students?

Mr MacMICHAEL - No, that is right. It would be under the university banners, to obviously get their branding out. For those players that do an apprenticeship or a trade or work, your 20-year-old builder that is an apprentice, they would still be able to play for one of these clubs. Hypothetically, a boy from the north-west coast goes down to Hobart for university, they could train and then play back with the north-west team or vice versa. You would also be trying to attract some of the best under-23s from around the mainland or wherever to try to come down to Tassie and play in these well. I don't know how that would work but it is basically for the talent we have here but it could be topped up with some other boys. There is a mid-season draft now in the AFL. This could be a platform where they say, yes, they performed really well and they're able to be drafted in the mid-season.

Ms SIEJKA - That sounds like an option that is worth looking at but in the past we have had the state league and we've had involvement in VFL. If they were more viable ways to make this a tier 1 competition, because it sounds like the bottom line is it needs to be a competitive league that people can progress to, what would make turning to a state league or involvement in the VFL more viable and sustainable if the university option wasn't something that could be pursued? Looking at those, what are your thoughts?

Mr MacMICHAEL - We have tried it. We have tried the state one-off team with the VFL and then with the North Melbourne banner. Yes, there is the political divide between Launceston

PUBLIC

and Hobart that needs to be overcome. We somehow need a model that will embrace everyone from Hobart, Launceston and abroad. It is about looking at it a bit differently.

The commercialisation of the game, like AFL Friday night football; everyone is at home watching Friday night football. I wouldn't be scheduling a game, as such, on a Friday night because we know most people won't come out and support this type of team. If there was a February or March game, the AFLW have been trying to get that brand through February-March, but if there was some sort of representative team from Tasmania playing, let's use New South Wales, I know the Giants and the Sydney academies are pretty big at the moment, but let's have an academy match with the best Tasmanian boys and girls against the GWS academies on a Friday night in February or March.

Ms SIEJKA - It's interesting that people do go to Hurricane matches on all different days of the week.

Mr MacMICHAEL - That's true, yes.

Ms SIEJKA - Sometimes it is the marketing, isn't it?

Mr MacMICHAEL - Yes, it is.

Mr FINCH - Holiday time, as well.

Mr MacMICHAEL - Holiday time and the warmth brings them out as well. That's where we have to look and it's the same for AFL games as well, like the Giants vs Hawthorn game in Canberra the other day. Bellerive got a Friday night footy game in June-July or whatever. It was so cold that it seems to have been abandoned for the last couple of years. That is probably where the AFL needs to be smarter and say, righto, we're going to give Bellerive a Friday night game in April or something like that. That's where we need to talk to the AFL. You are right, Ms Siejka, with the Hobart Hurricanes. They're so successful with their crowds in Hobart and it was really well-supported here at UTAS. We need to start thinking about how we can showcase the best footy talent, working with the AFL on scheduling. They've tried Sunday night footy, they've tried Monday night footy. I won't go into the NFL but their scheduling is totally different as well.

Ms SIEJKA - In addition to the things you've touched on like youth development and that competitive level, it's also those other things that set things up for success, which the Hurricanes have done well. A different game, obviously, but there could be lessons there.

Mr MacMICHAEL - The scheduling, for sure.

Mr FINCH - What they've done too well is develop Jofra Archer for the English Test team, for goodness' sake. Your suggestion is that there be the tier 1 league and that would be this university competition. That would be where the best players in the state would be plying their trade to try to be drafted into the Tasmanian team or the national draft. Then you would have the SFL, the NTFA, NWFL or NWFU, whatever it is, underneath that -

Mr MacMICHAEL - Yes.

Mr FINCH - for your local competition, playing in your own area. Then you come back down through the under-19s, under-17s and your local community football. Is that right?

PUBLIC

Mr MacMICHAEL - That's correct. Tier 1 would be that state model of, let's say, four teams, whatever it may be. Tier 2 would be your southern, northern and NWFL, and then under that would be your community football and your underage would feed in. You are right, Mr Finch.

Mr FINCH - I like the look of it.

CHAIR - I will let Mr MacMichael keep going because he had to answer Mr Armstrong's question as well.

Mr MacMICHAEL - That's okay. There a tier 1 and the supports needed. What was your question, Mr Armstrong?

Mr ARMSTRONG - I think you've answered it here.

Mr MacMICHAEL - No worries.

Mr FINCH - It is interesting in your involvement with football that you've also delineated the training that takes place. Do you have a sense that, at local footy level, people burn out, administrators, players and the like?

Mr MacMICHAEL - Yes. That's in point number four of my submission, pre-season. When I worked for AFL Victoria in Geelong they set up regional commissions in Victoria. They had the Peter Jackson Review in 2011 about the state of Victorian footy, the home of footy. It was after the growth of New South Wales and Queensland and the sides that came in there. I don't think they will mind me saying they didn't take their eyes of Victoria but Victoria has always been the state, with 50 per cent of draftees and the home of football.

They had a review and what came out of that review was regional commissions in each area in Victoria, but also more staff. There used to be one football development manager in Geelong for 15 years and then, in 2013, there were three of us, including myself. We were able to branch out and do a lot more with the development side of football, but also the club development side of football. There was a huge investment there.

I will talk about that other point in a second. With pre-season, I suppose 20 years ago there were those pathways that I've already spoken about. I think the AFL almost held their nerve that we knew we were the best code. We still are the best code, but I think there was always murmurings of soccer pathways and other pathways getting the younger ones involved a lot earlier. That's probably where a bit of the kneejerk reaction came in - 'Oh, we'd better start getting these younger kids involved a lot earlier', and that has put a lot of players at risk of burning out, including volunteers and clubs.

I said on radio yesterday, in my dealing in Geelong I would see a president - and I see it down here as well - sign on for 12 months, all hunky dory, but they'd walk in there October-November - 'It'd be great to be president' - then they find in January-February there is all this database stuff and clearances and they have to raise funds and it becomes so operational that they burn out by the end of the year and move on pretty quick, unless you have a good structure in place there.

Getting back to it, I started canvassing in the Barwon region and we were hearing under-12s and under-14s start and I'm not sure of the Tassie landscape at present but by November-December

PUBLIC

they were having under-12, under-14 and youth girls is obviously really keen so I know that has been happening. Starting pre-season in November-December has always been the norm for the top-tier teams in Tassie, but for under-12s and under-14s to be starting in November is ridiculous. We'd try to have these conversations with clubs. It had to come from a commission level that they had to implement this, but the old footy coaches and the volunteers or the parents would think they were really keen and wanted to get into it. So they train in November and they want to keep going. We have this culture of, you know, we've got to get these kids drafted but realistically, how many of them do get drafted? By November-December the president is still there, the other committee members are there, and by February-March by the time the ball has been bounced, there's four months of training that has occurred which could be better used.

The one example I will use is the Geelong Falcons. They start training in December for their underage program. They train them right up until Christmas and then they basically give them a month off, so they will see them 23 December and then they expect to see them back by Australia Day in January and they're expected to have done a program. Some boys would have done a month of swimming or a month of sprint training, and that's probably why I'd come back to it. With the athletes that are trained these days they are so footy, footy, footy and I think it just needs to be a lot more diverse. To put it simply, I think there needs to be a policy - and this could be nationwide as well - that says, 'If tier 1 is the best of the best in football their training can only start on 1 December officially'.

Essendon did it unofficially when they went through their drug supplement saga, so it would be similar to that, but AFL is a little bit different. Let's say if you're tier 1 you won't be able to start training until 1 December; if you're tier 2 you won't be able to start training until 15 January; and if you're tier 3, which is country footy, you're not allowed to start training as such until 1 February. If it was regulated and there was an accountability over it, and if all clubs agreed to it - it needs to start at the junior level, though. Junior footy really shouldn't be starting training until 1 February but the clubs and volunteers feel pressured into starting training a lot earlier.

If there was a blanket rule that these regulations apply I think there would be some merit to it and you wouldn't see as much burnout in players but also volunteers, because there is evidence to suggest that when 18-, 19- and 20-year olds get to that point they are almost broken and some of them walk away from the game.

Mr FINCH - Point 7 of your submission is about female football, and our inquiry is really focused on an AFL male team. How do you think that the female component of our development of AFL in Tasmania can work hand in glove or dovetail or come along in the slipstream of that AFL team?

Mr MacMICHAEL - There is definitely a place for female football in AFLW, there's no question about that. In my submission I have said there is the male version of football that we know and there is the female version of football that we know, but the grounds are too big for what I currently see. To see that low-scoring style of football is not enjoyable to watch.

Mr FINCH - In female football?

Mr MacMICHAEL - In female football. I think there needs to be more scoring. Don't get me wrong - it happens in junior football as well. On Sunday there was the junior football final against Burnie and Wynyard at Penguin, there was a score of 2.3 to 2.2 and Burnie won by a point.

PUBLIC

I know it happens at junior footy, but that's another argument as well. They should be playing on smaller grounds with fewer players as well.

Female football, in particular, needs to also have fewer players on the field and smaller grounds, but that would also help that top end of female football because they wouldn't have to be supplying 22 to 24 players. If they were to have 15 a side or even 14 or 12, there would be a lot more space - there is a lot of congestion at the moment - and there would be a lot more free-flowing scoring, which is what people want to see. We don't want to see these mauls. AFL in England has the female university teams aligned with their university as well, and getting to my tier 1, there is no reason why the female universities could not follow the same and have double-headers and gala days and these sorts of things.

The AFL women's competition is in the pre-season so we need to start thinking about how we're going to start funnelling our better female footballers in Tasmania to get them drafted or to get on an AFLW list.

Mr FINCH - In respect of your talking about the AFLW and it being a smaller ground, what would you do - have possies for extra goalposts to be fitted to shorten the ground or how would you work it?

Mr MacMICHAEL - Not necessarily. I think the aesthetics of the game still need to look the same. I have been involved with under-12 footy and heard of under-12 footy in the NT a few years ago where they played at TIO Stadium and pulled out the mini-league goalposts and it was a bit of joke up there for whatever reason. I think we have to be smart with our scheduling - less players on the field first of all so that we can have more teams or more depth. I think the top end of female football at the moment is a little bit thin, a little bit stretched. Through development there is a divide between the top end and the middle talent coming through and to close that gap would be better.

I'll use Hobart as an example. Instead of playing female footy finals at Bellerive or Glenorchy KGV, it should be a boutique oval such as North Hobart - that would be a great spectacle. They've played AFL games there but they found it was too small because the 50-metre arc - and I think that was a bit of a joke - was touching on the centre square. I think they played their North Melbourne games there so I think those sorts of scheduling venues would be really smart for female football.

Mr FINCH - Double-headers would be ideal if you had this tier 1 with a men's team and a women's team.

Mr MacMICHAEL - Yes, absolutely. You could have double-headers in the north-west and the north, and two in the south. You could have all four male teams playing against one another here in Launceston or you could have all four female teams in Hobart - there's a lot of scope. I have said Friday night - night football - getting back to your point, Jo, there needs to be that commercialisation and promotion and product of what the Hobart Hurricanes have been able to do.

CHAIR - Do you need to progress further through your submission? There were a couple of points you wanted to make.

Mr MacMICHAEL - With my submission all my points are there. Like I said, some of them are flawed. The staffing from the university level - it would be interesting to see. They obviously have a wealth of experience there, and the state government does as well. We need to have that three-way conversation. First of all, is the University of Tasmania interested? There's a lot of

PUBLIC

expertise and if they're coming on board with naming rights of stadiums they might want to play a bigger part in what football is looking like in the state. AFL Tas, like I said, do a really good job of that. I think Auskick needs a rebrand at some stage as well but that's an AFL issue. At the underage level it should just be fun and you should be wanting to get into football through what you see at the Auskick level.

I am glad the Devils are back in play. They've got a state manager in Craig Notman that oversees all of the talent in Tasmania. The development at grassroots needs to branch into club development. Clubs are screaming out for help. That is generational as well, as I said in my document. On the north-west coast - I penned this this time last year - there is no representative football at the tier-two level of Smithton at this point in time. Circular Head, a really proud region, only has four teams now. They are playing in a country football format. Those Circular Head boys have to travel to Penguin and I know some have gone to East Devonport. Some have mainly gone to Wynyard but that's an hour travel. There are some passionate people down there at Circular Head and it's own footy club, that's a country football club, has folded or ceased to exist this year. There is more writing on the wall.

Club administrators and the competition administrators now realise, especially on the north-west coast, that what they've been doing is broken. There needs to be mergers, there needs to be a restructure. It needs to come from the state government. AFL Tasmania has been facilitating these meetings -

CHAIR - On that point, are you of the view that we need to get all of that right first to get AFL support for a national team? We need to demonstrate that we're moving forward, we have our structure and we're ready to move into the national competition.

Mr MacMICHAEL - Yes. I have used the analogy of Carlton, with Tassie footy being on a similar pathway to Carlton. Carlton won the 1995 Premiership. Since 2008, when they lost to Essendon in a preliminary, they had salary cap issues, and the Carlton footy club has been in the wilderness for the last 20 years. Everyone has tried to help the Carlton footy club and Tassie is in a similar position. We need to help ourselves first.

Gill McLachlan came down this time last year and put in some more resources. There's a talent manager on the north-west coast now. There's a talent manager overseeing the state. We need to get ourselves right, first of all. For this committee to be inquiring into what AFL Tasmania has done in the last decade, and it goes back 20 years ago, we need to start showing that we're ready for an AFL team in the next five years. We will be ready for an AFL team, I honestly believe that. People say industry and all that, and there is no money down here. There is. If the Gold Coast can have a licence up there, and we've seen what they've been doing since 2011, I'm pretty sure Tassie can get a licence and make a real go of it. We have to get that support underneath it first. We need to be taken seriously.

Mr FINCH - Do you think five years is enough time? Do you think we can do it sooner? Can we do it in four years?

Mr MacMICHAEL - Absolutely, in 2022-23. We just need to get our tier 1 competition right. A lot of people go to the WAFL, SAFL - I was over there last year and that's still really strong. They play Friday night footy in South Australia. VFL is taken really seriously. Even the Sydney academies are taken seriously. Queensland academies have been taken seriously for draftees. I don't see anyone challenging on draft day - there was Tarryn Thomas, obviously, with North

PUBLIC

Melbourne, so that's one example, but I can't think of too many more examples where they've been able to say that we've had this product through this academy system.

CHAIR - I am asking in line with our terms of reference, if we were able to get that national side, and hopefully we can, where should the headquarters be? With your background and your involvement in footy, where should the headquarters be and where should games be played?

Mr MacMICHAEL - I can address that now. When Hawthorn and Saint Kilda where here in Launceston in 2001, there was a lot of pre-season competition. York Park hadn't been fully developed. Bellerive definitely hadn't been developed and there was AFL Tasmania headquarters in North Hobart. In 2001, when Hawthorn and Saint Kilda had a presence here, there is no doubt in my mind that the AFL Tasmania headquarters should have been based here in Launceston at Aurora Stadium as it was called back then.

That is being as neutral as I can. The old terms of cricketers in the south of the state, I think everyone knew that if you want to a great cricketer - Jamie Cox, for example, knew that he had to go to Hobart. Everyone should have known back in 2001, when Hawthorn landed here at Aurora Stadium, that Launceston is the headquarter for AFL in the state. That is the way it should have been. For some gravitational pull to Bellerive and to get some games down there, North Melbourne has come on board. When Hawthorn signed on in 2001, we should have really embraced Hawthorn as our team. It should have based here in Lannie, then the AFL should have given the academies to North Melbourne and vice versa. Tassie should have got behind Hawthorn; headquarters should have been in Launceston, with two or three games still in south of the state.

Mr ARMSTRONG - In Saturday's paper, the *Mercury*, they are talking about a super stadium on Macquarie Point, which would hold 25 000 to 30 000 people, much like the Marvel Stadium. That came from the chair of the Tasmanian AFL Taskforce, Brett Godfrey. The one problem you have with Bellerive is people getting there. People from the north won't travel, whereas people from the south seem to travel because of the distance. You have accommodation, parking, you have everything there. If you had that stadium built and that was the headquarters for AFL - and I don't say don't play a game in Launceston - half of your population is in Oatlands and south, do you think that would attract a better crowd?

Mr MacMICHAEL - North Melbourne is down there and their issues with Bellerive are documented, but yes -

Mr ARMSTRONG - We all know that North Melbourne doesn't have a supporter base like Hawthorn. They have a game scheduled this weekend, North Melbourne and Melbourne, and you're not going to get a crowd because it's Melbourne. Melbourne doesn't have supporters in Tasmania. It is about the games they focus on for Deloraine. One submission stated that the difference between crowds at Aurora and Blundstone arenas was about 1000. I differ with you in saying that it should be in Launceston. I think a capital city, for marketing reasons and everything, should be your home but then you can play games in Launceston, too.

Mr MacMICHAEL - My point was that the AFL Tassie headquarters should have been based alongside Hawthorn or whoever.

Mr ARMSTRONG - We wouldn't be talking about Hawthorn if we get an AFL side.

PUBLIC

Mr MacMICHAEL - That is right, but Hawthorn has been here since 2001. We should have been based alongside Hawthorn 20 years ago. They were based here in Launceston but things have changed. North Melbourne have a market in Hobart and Hawthorn's got a market in Launceston. You can split both of them for sure and if there was a superstadium built in Hobart, if you build it they would definitely come. I suppose you're probably aware that they're trying to redevelop somewhere like Campbell Town as a training facility. We've always had state training at Campbell Town. I'm not sure how much investment is going in there but it's always been central for everyone. There have been trainings at Oatlands as well but I don't think developing the Campbell Town site would be of best interest for footy. I would much prefer money go towards a superstadium in Hobart or another upgrade of the one we have here or elsewhere.

Regarding the issues with Bellerive, you've only got to look at Perth stadium. They're getting huge attendance numbers and they've got other markets as well. I saw that in Geelong as well with GMHBA. My last point is that the demographics say Hobart would attract a larger crowd.

CHAIR - A good point. I have to draw this to a conclusion so if any member has any pressing question that you need to ask do so now.

Mr FINCH - My takeaway from Tim's presentation is about this tier 1 competition with the universities involved with the four-team competition here. Also, I have noticed that the universities have recognised there is a lot of advantage in putting their marketing dollars and branding into AFL football. We've got it on a grand scale at the University of Tasmania Stadium here now in Launceston but there is a lot of other marketing and universities I think are well aware of the appeal that has for drawing students to their universities.

Mr MacMICHAEL - Yes, we need to have the conversation with UTAS. I'm not sure how much money is provided to the stadium but there obviously has to be a great number there and we need to just sit down and have another discussion with them to see if they can provide some more resources for state AFL.

CHAIR - Tim, thank you very much for coming in today. We appreciate it. Sorry about running over time and starting a little late. Yours is a great submission and the way you have answered the questions today has been great. You have assisted this committee tremendously in the way we go with our final report on this as well. We appreciate that very much. Thank you.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.

PUBLIC

Mr STEVE MARTIN WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

CHAIR - Welcome Steve. You would be aware of the protocols and everything else that goes with these committee hearings but I need to go through a couple of things with you. This is a public hearing so the public are entitled to be here. It is being recorded for *Hansard* and will be put up on our website eventually. You have parliamentary privilege in this environment in here. I am not so sure you have it once you leave here but you certainly have it here in this place. If you want to say something in camera to the committee in confidence please simply say so and the committee will make a determination on how they receive that.

We appreciate very much the submission you put in for us when you were in that other position. We did not want to see you leave but that happened. I will give you an opportunity at this stage to add to your submission any further information that you might want to pass on to us or any further comment and then we can go into some questions, so I will just leave it open to you at this stage.

Mr MARTIN - I am of the strong belief that Tasmania should have an AFL and an AFLW team. I believe it has great social and economic benefits for the state as well as the opportunity to be aspirational for young people. Having said that, though, over the last three decades a lot of approaches have been made to the AFL and in response we have been given the comments that Tassie should have its own AFL team and yet nothing has occurred. There has been no commitment from the AFL whatsoever to achieving that.

I say that because in 2008 the AFL went to the 16 clubs and asked them if they could put up a team on the Gold Coast and one in Greater Western Sydney. The clubs agreed for that to occur and then the AFL went about - in these non-AFL states - investing in achieving that goal. In 2011 the Gold Coast Suns were welcomed into the competition and in 2012 Greater Western Sydney was welcomed into the competition. The population of the Gold Coast in the 2016 census was 569 997 and in the Greater Western Sydney area the population was 237 183.

In Tasmania, I understand we are around 530 000 and we are being asked to come up with 50 000 members, yet in 2018 the Gold Coast Suns had a membership of around 12 000 and that is after eight years. Greater Western Sydney has a membership of 25 243 and that is after seven years, yet Tasmania is being asked to come up with a plan for 50 000 people with a smaller population.

Mr FINCH - Are you suggesting that was a request from the AFL, or is that a Tasmanian desire to achieve 50 000 members?

Mr MARTIN - My understanding is it's from the AFL. It was mentioned I think last year by Gill McLachlan in conversations reported in the media that they were after 50 000 members and the committee was supposed to be looking at a business plan to set out how they would achieve 50 000 members.

CHAIR - Steve, hopefully you are happy with the way we went with Tim to take questions on the way through?

Mr MARTIN - Certainly.

CHAIR - Butt in, members, when you feel like it.

PUBLIC

Mr MARTIN - My point there is that Tasmania is being treated extremely differently from how the AFL has been treating other clubs such as the Gold Coast Suns and Greater Western Sydney. Instead of them investing and committing first up, they're asking us to run around and do all this work. We have had so many committees looking into wanting an AFL and having an argument over the last three decades and we haven't been able to go anywhere. In that time the sport has fallen off, not only with participation but also with club membership and attendance at grounds. The sport in Tasmania has been dropping off drastically.

In comparison, other sports have been picking up their participation rates, especially at junior level. If we take football, or soccer as we call it, there are about 10 000 extra players taking up that sport over and above AFL, yet financially we keep putting money into the AFL in the hope that we increase our participation. We strive to get these tiers to get top-level competition so that we can have a pathway into the AFL. Having said all of that as well, Gill McLachlan has come out and said that if we jump all of these hurdles, we do the 50 000, we have a business plan and we put it all together, the AFL may give Tasmania a VFL side. Again, no commitment.

Mr FINCH - A VFL side?

Mr MARTIN - A VFL side.

Mr FINCH - Not an AFL side.

Mr MARTIN - Not an AFL side. That was in the media last year. The point I tried to push through with my submission is that the AFL should come clean and should be serious about whether they're going to have a Tasmanian AFL team, AFLW team, or not. If they are serious about it, they need to make the commitment and say that Tasmania will have a team in 2022, 2023 or even 2024.

It will then be up to us to then backfill the requirements, and that is to give a boost to our local competitions. That is to be able to increase the participation rate and the pathways into the larger leagues, such as the AFL. Instead, the AFL wants us to run around - we're talking about larger stadiums now and investment in that - but they haven't made a commitment. I understand we have to show them that we're able to do that - well, we did, we had a business plan. Saul Eslake had a business plan and it didn't go anywhere. My statement to the AFL is, if they are serious about wanting a Tassie team, ante up, make the the commitment and put the funds in there and invest in Tasmania. Then we can get to work to achieve that time period, as much as what they did for the Gold Coast Suns and Greater Western Sydney.

CHAIR - If I go to your submission, you got the support of the Commonwealth Government - and I'm aware and the committee is aware of work you've done on this in the other place and in Canberra and we very much appreciate it - how far did that go? Can you expand on that and on any comments made?

Mr MARTIN - It was a baby step, I suppose, to highlight that Tasmanians were quite serious and were very interested in having an AFL team, at the same time announcing that the AFL should be making that commitment and investment in Tasmania. The next step was that I founded a T23 website to gain interest to support that motion and that raised about 500 or more members willing to show their support for a Tasmanian team. The time frame was quite achievable, from 2018 to 2023, that's five years from when we started this, for the AFL to make that commitment and have plenty time to be able to achieve that and work with the state government, work with the football competitions in every tier to be able to achieve that and provide those pathways.

PUBLIC

Ms HOWLETT - You were talking about memberships and the AFL's expectations for us to have a membership of around 50 000 people. Do you know how many Tasmanians are already members of various AFL teams? My understanding was that it was really quite high.

Mr MARTIN - It is approximately 90 000.

Ms HOWLETT - Are they wanting those people to leave their original club and become a member of the AFL Tasmanian team, or is there a plural membership? Don't people have a loyalty to their original club? How many people do you think would actually leave?

Mr MARTIN - What you have to look at is a starting point. In 2018, we started this and I was saying 2023. It is like anything else, it becomes tribal. When somebody starts barracking or supporting an AFL team, it is usually done at a young age and usually it is the premiership team of that year and that carries through.

Yes, we have 90 000 members and there will be a percentage of those who will not only support their chosen team, but would also pay membership to support a Tasmanian team. It is about growing the membership from that early age. That is what AFL clubs do, that is why there are all these young clinics and why there is Auskick; to get them at the start and read it through. The investment by the AFL in the lead-up to a commitment of, say, 2023, is to start the ball rolling and to try to get those pathways right. After that is the Tasmanian team, which becomes the identity that young people can move toward and you build on your membership from there.

CHAIR - You might be aware of what happened with the Eagles. Perth is a good example. They strongly supported the other side before they came into the competition, and Fremantle is the same. They found that, within about a two- to three-year period, they started changing across and giving their allegiance to their home club, so the membership changed drastically. You might well have that happening as well, do you think?

Mr MARTIN - I think that is quite true. As well, that is when you start getting some home-grown talent into the Tasmanian team and we will find that family support, the friendship support, the work support, the town support would all then come behind those players and that will build. I have no problem in achieving, maybe, 50 000. They are always putting up these large hurdles that Tasmania, with a small population base, even though we are punching above our weight as far as AFL representation in the league itself, they are asking us to do a hell of a lot - more so than any other club in the AFL that they have committed to.

Mr ARMSTRONG - Why do you think that is?

Mr MARTIN - We are an AFL state and we love AFL; we have some great, proud history of AFL football players. We link very much to the AFL and VFL and they have just taken us for granted over the years. In essence, when they have sent over St Kilda, Hawthorn and now North Melbourne, they have given permission for those teams to come over here because they are on their knees, financially. They were going to amalgamate, so we have pulled them up through our support and they are Victorian teams.

They also bring their entourage over here, which is great for the airlines and maybe TT-Line, but where are our people? Where are our players, where are our kids, who will have the opportunity of employment through this type of involvement? I have a long list of opportunities with regard to

PUBLIC

that. It is about home-grown employment so if we have our own Tasmanian team: the media, including photography and live commentary, administration for clubs, event management, marketing, promotions, sports medicine, security, hospitality, dieticians, fitness, biochemistry, umpiring and all those involved around a sport, but it doesn't necessarily have to be AFL.

Ms SIEJKA - Getting AFL support or getting state support to have the Tasmanian team is one thing, and what you raised about youth unemployment is interesting, but what do we need in terms of supports to get the team happening? We don't offer courses here in some of those fields. Aside from learning, investment and commitment, which is a big part of it, granted, what things do you think the state needs to do make it viable, sustainable, to support it into the future and make it work?

Mr MARTIN - We need to look at what the AFL is. It is a machine. If you pick up with the AFL in Launceston - I notice we were talking about where the headquarters of AFL Tasmania should be. I say Launceston because it is right next to UTAS and it is not right next to or close enough to the Tasmanian Institute of Sport. When you start talking about investment, education certainly is investment.

I use the argument that when I grew up, playing football or basketball, whatever sport it was, it was all about team work, it was about leadership and all this wonderful stuff. It was all true, but it is also about mathematics, it is also about science. How many dimples on a golf ball? Kicking the football the wrong way along the ground towards the goal. They have worked out how to do it, whether you kick a drop punt or whether you kick a torp. Is there a dynamics about it? Why are there six laces in the top. We do this naturally because we play the sport, but it is actually educational. We just don't name it.

You have to know your six times table for football. You have to know how to add up and subtract to know whether you are winning or not, or to tell in the bar after the game how many points you have kicked, or how far the torp actually went. Over the years it goes longer.

Ms SIEJKA - There are still things in the community that we need. Membership is one thing but there are other aspects such as community development and engagement and all those things that make some teams really successful and others purely an investment thing. If you look at some of the teams where they have put in for strange places, it is clearly a lack of money. The things that make these things work long term is when people are really invested and engaged. I am curious to know what things across the community you think are needed to make it a success.

Mr MARTIN - That is an interesting question. It is like chicken and egg stuff. For me it is about my push is to get the AFL to make a commitment. If they do not make the commitment I am saying we are better off expending our energy on other sports and invest in other sports to achieve the same thing.

While I have mentioned about the employment opportunities it is also about education opportunities where we tag into home-grown employment opportunities I just mentioned, the Tasmanian Institute of Sport, UTAS, even TasTAFE. It is about healthy outcomes as well, where there is preventive health. We have high rates of coronary disease, diabetes and obesity in Tasmania. It is also about the sense of pride which gives you aspirational pathways - state pride, community pride and the spinoffs from that. We can go down to the levels of vandalism, but it all comes back to respect.

PUBLIC

This is all about changing the culture and putting in a business plan that is adopted by the community but brought along with the community.

Ms SIEJKA - What would need to be in that business plan do you think to bring the community along?

Mr MARTIN - Any AFL team or any top grade team has a business plan. You do your clinics, you go out to the schools, you bring them along. There are a lot of football clubs that are involved in charities. They help the community. We seem to have lost that a bit along the way. We need to bring that back and use the AFL club as a vessel to achieve that.

If we start talking about the employment opportunities such as administration, that to me is about providing an opportunity for people to learn about administration. It does not have to be getting on the field and playing top grade football. It does mean being involved with top grade football. It is about the club populating and providing experiences and skills to those who wish to be involved in the game at whatever level and whatever capability. It is providing that opportunity. This is what I see an AFL team in Tasmania will provide.

Mr FINCH - I did want to make the point, 20 years ago I had a debate with the director of sport at a school about academia and sport. I got the impression that the director felt that sport was about recreation. I said, 'Do you realise that Collingwood has 90 employees?' That was 20 years ago. That is one club in that sport. I appreciate the employment opportunities you have touched on. We have so much youth unemployment, unfortunately. You have touched on that. That is a driver for your submission?

Mr MARTIN - It certainly is. We have young people out there who are looking for something to hang on to or to get involved in. If you are not the elite you certainly do not get any funding or any relevance. My thoughts are if you are interested in footy there should be opportunities at any level. Whether you are the Natone Football Club treasurer or secretary, there should be an opportunity for those people who volunteer to be able to upskill and link to a TAFE course or uni course. That reinforces our clubs and will hopefully bring volunteerism back into it. You have a qualification at the same time. That gives you a step up. If you are going into the private sector, they can see you have been committed to a cause, a member of a club, so you are a team player. Those skills come to the fore when you're looking for employment.

These are the areas we can get our young people involved in. Not just in Australian Rules Football, but soccer, golf, cricket and basketball. There are probably another 15 sports I could name that could offer the same opportunity. It would strengthen those sports and get people onto the paddock, running around being fit and healthy, being active and learning about what sport really is.

CHAIR - I should have mentioned at the beginning that Steve was a good footballer in his own right. He didn't like being free kicked, but he was a very good footballer in his own right. He has played a lot of football.

Mr MARTIN - Thank you.

Mr FINCH - I wanted to touch on the AFL's perception of Tasmania being geographically and politically divided, as you suggest in your submission. Do you think that can be overcome? Could we settle that argument if we had an AFL team?

PUBLIC

Mr MARTIN - It comes back to the AFL making the commitment that Tassie should have a team, and by a certain date. If we can get that commitment then will come together and achieve that. We would have five years to be able to work through it and get that done. If they make that commitment that gives us the fuel to go out and achieve it.

Mr FINCH - That means bringing the north-west, north, south, north-east all together?

Mr MARTIN - Yes. I do believe that once that commitment is made the best outcomes will be made for Tasmania by Tasmanians.

CHAIR - I only heard a bit about what Tim was saying in relation to that. We need to get that structure right to move forward. Is there anything further you want to say on that, Steve? I cut you off there again?

Mr MARTIN - No. I just think that it comes back to making that commitment. Yes, Tasmania will have a team. We will work it out from there and we will actually achieve it.

CHAIR - That was one of the things that Gillon McLachlan said on one of his last visits here. I heard him on radio saying that Tasmania needs to get its position and its things in place before it went to the AFL and asked for support. In other words, the parochialism needed to be addressed. Tasmania needed to have a clear position on moving forward with an AFL side. Where do you think our headquarters ought to be and our games ought to be played? How do you think we should structure that?

Mr MARTIN - AFL Tasmania should be based in Launceston. One, it is central to the whole of Tasmania. I believe Jim Bacon was right when he invested in York Park because it is accessible equally from all points of the island. If I look historically back at attendance records at Australian Rules football games on the north-west coast, we support our sport far more than AFL games in Hobart or Launceston. Historically that is true in comparison. On the north-west coast where we live we are fanatical about sport; we love the sport and if there's a grand final somewhere we'd probably turn up to it, and we travel as well, but we need to honour that and recognise that it has to be accessible equally to all of Tasmania. I understand Hobart has more than 40 per cent of the population and that's fine but equally, we have people in Smithton - some great players come out of Smithton - and they're going to have to travel four hours to get a game of footy or to train.

Mr ARMSTRONG - If we got a Tasmanian team, whether it is based in Launceston or Hobart, and you got players from Smithton, it's like if our players are playing in Saint Kilda they go to live in Victoria, they don't live in Tasmania and fly back and forward. Wouldn't it be the case if you've got players in Smithton and we had a team based either in Launceston or Hobart, they wouldn't be living in Smithton and travelling, they would be living where they're going to be playing football?

Mr MARTIN - Once they get up to that level, yes, but not leading up to that level.

Mr ARMSTRONG - But even now when you were drafted and there are people drafted from all over Tasmania and it could be to Perth or wherever but if they're a rookie draft they're still living in Perth or Brisbane or wherever they are drafted to, aren't they?

Mr MARTIN - They are. I haven't got a problem with that -

Mr ARMSTRONG - That would be the case here in Tasmania.

PUBLIC

Mr MARTIN - What I'm saying, though, is if you build up those tiers of football to get to that point you're going to have to travel and meet state sides and play in competitions and there will be a hell of a lot more travelling from Smithton or the west coast or even the east coast to get to a training spot. There is a big commitment to be able to do that, and we haven't got the public transport that the mainland has either so you're able to do that.

Mr ARMSTRONG - It all comes down to money, doesn't it, and getting these players up?

Mr MARTIN - If we start looking at Hobart or Launceston, the thing about that is if you put it in Launceston you've got UTAS right next door to the stadium and the Tasmanian Institute of Sport up the road. You've got an airport so you're able to get the visiting teams there and you've got TT-Line an hour up the road which brings over vehicles and tourists as well. They're also very strong considerations that should be taken into account on where the teams should be situated as well as accessibility.

Mr ARMSTRONG - I have a friend in Hobart who has a stall at Salamanca and it is interesting what he said to me. He says he has people fly into Hobart to buy his products he is selling there and they actually then leave Hobart and drive to Launceston to watch a game of football. It shows me that when people come to Tasmania to go to the football, whether it is in Launceston or Hobart, they fly in to travel. He said that happens so much at Salamanca where they fly in on the Friday, go to Salamanca and then drive to Launceston for the football and fly out from there. So people will travel.

Mr MARTIN - People visiting the state will travel, there's no doubt about that. But in the decision-making process -

Mr ARMSTRONG - You've got more than 50 per cent of your population in the south, that is where I was coming from.

Mr MARTIN - With educational and employment opportunities, where there is employment hardship and gaps you usually find it is in the rural and regional areas outside the capital cities.

Mr FINCH - I don't think there is any dispute about the fact that the games should be halved as best they can through Launceston and Hobart, six to five might be the count but that could change each year. There was a suggestion that the decision should be left up to the AFL and maybe the AFL Players' Association which then takes it out of the hands of a political or a parochial decision. How do you feel about that?

Mr MARTIN - If the AFL make it, it would be good for the AFL but not necessarily good for Tasmania. Their thoughts, I suppose, are that they have to attract players to Tasmania to play in the Tasmanian side, and if they come to an environment where they're unhappy about it they'll want to go back to another club over the other side as well. There are so many considerations that have to be made. I'm sure we can get some independent people, get a whiteboard out if you like, and start looking at it from a Tasmanian perspective of where best to have that team sited, taking into consideration how we attract players to Tasmania and how we keep them here. That is a lifestyle thing as well and bringing up families. We've got a lot to offer.

Mr FINCH - It might come up in the business plan, mightn't it?

PUBLIC

Mr MARTIN - It might do.

CHAIR - Is there anything further you wanted to go to? We cut you off mid-stream.

Mr MARTIN - No, I'm happy to answer any questions. I can go way off-track if you want to. I have visited the North Melbourne Football Club and Hawthorn Football Club and talked with their administrations back in 2014 from memory. At that stage North Melbourne was telling me that the AFL was just about to grant them Tasmania as their recruitment zone and they would most likely have an AFL women's team down here. As of 2014 the AFL wasn't talking about giving Tassie a team; they were talking about giving North Melbourne the zone. Hawthorn was certainly interested in Tasmania and didn't want to be encroached by another AFL team either down here because they had it exclusively for their club. Their memberships have skyrocketed because young people with kids are now becoming Hawks supporters and they will be for the rest of their lives.

Mr FINCH - Steve, do you have any thoughts on how the taxpayers funding and support might go to an AFL team? Do you think we are in a position to be able to provide the sort of support that would need to go hand in hand with the AFL financially supporting a team here?

Mr MARTIN - The research I did last year was looking at about \$40 million to put an AFL team onto the park, so to speak. From memory, the Tasmanian government gives about \$12 million - I haven't got that figure in front of me but I think it was about \$12 million - and when we were looking at the business case that Saul Eslake put up, he had Mars as one of the major sponsors. From talking to Saul, they were ready to commit. It didn't go ahead and in recent conversations he is saying there are similar large companies out there like Mars all over the world and now Australian football is being broadcast into all over the world as well. There are big companies out there that we would be able to attract to be exposed to the populace through the media in that respect. I think any AFL team worth its salt and business plan would be able to attract financial support. I am sure that the membership in Tasmania would grow. Even ex-pats - on the T23 webpage we've got people from Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland, especially Queensland.

Mr ARMSTRONG - They always stay Tasmanians, don't they?

Mr MARTIN - We always stay Tasmanian and we always support Tasmanians and they would follow them as well. There would be an interest. As we know, it is only a small degree of separation for any Tasmanian, wherever they go in the world.

Mr ARMSTRONG - In your submission you're saying you believe a properly set up Tasmanian AFL team would pay for itself given the huge increase in public support that can be expected if we have our own club. I certainly agree with you on that. What time frame, and when you look at what the AFL pays - the Gold Coast, \$22 million, Greater Western Sydney, \$22 million, Brisbane \$22 million, St Kilda, \$19 million - why shouldn't they be putting money into Tasmania when they are paying that money to those clubs every year? If we do set it up, you would expect them to giving us the same deal as they are giving these clubs, wouldn't you?

Mr MARTIN - That's my whole argument. They went out and they asked permission in 2008 and they got permission. They went out and invested it and marketed it in those communities, in a non-football Australian Rules state, to get that membership base. They wanted their market share and they wanted to get that population changed around. They left good old Tassie off the map, once again, until they wanted a business plan for their own and left us wandering around in the wilderness. When you start looking at the Gold Coast Suns in 2018, \$22 million, nearly

PUBLIC

\$23 million. What did I say, 2011? Seven or eight years later, they are still on \$22 million to \$23 million.

If we take the Tasmanian government and if we get the same contribution from the AFL, you are basically three-quarters of the way there to have an AFL team. What I'm saying is there is no reason why the AFL cannot make that commitment. They just have to be willing to do that. In between that, all we are doing is running around in circles while they are doing what they want to do.

Mr ARMSTRONG - When you look at those four clubs, out of the four clubs there are three of them - Brisbane are the Lions, the old Fitzroy - what are your thoughts on a club, like it was talked about years ago, that St Kilda, for instance, might relocate to Tasmania instead of our own AFL side?

Mr MARTIN - That would become a Tasmanian side, the Tasmanian Saints or whatever you like. I haven't got a problem with that whatsoever, as long as they are based in Tasmania.

Mr ARMSTRONG - It is the same as Brisbane or Sydney.

Mr MARTIN - Yes. We know that Sydney Swans, what do they call the Swans, the Bloods, South Melbourne reluctantly went. Hawthorn, Melbourne and North Melbourne were given incentives to amalgamate with other clubs and bits and pieces and they didn't want to do it, but they are okay to come to Tasmania on a part-time basis, take our money and go back to Victoria because that is their business plan and they are not worried about Tasmania. When we really get down to the nitty gritty it is all about shoring up the Hawthorn Football Club and the North Melbourne Football Club, not Tasmania or Tasmanians.

Mr ARMSTRONG - I was talking about joining Melbourne and Hawthorn once and calling them the Dawks, wasn't it, Mr Finch?

Mr ARMSTRONG - It was. Years ago, it was going to be Melbourne and Hawthorn when they were way down the bottom of the ladder. They were going to amalgamate because they were financially bankrupt.

You said that Tasmania would be able to be financially sustainable. If they built this new stadium they are talking about in Hobart, which I touched on earlier and would hold 25 000 to 30 000 people, do you think that would help attract good sponsorship, being in a capital city, compared to Launceston? If you were a sponsor like a Mars or whoever it may be, do you think they would look at a capital city area to be their home base to attract sponsors? Geelong attracted a sponsor, it used to be Ford. I am not sure -

Mr MARTIN - I don't believe so because, when you start talking about sponsorship, partnerships, et cetera, it is about exposure. On social media, TV rights and radio, there are so many programs now on TV and radio. They are all talking about clubs, players, a game on Saturday, who has kicked the most goals, all the statistics, et cetera. It will be based on the exposure through the media more so than your local ground. I go to watch the footy. I don't go to read sponsor signs. On TV, social media and radio, et cetera, you continually hear the sponsor's name, you see the sponsor's name and if I was going to invest, as a small or large business, I don't think where the ground is really matters. Where the ground is matters in what strong links it has to increasing the opportunity for people who are going to be involved in that team.

PUBLIC

Mr ARMSTRONG - It is how clubs get their exposure now. Collingwood Football Club, who I will put on record I don't support, give something like 50 000 meals a year to the homeless.

Mr MARTIN - A lot of the football clubs are involved in charities and their communities. I think Ms Siejka mentioned what a community needs to do.

Mr ARMSTRONG - That is where I was coming from.

Mr MARTIN - I think it is a dove-tail. All footballers and all sportspeople are community people from the beginning. That's how they climb up the ladder and they'll have their own beliefs in what charities they want to be involved in. I would think, as has been done, it will be pushed through the clubs and through the membership.

Mr FINCH - On your webpage, T23.com.au, do you have any mention of a 20-team competition for the AFL that might include a team from Tasmania and a team from the Northern Territory?

Mr MARTIN - I didn't touch on the Northern Territory. They would be looking at a 20-team competition but there is a roster that can have a 19-team competition. We do have byes in the AFL as well, which could be worked around that. Round 23 is a round where it is up to the AFL, three or four weeks ago they nominated which teams will play. There is versatility to be able to achieve having a 19-team roster or competition but also the ability to increase to 20 teams. I wonder if the AFL is looking at the same thing as they do in gridiron. They have two competitions, conferences, that they are going to build up and the winner of either conference plays for the Superbowl at the end of the year. Who knows. I don't know that but we are building up teams in bits and pieces, perhaps we might have different conferences.

CHAIR - Interesting concept.

Mr FINCH - Even now the AFL has half of the teams play one week and the other half of the teams play the other week give to them a chance to rest up, so that is tantamount to being a bye for the team.

Mr MARTIN - Certainly.

Mr ARMSTRONG - It wrecks the tipping competitions, doesn't it?

Mr MARTIN - Only for Geelong supporters.

CHAIR - Ms Martin, is there anything further you wanted to say at this stage?

Mr MARTIN - Well, it's AFL, and I hope we will get our own Tassie AFL team. It is bigger picture stuff I am trying to push out there as well and it will go right down to sports in schools and physical education as well. It can also go down to sports academy. That is why I went to see North Melbourne and Hawthorn, and what that would mean to a high school, especially in a rural or regional area, and how they would promote other sports and get people involved in those areas.

As we know, volunteerism is dying off. We have a different mentality coming through the next generations and we need to foster that as well. It is really big picture stuff and, whilst we are

PUBLIC

talking about AFL, my thing is we shouldn't be blinded by AFL. If they don't commit, it is my firm belief that they should be told to nick off and the three tiers of government, from local, state and federal, should be looking at other sports and building up their infrastructures, especially if they have more participation. Most of those sports have pathways not only into Australian championships but also to Olympic sport. The AFL doesn't, yet we are giving all our money and all our concentration to the AFL. They will either commit - if they don't, fine, that gives us the opportunity to invest into the other sports and give our young people a pathway to become an Olympian.

Mr ARMSTRONG - There's been a lot of talk about the A-League, hasn't there?

Mr MARTIN - Yes. The Devonport Strikers, dare I say, have been very successful over the last four to five years. They have beaten two mainland teams, even though one of them lost their boots on the Qantas flight over. That was a bonus for the local economy. There is a big picture here. We should not be blinded by the AFL. There are huge opportunities in other sports. We should be aware of those opportunities.

CHAIR - I probably need for *Hansard* your current position, Mr Martin?

Mr MARTIN - I am the Chairman of the Tasmanian National Party.

CHAIR - Mr Martin, thank you very much for being here. Thank you for your time and for the submission you put in. It is very much appreciated. We thank you for the way in which you have answered the questions and the information you have provided to this committee, which will assist this committee at the end in putting its report together. We hope to do so sooner rather than later. It is important that we get our report in as quickly as we can because of the position the committee has and where the board is sitting. The committee is looking closely at where we are.

We do appreciate your time. Thank you very much.

Mr MARTIN- Thank you for your work.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW.