

AFL submission to Legislative Council Select Committee

I am a follower of AFL (Collingwood) and consider myself at a level of average interest.

I am not a paid up member .

My primary sport of interest is Motor racing and I congratulate the government for their continue support of Supercars coming to Tasmania

I take an interest in local footy team Latrobe, do not attend games but follow in media.

If in Melbourne we will go to a Collingwood game but otherwise watch on TV and internet.

1 I believe there would be limited benefit to Tasmania in having a state AFL team because the amount of money required to successfully run a state team is not available year on year or there is enough mass of population who would support a team. Also many other factors eg where based as north people will in general not travel to south to watch a game or likewise south travel to north and there is not currently a ground with the required capacity to ensure an economic ongoing and viable outcome. Latest figures show 32% of state population is on income support payments thus we do not have a high economic status to support a major footy club with out major government support.

2 The current setup with Melbourne teams playing in Tasmania on a limited basis is the best long term solution for Tasmania football as this does bring economic benefits when games are on and can happen with current grounds as at present as these are rarely sellouts. Last game between North Melbourne and St Kilda is proof although game time was a bit late in the day, to suit television. Also the latest Hawks game had a reasonable crowd figure. Evidence says that some supporters make a trip of multiple days to Tassie when the football is on but would this flow across all clubs? and ongoing? Even if the Tasmanian team was uncompetitive? I believe the current level of funding by the Tasmanian Government should not be increased above the current levels as this seems about right to get goos exposure for Tasmania.

3 Overall there is not the level of support required long term in the community to justify an AFL Tasmanian team as this would require a significant level of financial support from the Tas Govt and things like education, health and infrastructure are regarded as more important by a lot of the general public. Given the lack of stability in Green and Labor parties if the Liberal Govt supported a team being establishing then a change of government would put this at risk eg their stance on Supercars and this week on news Labour belly aching about \$300,000 to ensure a national preseason basketball comp being held in Tassy goes to show how narrow minded Labor is currently. While a major sponsor might come on board to establish a team (lot of good exposure to start) would that be there on going? What If the team struggles? Eg Gold Coast

4 Fact of life as Tasmania has been north and south for ever and I don't see that changing any time soon. This is evident in daily life and if there is a solution then we would like to hear about it, an AFL team will not help this at all unless there is some smart strategic planning.

5 The decline, specially in country football will only continue even if we had an AFL team, given the problems with State league this only reinforces that a Tasmanian AFL will not be viable.

6 The only time a Tasmanian AFL team could be considered is if we had healthy local leagues with a good level of state wide teams and viable Devils team and or a VFL team to give a progressive pathway thru to top level as a State team cannot operate with out a healthy back up group on which to get match fitness and bring injured or development players thru. Also historical Tasmania has produced some very fine players but would we have enough to field a competitive team at the one time?? Unlikely and a good player would get probably more money at a major club than what Tasmania could offer.

7 If an AFL team starts up in Tasmania it should be bankrolled by the AFL not by Govt funds above the current levels to the two teams that play here at the moment. Most AFL followers already have a team and I doubt if they are worth their salt, a Tasmanian team would only be their second team, the amount of people who would take a membership would be limited. A Tasmanian team to operate successfully would require serious funding of which AFL needs to underwrite. The AFL set up new teams Eg Gold Coast and GWS to grow the game nationally, an AFL team in Tassy would not grow the product above where it currently is.

If there was a Tasmania Team in AFL would we travel to Launceston or Hobart to watch our team Collingwood play? Probably to Launceston is the answer as long as the Tasmanian team is going to make a contest and admission cost was less than Melbourne prices, very unlikely to go to Hobart. I think the government has a lot more to worry about and provide a better level of services as well as a strong economic economy than pursue an AFL team in Tasmania.

Thank You

Eddie Firth

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