

SOCCER ADMINISTRATION IN WA, RESTRUCTURING

Grievance

MR J.R. QUIGLEY (Innaloo) [9.56 am]: I rise as the member for Innaloo, but I also wish to speak as a board member of Soccer West Coast. I joined that board 12 months ago, at the invitation of Soccer West Coast, to help facilitate a review and restructuring of soccer administration in Western Australia. Soccer in Western Australia has three bodies - junior soccer, the amateurs, and Soccer West Coast, which is headed by the president, Mr David Schrandt, and includes delegates for other bodies, such as the referees. It was agreed and promoted by the Department of Sport and Recreation -

The SPEAKER: I know the Treasurer took exceptional care as he was leaving the Chamber, but he forgot it when he came back in and stood between me and the member for Innaloo. I call him to order for the first time.

Mr E.S. Ripper: I apologise, Mr Speaker.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: Over the past 12 months, the Government, under the former Minister for Sport and Recreation, Hon Alan Carpenter, has promoted this idea of a restructure, and it has been taken forward by the current minister. I would like to acknowledge the Soccer West Coast board - Mr David Schrandt, its president, and Peter Koulizos, Russell Goodrick, Liam Twigger and Denis McInerney - for taking these proposals out to the clubs and doing so much to restructure soccer in Western Australia. It would also be remiss of me if I did not also acknowledge my fiancée, Michelle Stronach, who, at the request of Soccer West Coast, took up a position on the penalties and disputes tribunal to sort out the differences between the various clubs. She has served well in that capacity, having studied sports law and worked with Kott Gunning.

Soccer is a fantastic sport because it bridges not only state but also international boundaries and can do so much to promote Australia. So much is happening at individual club levels, and an overarching restructure was needed to bring all the disparate groups together under the one umbrella so that the Government could then come to the party and assist this wonderful sport. To give the Chamber an idea of the direct benefits that can flow to our country and our State through the promotion of this sport, Soccer West Coast, together with the Department of Sport and Recreation, has been promoting a visit to Western Australia in November by the Iraqi soccer team. We very much look forward to welcoming a free, healthy and happy Iraqi team to Western Australia. I am sure all members of the community would love to see that. A few sponsorship deals must yet be concluded with the Australian Wheat Board, but one can see at once the great benefit to Australia through this sport. It presents some absolutely fantastic opportunities. The clubs themselves are doing so much. I should pause here to congratulate the Swan IC Soccer Club for its magnificent fighting victory over Perth at Dorrien Gardens in the Boral Cup grand final last Sunday, at which I was present. I particularly congratulate Gary Marocchi, the coach of Swan IC Soccer Club, and Damian Scali, the team captain. That is the first pennant for that team. I am sure that the team's success will do a lot to promote the sport in the Swan Valley, where so many soccer fans live. This will give the sport a higher profile in that area. I congratulate them.

At the junior level, Soccer West Coast this year instigated the junior championship league. Every premier league and first division club has attached to it a junior club in the junior championship league. It is doing marvellous things to promote the sport amongst juniors. When one looks at the involvement in soccer at the school and other levels, such as in women's soccer, help similar to that given to all other sports, such as Australian Rules football, hockey and netball, must be provided. The Western Australian Government needs to give some help and support to this sport. Soccer has now done its bit to put its house in order under this new structure. At all the club meetings that I have attended, the big concern expressed by all clubs is that they want government assistance, but they do not want the Government to be running their sport.

The previous minister's suggestions, which have been taken up by the current minister, included a proposal for a memorandum of understanding involving a two-year trial period of a new structure. Under the MOU, which has now been signed, the existing bodies will continue for that two-year period and will dissolve only by reason of their own vote, and not by reason of a government takeover. When the clubs themselves are happy with the way in which the new structure is running, they can vote to disband and the new structure will be up and running for the future. What is needed and what the game is looking for at the moment - its first two high-priority asks - is that a project officer be appointed or that someone at the Department of Sport and Recreation be able to visit the clubs and liaise with the administrators of the sport. Such a person could perhaps give those clubs some direction. Perhaps some administrative packs could be provided to help individual clubs organise their affairs to the best advantage of their members, and to give some direction. A project officer is needed. The other thing the clubs want is to have a state coaching director who can talk to all the clubs about the levels of coaching and to bring the level forward.

This is a fantastic sport. Per capita, Western Australia is doing marvellously. We need only look at the success of Perth Glory and the profile that team has given to the sport. I acknowledge that Perth Glory is a professional team owned under a separate licence. However, soccer players, such as Stan Lazaridis, whom I have met, are fantastic ambassadors for Western Australia. Stan Lazaridis is a sensational human being and sportsman. He can be seen playing in the premier league in the United Kingdom for Birmingham City and promoting the sport on television. Shaun Murphy, a premier league player for the past eight years in the UK, is coming back to Western Australia next season. He has signed with the Glory. Soccer is a fantastic sport. It is ready to go. The administration end has been organised. The sport is now looking for some government support.

MR R.C. KUCERA (Yokine - Minister for Sport and Recreation) [10.03 am]: I thank the member for Innaloo for raising this issue with me as Minister for Sport and Recreation. I also thank him for his involvement in the recent soccer forums and for his participation with Soccer West Coast. He has done much to advance the cause of the sport, particularly in the past 12 months. Unlike most peak sporting bodies that I have had dealings with since becoming Minister for Sport and Recreation, Soccer Administration of WA does not receive annual funding from the sports lottery development grants. There is a real and historic reason for that. It is a result of the historic inability, quite frankly, of the various soccer associations to work together. That is something that concerned not just the previous minister, the member for Willagee, but also his predecessor. Under the direction and leadership of the previous minister, we at least started to see a sensible direction starting to evolve. I am also pleased to announce that there are indications, which have very much arisen through some of the efforts of the member for Innaloo, that this situation will change, certainly as a result of the series of meetings of the soccer forum. As I have already said, the member for Innaloo is a member of that forum. The soccer forum consists of representatives from all soccer associations and has been meeting since May 2002. Minister Carpenter laid down very clear instructions and directions about where the Government wanted to go.

In my own electorate of Yokine, some 45 teams competed this year in the indoor, five-a-side soccer competition. Those teams were organised voluntarily by the various youth groups and soccer organisations in the area. What a fantastic competition that was. It was eventually won by the youngsters of the Yokine Primary School, who came up against the Carmel School, which is a Jewish school. It was great to see kids from the Islamic and Jewish colleges and all the schools in the area playing, under one banner, the world game of soccer. That is what we need to do in this State. Until such time as a young person from Yokine Primary School can see his way through the entire layer of soccer in this State, from junior soccer right up to the top echelons of the game in the world, and can believe that he can emulate the kinds of things that Stan Lazaridis is currently doing overseas, we will never move ahead in this State. Much of what has been done, particularly in the past six to eight months, indicates that we can go down that path. All major soccer associations, as a result of the meetings that the member for Innaloo has been a part of and a number of which I have attended both informally and formally, have now signed a memorandum of understanding that they will work towards a single structure. We need only go so far as the West Australian Football Commission to see the kind of structure that can work. Under that model, the various sections of the sport come together and are supported by the State Government, not in terms of controlling the sport, as the member for Innaloo rightly pointed out, but in properly funding and developing it.

Soccer people in this State now consider and realise that this sport is the world game. The current participation rate in soccer, and particularly junior soccer, is the highest for sport in the State. The only sport that comes near it is netball. Right across the board, the number of young women and men involved in the sport means that it is now the largest participation sport in this State. Just last week, when I was in Collie with the member for Collie, we were able to give some \$50 000 to one of the Collie soccer associations for the development of a new pitch, which will allow that association to bring the sport on in that town.

The signing of the agreement by the parties supports the implementation of stage 1 of the restructure of soccer. This reflects the national direction being taken under Frank Lowy. A national organisation of the game of soccer is being brought together. That will form the umbrella organisation for the nation. Western Australia needs to be one of the spokes of that umbrella. It needs to be part of the support that will be provided to the overall game in this country. The restructure will allow the process to be managed by the Department of Sport and Recreation and the soccer forum. I understand that negotiations are under way with Ron Alexander and his team towards the development of a project officer and indeed a project group to bring together what is now being proposed for this new structure.

Although Soccer West Coast was initially reluctant, I am pleased to note that it has at last committed to the process and has signed the MOU. Members may be aware of the difficulties previous Governments have had in trying to bring the various parties together. A large number of vested interests are involved in the game, which we need to overcome. Most importantly, there must be a shared vision for soccer. I have spoken to people such as Paul Tombides, David Schrandt and the recently appointed state coach, Paul Simmons. He was the coach of Joondalup ECU and did an excellent job of bringing that from being a relatively unknown team to a premiership team and league winner. Those people are now really committed to a single vision. I applaud that. There are no

guarantees, of course, that all these parties will remain committed to the MOU. Although some individual members may support the direction that is being taken, there is certainly still an underlying reluctance on the part of some clubs and individual groups within the sport to support it.

I will outline where we are going from here. Stage 1 will involve the formation of a soccer board with seven directors, including one nominated by the Junior Soccer Association of Western Australia, one from the West Australian Amateur Social Soccer Association, and one nominated by Soccer West Coast, with four independent directors. I am advised that nominations for directors positions will be called for in the next few weeks and, with everybody's goodwill, the commission should be fully functional by March 2004. Once stage 1 is in place, the Department of Sport and Recreation will assist the new board in the implementation of stage 2, which will see all associations amalgamate into one unified body. Once this is in place we will finally be in a position to allocate funds from the sports lotteries development grant to ensure the continued development of this fast growing sport in Western Australia. If we link that in partnership with the Town of Vincent and the \$6 million expenditure on the new Perth oval to create a dedicated soccer pitch, and the \$6 000 expenditure on an official department through the support of DSR, at long last the young people who view soccer as a world game will see that vision develop. This will allow them to follow right through with their sport and individuals will have the chance to become yet another Stan Lazaridis and represent this great sport in our great nation.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr A.J. Dean): Grievances noted.