

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL — HISTORY

Grievance

MR J.E. McGRATH (South Perth) [9.10 am]: My grievance is to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. The history of Western Australian football dates to 1885 and Subiaco Oval has been the home of football since 1908. I am sure that the minister would agree that the ground reeks of the history of this great game. The old gates with turnstiles are heritage listed. Gates and rooms around the ground are dedicated to some of our famous names in football: Farmer, Walker, Cable and Todd. Our Sandover Medallists are honoured with a medallists walk along Roberts Road on the Subiaco side of the ground. Inside the stadium, photos on the walls of the corridors around the corporate boxes capture the rich history of this great game. We are moving to a new stadium—a stadium that we all embrace that will help to establish Perth as a modern city. It is a world-class facility constructed with \$1.4 billion of taxpayers' money. It is a stadium for all sports, and we agree that it should be. It is a stadium for any sport that can attract a crowd of 40 000–60 000. It will attract international events in all sports, but every week of the football season we will see AFL played at that stadium.

My concern—the reason I am asking the minister to give the Parliament and the public some information—is where will the history of football be commemorated? Football will no longer have a home and no football will be played at Subiaco Oval. I believe the government's plan is that maybe the West Australian Football Commission will remain located at the ground, but it will be mainly used for its programs of excellence to bring on champion players of the future, and a new secondary school will be built alongside it. West Coast Eagles and Fremantle will play at the new stadium, but there will be no home of football that we have known for over 100 years. We know this is progress; we are not opposed to that because a Liberal government built most of the stadium. We believed that football had to move from Subiaco Oval.

I believe a working group has been established to represent all the major sports' memorabilia. Football is represented on that working group by George Michalzek, who I am sure the minister knows. He is president of the 200 Club, which has 450 members—that is, 450 Western Australians who over the years have played 200 games of league football at the top level. That is a commitment of 10 or 15 years of their lives to playing a game that has so enriched the lives of many Western Australians who follow our great competition. Also on the committee is Greg Wardell-Johnson. He is a football historian.

At the new stadium will there be any display of art that commemorates this history of the game? Leading up to the last game at Domain Stadium, *The West Australian* ran some very good features on the history of the game. We saw the famous photo of Polly Farmer jumping up above my boyhood idol Jack Clarke of East Fremantle. It is a time-honoured photo. There was also the photo of the John Gerovich mark, which is probably still one of the greatest football photographs taken anywhere in Australia, and the photo of Haydn Bunton, the Swan Districts captain-coach, being chaired off the ground in one of those three finals with blood streaming from a gash over his eyebrow. That was the great days of State of Origin, when I know the minister and his mates used to come up from Collie for that Tuesday afternoon. I do not know how he got the day off. If we do not capture that history of the game at the stadium, where will it be?

Will there be any recognition of those players in the WA Football Hall of Fame, particularly the legends? When I talk about the legends, I include names like Haydn Bunton, Barry Cable, George Doig, Polly Farmer, Steve Marsh, Merv McIntosh, Graham Moss, Jack Sheedy, John Todd, Billy Walker, John Leonard and Denis Marshall, who famously went away and played at Geelong and I think was runner-up for a Brownlow Medal. They are champions of the history of our sport. I also ask: will there be any mention or recognition—a wall—of players who have played 200 games? I understand that it is difficult to put everything in the new stadium that football wants. The other suggestion that has been made to me is that maybe we could have above every corporate box the name of a famous Western Australian sports person. I think there will be 101 corporate boxes. There would be easily 100 famous Western Australian sportspeople—I will mention some names in a minute. Another suggestion, which we looked at in government and the Premier thought we could do every second year, is that leading up to the ground we could have statues of famous Western Australian sportspeople, like they have at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. Herb Elliot is probably the most famous Western Australian sports person of all time, and others are Dennis Lillee, Marsh and McKenzie from cricket, Shirley Strickland, Farmer, Cable, Walker and Moss—all great names from a wide range of sports who have been so proudly recognised by Western Australians.

I want to make the point that this is something that is continually raised with me by football people. They love the idea of the new stadium but they are concerned that when Subi goes, the Western Australian Cricket Association ground will still be there, so it can have all the pictures of Lillee and the cricket greats, but where will the pictures of the great footballers be? That is why I raise this grievance with the minister today. I am sure the minister is as keen as anyone to make sure that not only are all sports recognised, but football is not forgotten.

MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie-Preston — Minister for Sport and Recreation) [9.17 am]: I thank the member for South Perth for the grievance.

I will say straight up that it is not assured that the AFL will play at the stadium; we are still waiting on that. I wanted to let the member know that.

Sports history is certainly something we must foster and keep. Good football clubs, or good clubs anywhere, keep their history in front of people. In fact, in my electorate on the weekend, I did a bit of a presentation on 50 years since Jack Sumich from South Fremantle won a fairest and best in the Collie league. I believe strong clubs and associations look after their history. The member is well aware of that and that is why he brings this grievance.

In June 2015, under the previous government, the Perth Stadium Sports Memorabilia Reference Group was formed to understand what sports memorabilia was appropriate for installation at the stadium. That has been ongoing. Recently, we had a briefing on that from the group. They are the same people the member talked about who were put in by the previous government. We have to remember that it is not football and football alone. We have other sports such as rugby league, rugby union, cricket, and, of course, the round ball football. We have to be very careful to not exclude one.

The member asked a question about the 200 Club. Wanting every name put up is a contentious issue. As the member said, it is a lot of names to have in that area. The 200 Club will be mentioned. I am not sure to what depth at this stage, because we do not have the final report on that, but I think what has been shown to me would satisfy most people. Of course, we will always have the individual who will say, “One was better than the other” in any sport. It does not matter so much about AFL. It is being worked on and some of the more modern, I suppose, approaches to what can be put on a wall, whether it is screens or a telly or those sorts of things, are there. I think we need to have something a bit more substantial than that, and that is what we have been talking about. We need something that really hooks onto the history of the AFL, especially, which I think will be responsible for 65 per cent of the use of the stadium, to make sure that the people the member was talking about—the Cahills, the Todds, the MacIntoshes, you name it—get the recognition, because they were absolute household names. Anyone remembering the radio days, before television, right up to the present, will know that those names have come up time and again. To be quite honest, in this job, it has been a pleasure to meet and talk to some of those people who are still around.

The goal of the strategy is to put some soul and life into the stadium. Bare concrete walls are certainly not the way to go. I have become a little confused, because at one stage I was told that the position of the stadium group was not to have any rooms named after individuals, and then the Dennis Cometti media box was suggested and is in process. There have already been some changes to what the group was saying under the previous government. I am trying to follow on from the work that was done by the previous government. The member will see that we have made no major changes; it is about allowing that group to proceed, and to work with sporting bodies to make sure that sports memorabilia are carried from one venue to the other. That does not mean to say that they will all be brought across, but what is left behind will go back to the appropriate club. It will not just be dumped or left behind. We will make sure that it is looked after and moved back to the clubs. I also remind the member that both the Eagles and the Dockers have new clubrooms. I had a look at the Fremantle facility, and it is sensational.

Ms R. Saffioti: Will it make them win more?

Mr M.P. MURRAY: They did not have a trophy cabinet; I did not look for that!

Both clubs have sensational new homes for the future. It is not as though they are moving without having a permanent home. I understand the idea of having the stadium recognise champions of the past, while leaving room for the champions of the future. We must remember that some players have now won Brownlow Medals and other top awards, not just in Western Australia but Australia-wide. We must have something similar to the footpath at Subiaco Oval, and areas like that.

Mr J.E. McGrath: What about the Sandover medallist wall?

Mr M.P. MURRAY: I am not sure about exactly what is being done about the Sandover medallist wall, but I will suggest to the committee that we lift those slabs and put them somewhere, because we should keep them. The member’s idea of the statue is another one worth considering, but we do not want the venue to be a clone of another stadium. We must think about things that are more appropriate to today’s thinking, and maybe doing it in a different way.

Mr J.E. McGrath: Just quickly, minister, I forgot to mention the sports museum at the stadium, for all the tourists and others who are going to visit. Have you talked about that?

Mr M.P. MURRAY: Its inclusion in the stadium certainly has been talked about for the tours of the stadium. Although the area is not yet available for tours, one of the best views of Perth is from the top of the stadium, and I think that we will see that, in time, and we will have another tourist attraction. I think it is a great idea. People do not necessarily have to come to a game to understand the history of our sport.

In the short time I have left, yes, we are looking at it. The committee formed by the previous government is working on it. I have had a briefing, and what I have seen so far is sensational. I did not pick up on the Sandover medallist wall, but I will certainly take that on board and see what I can do.