

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE REPORT 17

MORE THAN JUST A GAME – THE USE OF STATE FUNDS BY THE WA FOOTBALL COMMISSION

Introduction

On 26 June 2020, the Public Accounts Committee resolved to establish an Inquiry with the following terms of reference:

The Public Accounts Committee will inquire into and report on the use of State funding by the West Australian Football Commission (WAFC) in its role as caretaker of football in WA.

The Inquiry will focus on:

- a) how effectively State funds have been used to develop football across all levels;
- b) whether the WAFC is meeting its obligations under the funding agreement with the State; and
- c) the effectiveness and transparency of monitoring and reporting functions included in the State's funding agreement with the WAFC.

The report was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 12 November 2020.

Background

In the development of the response to the recommendations, the following considerations occurred to make clarifications or enhancements to the report's findings and recommendations:

- The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC) met with the Chair of the WAFC on 3 December 2020 to discuss the report and its intentions in regard to the recommendations; and
- A subsequent meeting occurred at an officer level between DLGSC and the WAFC on 17 December 2020 to discuss the progress of the report's recommendations and how these can be reflected in the 2021 work plans.

Table of Recommendations

Chapter 1 – Background – and some concerns about interference and misleading information

Recommendation	DLGSC Response
<p>Recommendation 1 Page 3 To deliver the greatest accountability and assurance to Parliament and the public, the Minister for Sport and Recreation (the Minister) and the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC), as the State’s representatives in the major football funding agreement, should work closely with the WA Football Commission (WAFC) to monitor the implementation of the recommendations in this report.</p>	Supported, to the extent of the use of the funds from the Football Agreement. There are specific elements within the Agreement where VenuesWest as the Owner Agency of the Perth Stadium and the party responsible for the management of the same have a responsibility.
<p>Recommendation 2 Page 7 The WAFC should continue to provide oversight and governance to football in WA.</p>	Left Intentionally blank
<p>Recommendation 3 Page 19 The WAFC should make concerted efforts to educate its staff and Commissioners on the propriety of public pronouncements and at all times behaving ethically and with full recognition of the limitations inherent in their role as Commissioners.</p>	Left Intentionally blank

Chapter 2 – Football has a strong self-funding ideology, but State funding is central to its well-being

Recommendation	DLGSC Response
<p>Recommendation 4 Page 36 The Minister should require more transparent reporting by the WAFC, to increase its accountability to its stakeholders. This should include at the minimum more openness about its staffing, including the numbers of employees, their broad employment areas and the overall cost of their salaries and benefits.</p>	Supported.

Chapter 3 – There is an uneasy balance between WAFC’s elite talent management and grassroots development

Recommendation	DLGSC Response
<p>Recommendation 5 Page 48 The DLGSC should work with WAFC to develop mechanisms to track, monitor, and report on how the appropriate resources are being secured to support the continued growth in all aspects of women’s involvement in football.</p>	Supported. The extent of the mechanism and focus on Australian Rules football should not be to the detriment of other sports and should ideally be used to improve the reporting for all sports.
<p>Recommendation 6 Page 51 The Minister and the DLGSC should work with the WAFC to explore options to further improve and support junior and youth</p>	(6-9) Supported. The level of growth and measures will be monitored by the targets that WAFC set in its reporting and DLGSC

Recommendation	DLGSC Response
<p>football development and participation. This includes looking at other ways to work with local clubs and schools in developing strong competitions.</p>	<p>will monitor progress against these targets and measures.</p>
<p>Recommendation 7 Page 55 The Minister and the DLGSC should work with the WAFC to explore ways to develop and increase participation in country football. Measures should be put in place to track and report on progress.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 8 Page 57 The Minister and the DLGSC should work with the WAFC to ensure adequate measures for further supporting Indigenous football are in place as a future priority for the WAFC. These measures should be tracked and monitored for progress, and periodically reported on.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 9 Page 58 That the Minister and the DLGSC should work with the WAFC to ensure there is continued investment to support expansion of programs promoting all-abilities football.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 10 Page 62 The WAFC should increase its support to WAFL clubs to assist them repurpose towards community engagement.</p>	<p>Left Intentionally blank</p>
<p>Recommendation 11 Page 66 The Minister for Sport and Recreation and the Minister of Education and Training should work together to maximise the opportunities for public school footballers to reach their full sporting potential, including looking at resource allocations. In doing so, they should also work with the WAFC to determine the most effective ways in which it can assist.</p>	<p>Supported. However, there is the potential to look at more opportunities for physical education and exposure to more sports in the education system rather than simply a focus on Australian Rules football.</p>
<p>Recommendation 12 Page 70 The WAFC should provide mechanisms to ensure that the WAFL continues to be, and remains sustainable as, the premier State competition.</p>	<p>Left Intentionally blank</p>
<p>Recommendation 13 Page 70 That the WAFC coordinate with member and Affiliate clubs and leagues to devolve its service and delivery functions to the appropriate stakeholder. As part of this, the WAFC should work with the WAFL clubs to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More fully involve them in talent and junior development, in order to strengthen WAFL clubs' connection with their communities. • Shift control of the Colts competition back to the WAFL clubs. 	<p>Left Intentionally blank</p>

Recommendation	DLGSC Response
<p>Recommendation 14 Page 70 That the Minister and the DLGSC monitor the WAFC's responses to the recommendations. If they deem the action taken by the WAFC to be insufficient, the Minister and the DLGSC should reconsider funding arrangements (both the 10-year term under the WAFC Funding Agreement, and the other funding available to the WAFC as a State Sporting Association).</p>	Supported.
<p>Recommendation 15 Page 74 To ensure greater player welfare and support, the DLGSC should work with the WAFC to develop rigorous mechanisms to track and report on the development of draftees throughout their careers, and gather data on the number of players who drop out of football, especially the AFL, and the reasons for this.</p>	Supported. Following the determination of players welfare and support outcome by WAFC and DLGSC this will be monitored and reported through the requirements of 7.3 of the WAFC Funding Agreement.
<p>Recommendation 16 Page 76 The DLGSC and WAFC should work together to arrive at a more appropriate older drafting age to promote to the AFL, recognising the benefits of allowing draftees greater development as individuals rather than merely as footballers.</p>	The DLGSC and the WAFC can work towards this outcome. The mechanism to achieve this requires further consideration.

Chapter 4 – The process to elect the WAFC board is complex, and unreflective of WA football as a whole

Recommendations	DLGSC Response
<p>Recommendation 17 Page 88 The WAFC Constitution should be amended so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commissioners cannot be members of the WAFC. • Affiliates become members of the WAFC. 	Left Intentionally blank
<p>Recommendation 18 Page 88 The WAFC should reform the board's nomination and election processes to ensure it more fully represents the various stakeholders and the wider football community, including the need for greater representation from the various Affiliates. Suggested reforms include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing Commissioners should have no role to play in appointing new Commissioners. • There should be term limits on WAFC board appointments. • Employees of WAFC, the two AFL Clubs, and the WAFL clubs and Affiliates should not be able to be appointed as Commissioners. 	Left Intentionally blank
<p>Recommendation 19 Page 88 Any appointed Commissioner, while they may be a 'representative' of the 'body' that nominated them, must operate with full cognisance that they have an obligation to make decisions in the interest of football in WA. To facilitate this, all incoming Commissioners should receive appropriate board training.</p>	Left Intentionally blank

Recommendations	DLGSC Response
<p>Recommendation 20 Page 88 That the Minister and the DLGSC monitor the WAFC’s responses to all recommendations directed at the WAFC. If they deem the WAFC’s responses to be insufficient, the Minister and the DLGSC should reconsider funding arrangements.</p>	Supported.

Chapter 5 – The WAFC’s restricted approach to transparency has led to stakeholder distrust and dissatisfaction

Recommendations	DLGSC Response
<p>Recommendation 21 Page 95 The Minister should ensure that the DLGSC tests the quality and impact of WAFC reporting. This should include a focus on WAFC analysis of player wellbeing.</p>	Supported. In addition to the response to Recommendation 15 other matters can be added to the definition of the elements within the game development reports outlined in 7.3(a)(ii) of the WAFC Funding Agreement.
<p>Recommendation 22 Page 99 The Minister and the DLGSC should work with the WAFC to ensure there is greater clarity about the impact and effectiveness of expenditure allocated to the WAFL and other parts of the football ecosystem.</p>	Supported
<p>Recommendation 23 Page 101 The Minister should work with the WAFC to ensure that reported participation and membership figures are accurate and explicable.</p>	Supported. In addition to the response to Recommendation 15 other matters can be added to the definition of the elements within the game development reports outlined in 7.3(a)(ii) of the WAFC Funding Agreement.