



FACILITIES & THE CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

WAFL FUTURE DIRECTIONS RECOMMENDATIONS

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1. Redevelopment Program

It has long been recognized that many of the traditional WAFL Club facilities are aging, poorly maintained and inadequate to meet continuing demands of the pre-eminent State football league. There has been a range of contributing circumstances but it has now reached a point where, for the sustainability of the Clubs and the place of WAFL in the future of WA football, they all need to reach certain minimum standards. The impact of poor facilities affects not only players and coaching staff and on field performance, but importantly the quality, condition and type of public facilities impacts significantly on the off field financial health of the Club. The standard and scope of facilities limits potential sponsorship support and affects the involvement of the broader public in a range of supporting roles and as spectators.

The state of the WAFL facilities was documented following the 2006 WAFL Future Directions report and recommendations. A subsequent level of assistance and improvement was made possible by granting modest levels of support through the WAFC Community Development Facility Fund. A range of improvements was made and individual Club strategies were initiated and are at different stages of development. To move to the next level it is now appropriate to seek State Government support for a more substantial injection of funds to enable the aspiration of WAFL Clubs to effectively function as their District Football Centres of Excellence.

To that end the WAFC has prepared a submission to the State Government advocating the establishment of a program to redevelop WAFL grounds and support improved regional football facilities. The submission proposes a partnership with the Department of Sport and Recreation to manage implementation of a program for the allocation of funds for upgrading or rebuilding of facilities.

Notably the WAFC is also committed to working closely with the relevant Local Authorities on the various redevelopment projects to ensure that they happen.

The submission is made on the basis that all grounds currently operating should be retained and that no further sharing of WAFL grounds is envisaged at this stage. It is recognized that different venues have different needs and that priorities will need to be set and agreed upon. A number of the venues need to be completely redeveloped as soon as practical (Peel and Claremont), some require more detailed feasibility and planning (East Fremantle, Swan Districts and West Perth), while for others specific improvements are needed (East Perth, Subiaco, Perth and South Fremantle).

In redeveloping the facilities to meet modern requirements and expectations the new facilities scope and design are to be based on the preferred facility standards for WAFL venues as detailed in the WAFC Facility Strategic Plan. This shall be used as a guide for the minimum requirements.

The submission proposes that the State Government commit to a program now with an expectation that the State will receive funding in due course through the redevelopment of identified surplus land surrounding WAFL grounds.

Given that the land has been occupied and used by football for many decades it is proposed that the State work with the WAFC and the Clubs in a systematic way to redevelop the sites. This can form an infrastructure program administered through the Department of Sport and Recreation to fund upgrades or build new facilities more attuned to modern sporting and recreational needs at those venues.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

That the WAFL Clubs endorse and strongly support the initiative of the WAFC to promote to the State Government that a new program be established to fund redevelopment of WAFL grounds.

2. Immediate and Continued Facility Improvements

The WAFC has given financial support to the WAFL Clubs since 2007 to upgrade essential aspects of their clubs to move towards meeting centre of excellence standards. That money has been used to support a range of improvements for players (for example gymnasiums, IT equipment, lights and changerooms), umpires (changers), coaches (coaching boxes), visiting teams (changers) and the general public (seating, painting and sound system).

Whilst these improvements have made a difference and have been very welcomed and appreciated, much work remains to be done in the short term. It is likely that the success and implementation of a redevelopment program is for a number of Clubs a long term objective. In the interim maintenance and capital improvements continue to be a priority.

The need for such work to remain as a priority, particularly in the spectator and public areas, stems from the need for the WAFL Clubs to provide venues and facilities that are 'customer friendly'. It is accepted that no longer can the support of the general public be taken for granted and the challenge is for Clubs to seriously commit to meet changing expectations.

The continued growth of the game is related to its entertainment value both on and off the ground. The quality of the surrounds, the standard of seating, the price and range of food and beverages, access to protection from the elements and the cleanliness of the public amenities are also important components in attracting and retaining spectators and potential members.

The support in improving the public facilities that has been given by the WAFC to the WAFL Clubs in recent years is still considered vital and needs to be continued by the WAFC.

Additionally it is anticipated that a number of the redevelopments will require feasibilities and planning to be undertaken. It will be expected that the Clubs and the WAFC will contribute to those and this is desirable in attempting to maximize the return to football.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

That the WAFC continue to resource the Community Development Facility Fund to enable WAFL Clubs to continue to improve and redevelop facilities to fulfil their function as District Football Centres of Excellence.

3. Ongoing Maintenance and Repairs

The role and value of facilities in generating revenue, attracting sponsors and crowds and assisting growth in participation is critical. The need to keep them at standards that meet modern expectations and satisfy statutory requirements is essential to continue to have the game grow at WAFL level. In the past the public areas of the WAFL grounds in particular have received minimal attention and this needs to be addressed.

Current arrangements for maintenance of the facilities varies according to the different lease arrangements and the amount chosen and able to be expended by the Clubs. It is suggested that Clubs must give focus to attending to the needs of the paying public and present their facilities at suitable standards. To that end it is important that all Clubs commit portion of their own revenue and expenditure on facility improvement and maintenance and these should be documented.

To continue that focus it is suggested that each Club, if not already in place, should appoint a Director of Facilities in order that these off field services are given sufficient attention. That Director in fulfilling that role should over time ensure that an asset register of the Club's facilities is in place. That register may include a description of each asset, a condition assessment, an estimate of remaining useful life and a program of maintenance to ensure that provision is allowed on an annual basis for replacement and upkeep.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

That all Clubs appoint a Director of Facilities

That Clubs target and budget for 10% of total expenditure to be allocated to facility