



# CHAIRMAN AND CEO'S REPORTS

**MIKE FITZPATRICK**  
CHAIRMAN

**GILLON McLACHLAN**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The AFL maintains its position as the pre-eminent sporting code in Australia, delivering positive outcomes for key stakeholders and dealing with fresh challenges.

# 1

#### LASTING LEGACY

Dual Brownlow medallist Chris Judd's stellar career came to an end in 2015 after suffering a serious knee injury against the Crows at the MCG, but he left an indelible mark at his two clubs Carlton and the West Coast Eagles.



# CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

**MIKE FITZPATRICK**  
CHAIRMAN

While history was made as Hawthorn won its third successive premiership, the game rallied to support those affected by the tragic death of Phil Walsh.

**T**he 2015 season will be remembered for both historic successes and also the deep sadness at the death of Adelaide Crows senior coach Phil Walsh.

Hawthorn enhanced its reputation as the powerhouse of the AFL era by adding the 2015 Toyota AFL Premiership to the premierships it had won in 2008, 2013 and 2014.

We congratulate the Hawks who have played in six Grand Finals in the AFL era and also coach Alastair Clarkson, who joined the list of all-time coaching greats to have coached four premierships. I also want to congratulate Fremantle's Nat Fyfe whose on-field brilliance in winning the 2015 Brownlow Medal was matched only by his humility and humour.

In 2015, we saw significant achievements through attendances, club

membership and participation in our game and the continued growth in the number of women playing our game. The introduction of a national AFL women's competition in 2017 will ensure even greater opportunities for women taking up our game. I want to thank our AFL CEO Gillon McLachlan for a series of changes brought in during 2015 that ensured the fixture, the match-day environment and even the price of food was more focused on providing benefits for all our fans.

We continued to make changes to enhance the look of the game and the on-field safety and wellbeing of players with the AFL Commission approving a further reduction in the number of interchanges for the 2016 season while maintaining a strong focus on the prevention and treatment of injury, particularly concussion.

## BALL ON A STRING

The Western Bulldogs' rise up the ladder was a season highlight in 2015, with talented forward Jake Stringer being a key player in their resurgence.







#### MARK OF RESPECT

Hawthorn and Collingwood players linked arms after their game at the MCG on July 3 for a minute's silence in a fitting tribute to Adelaide Crows coach Phil Walsh which was repeated at other matches around the country.

Last year also saw the AFL secure the largest broadcasting rights agreement for any Australian sporting body in history with the Seven Network, News Corporation and Telstra.

Importantly, the role of the AFL Commission was not just to ensure the competition secured an appropriate broadcasting agreement that provides a strong return for the game and stronger access for supporters, but to decide the funding framework so future investment of broadcast revenue continues to serve the best interests of the game.

### DEATH OF PHIL WALSH

In many ways the 2015 AFL season was framed by the death in unimaginable circumstances on July 3 of Adelaide Crows senior coach Phil Walsh. Phil was enjoying his first season in the role after 32 years of service to the game as a player with Collingwood, Richmond and the Brisbane Bears, and as an assistant coach with Geelong, Port Adelaide and the West Coast Eagles before his appointment by Adelaide.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the exceptional management and leadership of Adelaide FC Chairman Rob Chapman, CEO Andrew Fagan, Head of Football David Noble and General Manager, Media and Communications, Ian Shuttleworth for how they dealt with a tragedy which was unprecedented in the history of our game.

They had wonderful support from their board, staff and players. At a time of crisis, our game has a rare capacity to

come together to support one of our own and I would like to thank and acknowledge the role of every AFL club, their players, coaches and staff for their support of the Adelaide Football Club in particular and others impacted by the tragedy.

After consulting with all AFL clubs, the AFL decided the scheduled game between Adelaide and Geelong on July 5 at Adelaide Oval would not proceed as a mark of respect to Phil and his family. All felt it would not be fair to ask the Crows and Cats players to play under those circumstances.

The premiership points were split between Adelaide and Geelong, as per the AFL rules. The remaining seven games proceeded as scheduled but with changed pre and post-match activities, including the observation of a minute's silence at all games, as a mark of respect to Phil and his family.

I would also like to acknowledge the West Coast Eagles for how they supported the staff, players and families of Adelaide when the club played the Eagles at Domain Stadium in Perth the following week.

The Eagles were also deeply impacted by the death of Phil, given his five years as an assistant coach with the club, but they and their supporters could not have done more to support their Adelaide colleagues.

The initiative of Hawthorn coach Alastair Clarkson and his Collingwood counterpart Nathan Buckley in bringing their players together with arms linked at the end of their game at the MCG on July 3 for a minute's silence was a fitting tribute

repeated not only at other AFL matches during the weekend but also by community clubs around Australia.

A tribute to Phil by leading *Adelaide Advertiser* journalist Michelangelo Rucci is in this report on page 29.

The AFL competition, in particular the Carlton and Hawthorn Football Clubs, also rallied around Hawks assistant coach and former Blues senior coach and premiership player Brett Ratten after his eldest son Cooper died in a car accident in August.

### HISTORIC BROADCAST AGREEMENT

The AFL Commission was delighted to finalise broadcast rights agreements with the Seven Network, News Corporation and Telstra for a six-year period starting in 2017 which are a benchmark for Australian sport.

The agreements followed an enormous amount of work over several years by the Executive team with the support from AFL Commissioners Paul Bassat and Kim Williams who joined me on the AFL Commission's Broadcasting sub-committee.

It was important any agreement ensure the fundamentals for the AFL, including that the AFL continue to have full control of the production of the fixture, including the scheduling of the Toyota AFL Grand Final, and that the Toyota AFL Premiership Season continue to be a 22-match season for each of our clubs, with a standard round of nine matches.

The agreement covers six seasons from 2017-22, and will deliver the AFL a financial return of \$2.508 billion.



#### IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The AFL's new broadcasting rights agreement with the Seven Network, News Corporation and Telstra will make it easier to follow the exploits of stars such as Richmond's All-Australian utility Brett Deledio.



### HISTORIC AGREEMENT

The AFL signed the biggest broadcast right deals in Australian sporting history in 2015. At the announcement on August 18 were (from left) Tim Worner, Chief Executive Officer, Seven West Media; Ryan Stokes, Chief Executive Officer, Seven Group Holdings; Andy Penn, Chief Executive Officer, Telstra; Gillon McLachlan, Chief Executive Officer, AFL; Kerry Stokes, Chairman, Seven West Media; Mike Fitzpatrick, Chairman, AFL Commission; Rupert Murdoch, Executive Chairman, News Corporation; Robert Thomson, Chief Executive, News Corporation; Joe Pollard, Group Managing Director, Media and Marketing, Telstra.

## THE BROADCAST DEAL IN DETAIL

Under the agreement with our broadcast partners, the following arrangements will be in place for the 2017 Toyota AFL Premiership season.

The agreements ensure that other than Thursday night matches, public holiday schedules and bye/split rounds, the competition will have:

- 1 Friday night game
- 2 Saturday afternoon games
- 1 Saturday twilight game
- 2 Saturday night games
- 2 Sunday afternoon games
- 1 Sunday twilight game

The AFL's agreement with our partners will cover:

- The Seven Network for free-to-air television.
- News Limited for subscription television across Foxtel and the Fox Footy Channel.
- Telstra for the Live AFL App, *AFL.com.au*, club digital network and IP TV.

Other key components include:

### Seven Network holds the free-to-air rights, and includes:

- The Toyota AFL Grand Final exclusively live in every state and territory.
- The Brownlow Medal count exclusively live in every state and territory.
- All matches in the Toyota AFL Finals Series live in every state and territory.
- During the Toyota AFL premiership season, the Seven Network will broadcast:
  - > Each Friday night match live in every state and territory.
  - > One Saturday night match live in every state and territory.

- > One Sunday afternoon match in the 3.20pm Eastern Time Zone slot live in every state and territory.
- > In addition, the Seven Network will telecast a further 11 games live across the season that are played on public holidays, the eve of public holidays such as Anzac Day/Easter Thursday and between 5-6 Thursday night games.
- > In effect, across an average two normal rounds of 18 matches in our regular season, the Seven Network will broadcast seven games, equating to 3.5 matches a round across the season.

All matches for the NSW/Queensland teams – the Gold Coast Suns, the Brisbane Lions, the Sydney Swans and the GWS Giants – will continue to be shown live on free-to-air television.

As our game develops across the country, this support from the Seven Network is pivotal for us.

In Western Australia and South Australia – where the Adelaide Crows, Port Adelaide, the West Coast Eagles and Fremantle dominate the sporting landscape – matches will be shown on free-to-air television, but three matches for each team in the premiership season will be broadcast on a delayed basis.

### Subscription/Pay TV rights were acquired by News Corporation and include the following:

- All nine games each week – every game of every round during the premiership season to be broadcast live.
- Across an average of two normal rounds of 18 matches in our regular season, Foxtel and the Fox Footy

Channel will produce the broadcast for 11 matches, equating to 5.5 matches a round, while broadcasting the other matches live.

- News Corporation has the right to sub-licence one game a round each weekend, which would be played in the Saturday eastern standard time slot of 3.20pm, to a free-to-air provider, if it wishes to do so.
- With the exception of the Toyota AFL Grand Final, all other matches in the Toyota AFL Finals Series will be broadcast live.
- In Western Australia and South Australia, Foxtel and the Fox Footy Channel will exclusively broadcast live three premiership season matches for each of the teams based in those states – the West Coast Eagles, Fremantle, the Adelaide Crows and Port Adelaide – with those matches to be replayed on delay on free-to-air television.

## DIGITAL RIGHTS

Telstra will again hold the AFL rights for all hand-held mobile devices, the AFL website *AFL.com.au* – which is the most-visited sporting website in Australia – the club digital network and IP television.

Telstra will deliver every game, every week, live, in the palm of your hand, no matter where you are in this country.

The broadcasting of our game on the Seven Network, News Corp via Foxtel and the Fox Footy Channel, and Telstra is world class and we look forward to continuing to work with our broadcast partners in 2017 and beyond.

## WHAT THE BROADCASTING AGREEMENT MEANS

In 2015, we started the important work on deciding how to invest the revenue that will be generated by the broadcasting agreement for 2017 and beyond.

The AFL Commission regards this as a once-in-a-generation opportunity. We won't be spending for the moment; we'll be investing for generational evolution, generational change and generational needs.

The legacy is not in the agreement itself but in how the broadcast revenue can be put to use in the best long-term interests of the AFL industry. Over the past 10 years, we invested in expansion of our game – a move that has made us stronger and given us a larger national footprint and appeal that is reflected in the price generated for our broadcast rights.

Our focus for the future is clear. Our investment strategy is based on upholding the key pillars that make up our game – our clubs, our fans, our players and the community.

We have considerable challenges ahead for our sport in a rapidly changing and increasingly globalised environment.

We don't take our success for granted and now is the time to make hard decisions for the long-term future of the game.

The Australian community is changing and our job is to continue to attract the young men and women in our rapidly growing multicultural community – the AFL must change as our country changes.

We must continue to be relevant and to do so our game must reflect our community. And it's clear girls and women want to play our game and we need to

make it easier for them to do so and have a pathway from community competition to elite level.

We have more than 300,000 registered girls and women playing and the trends suggest this number will double in the next decade.

The past 10 years have been about expansion and investment in the AFL competition. Over that period, we added two new teams and invested in stadiums and infrastructure at the elite and community level around Australia.

Senior AFL football is now played in every state and territory.

Our challenge over the next decade is to make the right investments to grow our reach into every state, region, town and community. We want all people to know that we want to welcome them into our game.

We need to continue to be the first choice for our elite and talented athletes, we need to strengthen our clubs at all levels and we need to invest in the community level of our game.

## CORPORATE PARTNERS

The commercial operations section of this report highlights the extensive contribution by our corporate partners to the AFL competition and the broader game.

We are indeed fortunate to enjoy the support of many of the world's leading companies, starting with Toyota, our Premier Partner for the past 12 seasons, which includes the Toyota AFL Premiership Season, Toyota AFL Finals Series, Toyota AFL Grand Final Parade and Toyota AFL Grand Final.

Toyota supports its partnership with the AFL in a variety of ways, including its

Legendary Moments campaign and the Toyota Good for Footy Program, which supports the game at a community level, while a new initiative in 2015, the Toyota Good for Footy raffle helped almost 250 community clubs around Australia raise more than \$380,000. This is in addition to the \$2.6 million raised by the Good for Footy Program.

On behalf of the AFL Commission, I would also like to thank our major partners for their commitment to our game, including the National Australia Bank, Coca-Cola, CrownBet, Carlton and United Breweries and Gatorade along with our official partners.

## FINANCIAL RESULT

In 2015, AFL revenue increased by \$33.6 million to \$506 million, while our operating surplus before grants and distributions was \$337.8 million.

Other key financial highlights included:

- Revenue increased by \$33.3 million to \$506 million.
- Expenditure increased by \$12.7 million to \$168 million due to revenue-related increases.
- The operating surplus before grants and distributions increased by six per cent to \$337.8 million.
- The AFL provided \$245.2 million to AFL clubs compared with \$218.3 million in 2014.
- The AFL allocated \$39.4 million of game development grants in 2015.
- After grants and distributions, the AFL's net profit decreased by \$10 million in 2015 to \$2.5 million which was in line with the 2015 budget.



**GROWING THE GAME**

John Witheriff, who has been instrumental in the Gold Coast Suns' establishment and development, has announced he will stand down as chairman after the club's opening match of the 2016 season.

**AFL CLUBS**

The 18 clubs that make up the AFL competition drive the popularity of our game and I would like to thank everyone involved with our clubs – board members, staff, players, coaches and volunteers for their fundamental role at the highest level of our game. We congratulate and thank each of you for what you do for Australia's only indigenous game.

I would like to make particular mention of Gold Coast Suns chairman John Witheriff who announced his retirement from the role in December 2015.

John was not a lifelong fan of our game, but has been a lifelong advocate for the Gold Coast and, as a successful local businessman, understood the benefits an AFL club could bring to the community.

He chaired the GC 17 bid group which, after almost two years' work and the passionate support of the local community, presented a proposal to the AFL Commission that an AFL club be established on the Gold Coast.

After the AFL Commission decided in March 2009 to establish the Gold Coast Suns, John became the inaugural chairman of the club.

Establishing a new club is a great challenge which John embraced and his contribution to the Suns in particular and the broader growth of our game at an AFL and community level in Queensland has been invaluable with the club driving 82 per cent growth in participation in the region.

John will stand down as chairman on March 26 when the Suns host Essendon at Metricon Stadium in their opening game of the 2016 Toyota AFL Premiership Season. He will remain on the board until the end of the 2016 season.

His successor as chairman will be Tony Cochrane who joined the Suns' board in March 2014. Like John, Tony has forged a successful business career as a Gold Coast resident, establishing V8 Supercars and producing and promoting major sporting and entertainment events.

This year, the game also farewelled Paul Little, who served the Essendon

Football Club as a board member, and for two-and-a-half years as chairman.

Paul worked tirelessly to lead the club during a very difficult period in its history, and despite the great challenges, the club has grown its membership and kept strong relationships with its key stakeholders.

Paul led the club during the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority investigation, charging of the players and the World Anti-Doping Authority appeal, and while we did not always agree with his position, we recognise the hard work and commitment he displayed to the club during his tenure.

The AFL Commission welcomed the club's appointment of Lindsay Tanner, a former Federal Finance Minister and long-serving member of the Federal Parliament to replace Paul as chairman.

He brings a wealth of experience from government and the private sector and we look forward to working closely with him and his board to lead Essendon back to its place as a strong, competitive powerhouse of the AFL.

**JOHN KENNEDY LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**

On Toyota AFL Grand Final Day, we were delighted to announce that Dr Allen Aylett had been selected as the second winner of the John Kennedy Lifetime Achievement Award.

The John Kennedy Lifetime Achievement Award is presented periodically to an individual who has made an extraordinary and positive contribution to the AFL competition and/or the game of Australian Football as an administrator, media representative, player, coach or field umpire or any combination thereof.

The inaugural winner in 2014 was Lou Richards, given his contribution to the game as a player and premierships captain with Collingwood combined by his career as a newspaper columnist, radio and television broadcaster.

Dr Aylett played 220 games and kicked 311 goals for North Melbourne, captained the club and was a three-time

club best and fairest winner. He was one of the initial inductees into the Australian Football Hall of Fame in 1996.

After his retirement as a player, Dr Aylett maintained his involvement in football as a writer with the *Sporting Globe* and panellist on HSV7's *Football Inquest* on Saturday nights with media personalities such as Ron Casey and Mike Williamson.

He served as a board member for North Melbourne from 1965 but, when he became chairman of North Melbourne, the club transformed under his leadership to win its first VFL premiership in 1975. At age 36, he was the youngest person to be appointed as president of a VFL club.

Dr Aylett served two terms as chairman of North Melbourne – from 1971-76 and 2001-06.

When he became VFL president in 1977, he was a strong advocate for:

- A national competition
- An independent commission to run the game.

He was VFL president from 1977-84 – he stood down when the first VFL Commission was appointed.

**LIFETIME ACHIEVER**

Dr Allen Aylett was recognised for his service to the game as a player, club and League president.



**AFL COMMISSION 2015**

(from left) Kim Williams, Richard Goyder, Jason Ball, Sam Mostyn, Mike Fitzpatrick, Gillon McLachlan, Major General Simone Wilkie, Paul Bassat and Chris Langford.

**AFL COMMISSION**

At our meeting in February 2016, the AFL Commission accepted the recommendations of the Nominations Sub-Committee to nominate Andrew Newbold and Gabrielle Trainor to the AFL Commission to replace the retiring Chris Langford and Sam Mostyn.

The nominations will be considered by the AFL club presidents/chairs at the Annual General Meeting on March 17, 2016.

I chaired the Nominations Committee which also included AFL Commissioner Richard Goyder, along with the president of the Richmond Football Club, Peggy O'Neal, and the chairman of the Port Adelaide Football Club, David Koch.

Andrew Newbold stepped down from serving as president of the Hawthorn Football Club in January 2016, and has had a very successful commercial career as a lawyer, manager and entrepreneur. Andrew has a deep understanding of the AFL and its role in the Australian social and corporate

arenas and extensive experience in the corporate sector.

He is a Director of Bryson Funds Management PTY LTD, RealAs and Sports Education Development Australia and was a director of Hawthorn for 13 years and was appointed president in 2012.

During his term as president, the club won three premierships and played in four successive Toyota AFL Grand Finals, had four years of collective club profit and signed off on plans for a new home and development at Dingley.

Gabrielle Trainor is a former lawyer, journalist, public sector executive and consultant in public policy, government relations and issues management. She has more than 20 years' experience as a non-executive director in entities such as urban development, major projects, transport and infrastructure.

She is a director of two ANZ Banking Group subsidiary boards, of Infrastructure Australia, the Barangaroo Delivery Authority and Clarius Group. She chairs Barnardo's Australia and the National

Film and Sound Archive and has a number of other appointments, including on the board of trustees of Western Sydney University and Business Events Sydney. She sits on the board of agenda-setting Indigenous organisation Cape York Partnership and chairs the Aurora Education Foundation for Indigenous students.

Gabrielle was appointed as an inaugural director of the Greater Western Sydney Giants FC in 2011 and chaired the Giants' Integrity Committee. She has lifelong experience in football, ranging from volunteering for the Willoughby Wildcats in the Sydney AFL juniors competition to sitting on the AFL Commission NSW/ACT, where she championed the movement to better integrate the Sydney Women's AFL with the Commission.

Her grandfather, Frank, and father, Tony, were presidents of North Melbourne for a total of 22 years.

Gabrielle and Andrew both bring recent club board experience and a depth of

corporate, government and not-for-profit leadership over many years.

I would also like to acknowledge the very long and exemplary service of Sam Mostyn and Chris Langford as AFL Commissioners.

Sam Mostyn was the AFL's first female Commissioner, joining the AFL Commission in 2005.

Sam has been a strong advocate for the AFL's Respect and Responsibility policies and indigenous programs. She has been a driving force in the development of a national women's league and participation for women and girls playing at all levels of the game, as well as bringing high-level business and corporate knowledge to the role.

She has been a trailblazer in her role. Her 10 years of commitment to the AFL Commission has made the AFL a better, stronger and more community-minded organisation and she will leave an indelible stamp on our game.

Chris Langford, decorated premiership player and captain of the Hawthorn Football Club, twice All-Australian, AFL

Life Member and member of the Australian Football Hall of Fame, and successful businessman, retires after serving more than 16 years with the AFL Commission.

Chris has been a great servant of the game and he brought a player's sensibility as well as great intelligence to the AFL Commission.

In addition, his real estate knowledge has been of great value as we worked through stadium and training and administration deals. He will be greatly missed and our game is much better for his long service at the top of the code.

I would also like to thank and acknowledge the continued commitment to our game of AFL Commissioners Jason Ball, Paul Bassat, Richard Goyder, Major General Simone Wilkie and Kim Williams along with Chief Executive Officer Gillon McLachlan.

Like other sections of our game, the issues we deal with are quite complex and demand a significant amount of time and, as Chairman, I could not ask for anything more from the AFL Commission who serve our game very well.

I want to thank the Commissioners for their time in dealing with the outcomes of the ASADA investigation and subsequent Court of Arbitration for Sport decision. This has been a major issue for our competition and the Commissioners' guidance to the game throughout has been invaluable.

I also want to express the Commission's view on the treatment of Adam Goodes by crowds during the season. Adam is, and will always be, a great champion of the AFL, and for racism to blight his final season is a great shame for our game. While we have much to be proud of in fighting racism and working with the Indigenous community, the Commission also acknowledges the journey we are all still on.

In finishing, I want to extend a special thank you to our CEO Gillon McLachlan and all AFL staff for their continued efforts on behalf of our game – we greatly value your time, effort and expertise.

**Mike Fitzpatrick**  
Chairman



## ESSENDON SANCTIONS

At the time of finalising this report, 34 current and former Essendon players were appealing against the Court of Arbitration for Sport which announced on January 12, 2016, that sanctions had been imposed on the players for breaches of the AFL's Anti-Doping Policy. The ruling of the Court of Arbitration for Sport is included in the legal and integrity section of this report.

The 34 players were sanctioned with a period of ineligibility of two years, starting on March 31, 2015, with credit given for any individual period of ineligibility already served. The sanctions effectively excluded the players who remain on an AFL list or are working in a support or coaching capacity with an AFL club from participating in the 2016 season.

This decision arose after the World Anti-Doping Agency lodged an appeal with the Court of Arbitration for Sport against the decision of the AFL Anti-Doping Tribunal which handed down its decision on March 31, 2015, that it was not comfortably satisfied that any player had violated the AFL Anti-Doping Code.

While the Court of Arbitration for Sport imposed a tough sanction, the AFL accepted the decision of the Court of Arbitration for Sport. We were very disappointed for the players.

The supplements program at the Essendon Football Club in 2012 was a stain

on our game – and it has had a terrible impact on the players, the club and the reputation of the AFL.

It has struck at the very heart of our game – the integrity of the competition and the health and safety of the players – which are two pillars that we at the AFL and all in football must protect for the game to remain strong.

The players have paid a very high price, having a doping violation recorded and a suspension until November 2016.

The club, too, has paid a very high price and in 2013 received historic sanctions not seen before in our code.

The club accepted the sanctions and agreed it put its players in a position of unacceptable risk of being doped. The club has also acknowledged serious breaches of the Occupational Health and Safety Act in Victoria.

The officials involved all received sanctions. Former club staff member Stephen Dank has been given a life ban by the AFL, which excludes him from all sport, forever.

Port Adelaide, Melbourne, St Kilda and the Western Bulldogs also have players suspended.

This has been a very dark period, but the past four years will not define the Essendon Football Club.

It will not define Australian Football.

The club has two very respected people in new chairman Lindsay Tanner and

new coach John Worsfold and the AFL is committed to doing what we can to assist the club in moving forward.

Our competition is stronger when Essendon is strong and all of our clubs want to see Essendon recover and rebuild and be the fierce and passionate competitor it is.

I would like to stress that the integrity of the competition, and the health of players **are the most important things for our game** – and we **must** fight to protect both. And we will.

Every decision we have made has been driven by these two pillars.

At every stage of this process, we acted within our rules and our powers and we have assisted and co-operated with the anti-doping authorities – as we should.

Every sport in the world faces the threat of doping, and new forms of doping. Fighting performance-enhancing drugs in sport is more important than ever.

We strongly believe our **players** are committed to anti-doping and that they want us to stand up and fight against performance-enhancing drugs.

Since 2012, the AFL has introduced several measures in response to the matters raised in the investigation:

- We immediately conducted a review of the supplementation practices at all AFL clubs.
- We also conducted detailed background checks on all sports-science and medical staff in the industry.
- We significantly increased the size and powers of the AFL Integrity Department.
- We enhanced the AFL Anti-Doping Code to include Treatment Rules that govern supplementation and medical treatments that go beyond the WADA Code.
- And, finally, we introduced new rules that prohibit anyone other than the appropriate medical doctor giving injections.
- This Essendon process has taken too long and the Court of Arbitration for Sport judgment invites a discussion about the way the code applies to team sports in future.
- We look forward to working with ASADA and WADA and with the Federal Government to keep sport clean and to protect the health and safety of players.



### PERFECT FIT

John Worsfold, one of the most respected people in the game, returns to senior coaching at Essendon in 2016.



### OUTPOURING OF GRIEF

The tragic death of coach Phil Walsh touched so many, not only at the Crows but throughout the AFL community.

PHOTO Getty Images

## LAST – AND LASTING – CONVERSATION WITH PHIL WALSH THE COACH, AND PHIL WALSH THE MAN

### MICHELANGELO RUCCI

*The Advertiser*

Everyone will have a lasting memory of Phil Walsh. Such a long and wide journey in football – with seven VFL-AFL clubs directly touched by Walsh – involves so many people who today are in shock and disbelief.

And there is the last time, the last memory with Phil Walsh.

At the Gabba on Saturday night – after the most-frustrating AFL game in which Walsh engineered a 13-point win against Brisbane – as the Adelaide Football Club media minders tried to wind up the after-match press conference, the first-year Crows coach said “thank you” for making the trip to Queensland.

For a man who went through a lengthy “chat” during his job interviews with the Adelaide hierarchy about how he would deal with the confrontational football media, Walsh was reaffirming his dislike of the Fourth Estate was a myth.

He had started the job “uneasy” about being in the media, arguing he simply did

not feel it was his strength. He was quick to learn how to survive under the bright lights.

Last week – as he threw a few in-jokes and Vincent van Gogh into his weekly press conference at West Lakes – Walsh revealed he was starting to enjoy being before the cameras and microphones. The myth was shattering.

But at the Gabba on Saturday night there was more about Phil Walsh the man – than the coach – as he walked from a small, nondescript room under the grandstands.

His media team had wanted him out of the press conference quickly, so that he could start a much-needed team review and get organised for an early morning flight to Adelaide where he wanted to scout new selection options in the SANFL game at Alberton Oval on Sunday afternoon.

But Walsh was prepared to take on the meaningful questions about his team and his coaching. He was shattering the myth again.

And on the way out he asked a personal question – and stopped, despite his pressing agenda, for a meaningful chat.

It was not a throwaway question; it was an expression of concern and interest. He was caring of a matter beyond a football game.

It was not the toe-to-toe coach-versus-journalist moment many had feared would unfold this year to fulfil the mythical image of an intense Phil Walsh finally taking on the media.

It was the Phil Walsh the Adelaide Football Club came to know as a man of care as he made a bedside vigil with Brent Reilly at Royal Adelaide Hospital in late February after the defender had been seriously injured with a knock to the head in training at Thebarton Oval.

It was the Phil Walsh the Bailey family knew when Dean Bailey died of cancer last year and he stood by his widow Caron and her two sons – and at Adelaide Oval delivered the eulogy that made the Adelaide Football Club recognise Walsh was more than an accomplished football coach.

Walsh's care – and appreciation for more meaningful points in life, particularly after his near-death experience in Peru in October 2012 – highlighted the character and strength of the man.

The lasting memory of Phil Walsh is beyond football.

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# CEO'S REPORT

**GILLON McLACHLAN**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Securing a new broadcast rights agreement was not only one of the highlights of 2015, it will help to strengthen Australian Football at all levels.

**T**he 2015 year was one of great challenge, and great achievement. We faced the death of one of our senior coaches, Phil Walsh, and a number of off-field issues that required the competition to come together to make decisions to protect the game and to show care for the football family. Other sections of the Annual Report celebrate Phil and his contribution to our game and deal with the other issues that challenged us this year.

Despite the challenges, I am very proud of our 18 AFL clubs, our 2600 community clubs and, indeed, of all those involved in our game, about the decisions we made that will strengthen our game into the future.

As CEO, I am also extremely proud of the AFL Executive team which assisted in the negotiations for a new broadcast rights agreement. The agreement, which starts in 2017 with our partners, Foxtel, News Ltd and Telstra, will deliver \$2.508 billion to the game over six years. This new agreement will allow us to make decisions that strengthen our foundations and plan for our future.

## THE FUTURE OF THE GAME

Our game is one of the oldest football codes in the world, with its beginnings in the 1850s, and several of our clubs are older than many of Europe's leading soccer clubs.

However, our history does not give us the right to claim the future. →

### SWANSONG

After an extraordinary career spanning 16 seasons, Adam Goodes retired at the end of 2015 as one of the game's most decorated players.





In August 2015, Waleed Aly, the academic, TV host, sports commentator and passionate Richmond fan, spoke at a conference with our AFL club Chief Executive Officers.

Two things in particular Waleed said have stayed with me and sum up perfectly our challenge, in fact the challenge of all sports in Australia.

First, Australian sport needs to understand our children are growing up in a truly globalised world providing what he called 'radical choice'. We can no longer assume each generation will grow up as AFL supporters – kids these days can have a global conversation about LeBron James.

And second, for the AFL to continue to be a central part in Australian life, we must understand our role in culture and the changes in Australia.

A few salient facts:

- 50 per cent of Australians have at least one parent born overseas.
- 27 per cent of Australians are born overseas.
- 20 per cent speak a language other than English at home.
- 55 per cent of migrants are settling in New South Wales and Victoria.

Australia is changing and the challenge for our game is to change with it, so that we continue to be the No. 1 football code in the country.

We are very proud of the programs we have been running to celebrate and embrace diversity.

Established in 2005, the AFL Multicultural Program introduces multicultural communities to Australian Football through a number of programs focusing on community engagement, leadership opportunities, personal development, community strengthening, and talent identification.

Our programs received national recognition at the 2015 Australian Migration and Settlement Awards in Canberra, winning the Virgin Australia Sports Leadership Award

Greater Western Sydney Giants Head of Community Ali Faraj also received Case Worker of the Year at the gala dinner held in the Great Hall of Parliament House in Canberra, recognising his extensive work with the multitude of multicultural communities in Western Sydney.

## NATIONAL WOMEN'S COMPETITION

The growth in participation by females in our game during the past five years has been extraordinary, going from 95,000 participants in 2011 to more than 318,000 in 2015.

Since 2013, the Melbourne and Western Bulldogs Football Clubs have led the way in embracing women's football and the commitment of these clubs has increased the drive and ambition of female athletes to play our game at the highest level.

The exhibition game between Melbourne and the Western Bulldogs in August 2015 drew a national audience on the Seven Network of 345,000 and a peak audience of 501,000.

The work of these clubs has laid the foundation for a national women's competition in 2017 and we are aiming for four teams from Victoria and one from each mainland state.

In 2016, we will play 10 exhibition games around Australia, culminating in a game between Melbourne and the Western Bulldogs on Saturday, September 3, which will be televised nationally by the Seven Network.

Melbourne has appointed Michelle Cowan as a development and welfare coach in 2016, while leading player Daisy Pearce, who has captained Melbourne during the past three years, has joined the club's administration.

Michelle has coached Melbourne in the exhibition series during the past three years after working as an assistant coach for the South Fremantle and West Perth Football Clubs since 2012. She is the second

woman to be employed by an AFL club as a development coach, the first being Peta Searle with St Kilda in 2014.

We need to do more to promote the roles of women in our game at all levels, but the national women's competition and initiatives such as those driven by Melbourne and the Western Bulldogs will add a new dimension to our game and provide greater opportunities for women to become involved.

Another highlight for me in 2015 was when the Auburn Giants, Australia's first predominantly Muslim women's team, played a curtain-raiser game on the MCG, the first time any of the players had stepped on to the ground.

Earlier in the year, Harvey Norman's Chief Executive Officer Katie Page announced that her company would sponsor the team, which will help the club hire a coach and create a pathway to help talented teenagers move to the elite level of the game.

## NEXT GENERATION ACADEMIES

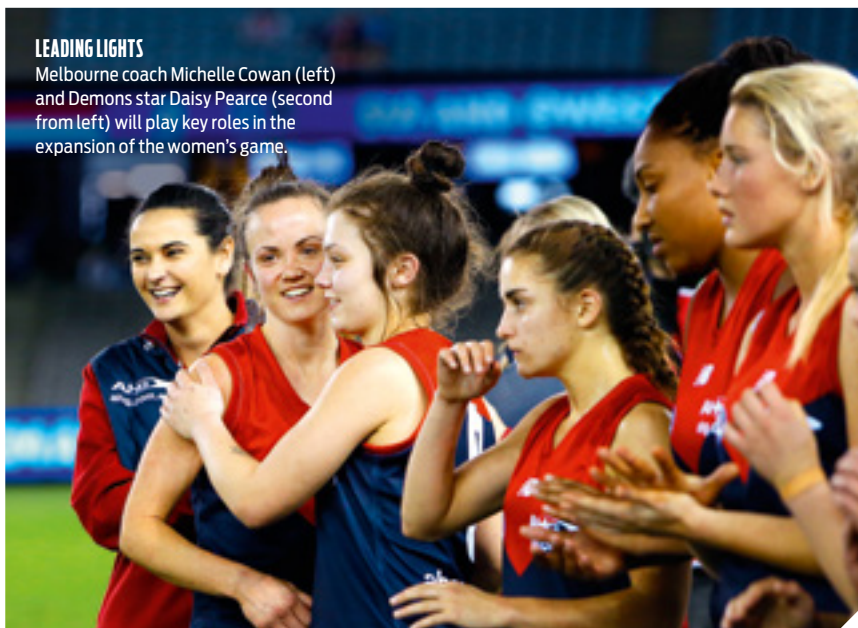
We have also embarked on an ambitious initiative to further build the diversity of our game through the power of our 18 clubs.

In 2015, we announced the plan for Next Generation AFL club academies to increase the opportunity for young Indigenous and multicultural players to play our game.

AFL clubs have been provided with seed funding to begin establishing academies in specific regions in 2016, with the objective of expanding the program in 2017 and beyond.

### LEADING LIGHTS

Melbourne coach Michelle Cowan (left) and Demons star Daisy Pearce (second from left) will play key roles in the expansion of the women's game.



### HELPING HAND

Players (from left) Yash Kammoun, Rayanne Kenny, Amna Karra-Hassan and Liali Karra-Hassan celebrate Harvey Norman's sponsorship of the Auburn Giants with the company's CEO Katie Page.

PHOTO News Corp Australia



The academies are part of the AFL's broader commitment to invest in the community foundations of the game and to build strong links between local communities, grassroots football and the elite level, to ensure our game is representative, inclusive and embraces gender and cultural diversity.

For Australian Football to prosper in the future, we must invest in new and emerging communities and reinforce the pathways for Indigenous Australians.

The academies will deliver talent concessions to the clubs as an incentive to reach into new communities, enabling AFL clubs to be actively involved in introducing children of all backgrounds to the game and provide aspirational pathways for coaches, umpires and administrators.

## SUPPORT GROWS

Our 18 clubs and the broader game continued to enjoy a high level of support in 2015 as highlighted by the following:

- Total attendance for the 2015 Toyota AFL Premiership Season was 6,351,578 at an average per game of 32,242

which was on a par with the average attendance per game in 2014.

- For the 15th consecutive season, AFL clubs set a record for club membership with 836,136 people joining the 18 clubs. One in 28 Australians is a member of an AFL club.
- The average gross television audience per round across the Seven Network and Fox Footy Channel was 4.466 million people.
- In partnership with Telstra, the AFL and club digital network, which includes the 18 club mobile and desk top sites, the 18 club apps, [AFL.com.au](http://AFL.com.au) and the AFL Live app attracted more than 98 million unique visitors a month between November 1, 2014, and October 31, 2015, an increase of 8.5 per cent on 2014.
- Total domestic participation in our game grew to 1,247,575 in 2015, an increase of eight per cent on the 2014 total.

I would like to acknowledge the strong support we received from the Melbourne Cricket Club, Etihad Stadium management and various

suppliers to both venues in support of our plan to make it easier for people to attend AFL matches at both venues, to improve the match-day experience and to reduce the cost of various food and beverage items.

## DELIVERING ON OUR FAN AGENDA

In 2015, we put accessibility and affordability at the heart of our decisions about the game.

We worked closely with stadiums to decrease food prices in Melbourne and we kept our general admission prices at both major venues to \$25 for an adult.

We also kept ticket prices for the 2015 Toyota AFL Finals Series at 2013 levels.

We encouraged all our venues to allow kick-to-kick at the ground after the game and we had Sunday Funday in Melbourne where kids under 15 had free admission.

AFL clubs embraced all of these initiatives and we will maintain our emphasis on keeping the game affordable at all venues which host AFL matches into the future.



**PROUD ACHIEVEMENT**  
Michael Malthouse, his wife Nanette and their grandchildren share the joy of the veteran coach breaking the all-time coaching record in 2015.



## HAWTHORN HAT-TRICK

Only four clubs in the history of the AFL/VFL competition since 1897 have been able to do what Hawthorn did in 2015 – complete a hat-trick of premierships.

The club's decisive victory over the West Coast Eagles was their fourth successive Toyota AFL Grand Final and completed successive premierships from 2013-15.

Other clubs to have achieved the feat are:

- Brisbane Lions 2001-03
- Melbourne 1955-57
- Melbourne 1939-41
- Carlton 1906-08

Collingwood is the only club to have won four successive premierships (1927-30), an achievement Hawthorn could equal in 2016.

Congratulations to Hawthorn president Andrew Newbold, Chief Executive Officer Stuart Fox, General Manager – Football Operations Chris Fagan and senior coach Alastair Clarkson along with the board, players and staff for their continued excellence which has set a benchmark for the AFL competition.

I would also like to congratulate West Coast Eagles chairman Alan Cransberg, Chief Executive Officer Trevor Nisbett, General Manager – Football Craig Vozzo and senior coach Adam Simpson, the club's board, players and staff for the achievement of reaching the Toyota AFL Grand Final.

Getting to the Grand Final is a difficult challenge and, despite the loss of key defenders Eric Mackenzie and Mitch Brown early in the year to season-ending knee injuries, the Eagles had their best season since their premiership of 2006.

From a West Australian perspective, the season was also a milestone for the Fremantle Football Club in winning the Dr Wm. C. McClelland Trophy for finishing on top of the ladder at the end of the Toyota AFL Premiership Season, with the West Coast Eagles in second place. It was the first time the two WA-based clubs had finished in those positions in the same season.

Fremantle had another first when midfielder Nat Fyfe won the club's inaugural Brownlow Medal.

## EXTRAORDINARY CONTRIBUTIONS

Four men who have made extraordinary contributions to our game – Michael Malthouse, Dustin Fletcher, Chris Judd and Adam Goodes – were among those whose AFL careers came to an end in 2015.

On May 1, 2015, Michael Malthouse broke the record of 714 games as a senior coach previously held by Collingwood legend Jock McHale when he led Carlton against Collingwood at the MCG.

Michael's coaching career finished on 718 games while his association with the game began as a player with St Kilda in 1972 before he joined Richmond in 1976. He played 174 games for the two clubs and was a member of Richmond's last premiership team in 1980.

He coached the West Coast Eagles to their first two AFL premierships in 1992 and 1994 and then coached Collingwood to the 2010 premiership.

In 2015, Dustin Fletcher became only the third player in the competition's history to reach the milestone of 400 senior games, the others being Hawthorn's Michael Tuck and Richmond's Kevin Bartlett.



### AGE HAS NO BARRIER

Essendon's ever-reliable Dustin Fletcher soldiered on in 2015, becoming just the third player to pass the 400-game mark.



He made his debut for Essendon in 1993, was a member of two premierships, won the best and fairest in 2000 – a premiership year – and was named an All-Australian twice. He also played eight International Rules games for Australia, including the 2015 tour of Ireland.

Later in the season, he was joined in the 400 club by North Melbourne's Brent Harvey, who finished 2015 on 409 games and could break the record of 426, held by Michael Tuck, in round 19, 2016.

The career of Chris Judd, one of our game's most highly decorated players, was unfortunately cut short in round 10 against Adelaide at the MCG by a season-ending knee injury.

Chris played 279 games for the West Coast Eagles and Carlton, won the Brownlow Medal with both clubs, captained the Eagles to the 2006 premiership, won the Norm Smith Medal as best afield in the 2005 Grand Final, won five club best and fairests – two with the Eagles and three with the Blues – and was named an All-Australian six times, including 2008 as captain.

He was also a two-time winner of the AFL Players' Association Most Valuable Player award.

Adam Goodes is also one of our most decorated players and the games recorder-holder for the Sydney Swans/South Melbourne.

After making his debut in 1999, Adam played in 372 games for the Swans and kicked 464 goals.

He retired as a two-time premiership player, two-time winner of the Brownlow Medal, three-time best and fairest, four-time All-Australian, club captain from 2009-12, won the Rising Star Award in 1999 and was named in the Indigenous Team of the Century.

He also has the distinction of being the only Australian footballer to have been named as Australian of the Year, an honour he received in 2014.

Unfortunately, we only got the chance to formally farewell three of these great contributors to our game.

Adam did not attend the MCG on Grand Final day in the parade of champions and we respected his decision to take time away.

By the time Adam retired, he had been subject to a level of crowd booing and behaviour that none of our players should ever face.

The debate that occurred about whether or not the booing was due to racism put further pressure on this great Indigenous leader and one of our game's greatest champions.

Adam stood up to represent Indigenous people and he took a stand on racism, and for this I believe he was subject to hostility from some in our crowds.

As a game, we should have acted sooner and I am sorry we acted too slowly.

I am proud of the way the community, players from every club and supporters of the Sydney Swans made their support for Adam so public during his time away from the game, and on his return to play against Geelong.

The national conversation about racism taught me how important our role is to partner with all players to fight racism.

Adam has led with courage and humility and I look forward to the day our game can properly celebrate the retirement of this great champion.

## INDIGENOUS ADVISORY GROUP

In February 2015, we announced the establishment of our first AFL Indigenous Advisory Council to provide advice to the AFL Commission and Executive on the development and implementation of the AFL's Indigenous strategy and policies.

Yorta Yorta man Paul Briggs, chair of the Kaiela Institute and president of the Rumbalara Football/Netball Club, was named as the advisory group's inaugural chair.

Indigenous players and communities are a critical part of Australian Football and the Indigenous Advisory Council will assist the game to continue to be part of social and cultural change in Australia.

The establishment of the AFL Indigenous Advisory Council was part of the AFL's Reconciliation Action Plan, which was released in 2014.

At the end of 2015, members of the Indigenous Advisory Council included:

- Paul Briggs, Chair – Chair of the Kaiela Institute and president Rumbalara Football/Netball Club
- Peter Yu (Deputy Chair) – Chair of North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance Ltd (NAILSMA)
- Sam Mostyn – AFL Commissioner
- Kim Williams – AFL Commissioner
- Adam Goodes – 2014 Australian

**ASSISTANCE**  
Indigenous communities will benefit from the strategies and policies of the AFL's new Indigenous Advisory Council.



of the Year, two-time Sydney Swans premiership player and Brownlow medallist

- Jason Mifsud, Head of Diversity, AFL
- Professor Helen Milroy – Winthrop Professor and Director of the Centre for Aboriginal Medical and Dental Health, University of Western Australia; Commissioner for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
- Xavier Clarke – former St Kilda and Brisbane Lions player, senior coach Northern Territory Thunder
- Tanya Denning Orman – Channel Manager, NITV
- Jason Glanville – Chief Executive Officer, National Centre of Indigenous Excellence
- Tony Peek, Assistant to the CEO, AFL

## THE SOCIAL VALUE OF COMMUNITY CLUBS

Our game has long been built on the foundations of community football, but its importance was highlighted by research released in 2015 into the influence and impact of local football clubs.

The research by La Trobe University, conducted in partnership with the AFL and AFL Victoria, found that local community football clubs generated a range of positive effects for local communities, including heightened levels of physical and mental wellbeing, social interaction and economic activity.

The research, based on interviews and a survey of club members from across Victoria, highlights that regardless of where

you live or how often you are involved in a football club each week, you are likely to experience greater social connectedness, wellbeing and physical and mental health than if you were not involved.

These benefits apply to all club participants, including players, coaches, volunteers and supporters.

The Centre for Sport and Social Impact at La Trobe University conducted the 12-month research project, involving in-depth case studies of nine clubs, 110 extensive interviews with club and community members and analysis of 1677 survey responses from individual club members. Highlights of the study included:

- For every dollar spent on a community football club, at least \$4.40 is returned in social value in terms of increased social connectedness, wellbeing, mental health

status, employment outcomes, personal development and physical health.

- A football club's reach is significant and extends beyond the players, coaches, administrators and volunteers within the club; for every one player, football clubs reach 10 people in their community.
- Football clubs provide individuals, particularly those aged 15-24, with significantly increased chances of securing employment via the social networks provided by the club.
- The self-reported mental health of people aged 18-24 associated with a football club is substantially higher than the general population.
- Football clubs are three times more useful for developing social networks than work, education or other community group networks.





#### GIANT STRIDES

Thanks to stars such as Greater Western Sydney forward Jeremy Cameron, the game is growing in the non-traditional states of NSW and Queensland.

## ECONOMIC IMPACT

Australian Football is one of the major sports in Australia and is among the largest individual business sectors within the sports and recreation industry.

The 2015 economic impact study by Street Ryan found that our game is:

- Australia's premier spectator sport, attracting 15.22 million spectator attendances in 2015.
- Australia's major football code in terms of regular participation with 1,247,575 participants.
- An industry sector which supports 7075 full-time equivalent jobs (excluding players and umpires).
- An industry sector which generated \$5.72 billion in financial contribution to the Australian economy in 2015.
- Australian Football is the most national football code; evidenced by growth in participation in the non-traditional states of NSW and Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory, which now accommodate 34 per cent of all participation (compared with 17 per cent in 2000).
- There were 15,223,460 spectator attendances at Australian Football matches in 2015. Of the total attendances, 46.4 per cent were at AFL matches.

## EMPLOYMENT

- An estimated 174,811 Australian Football volunteers contributed 13.98 million working hours in 2015, worth the equivalent of \$289 million in labour effort.
- Australian Football peak bodies, leagues, associations and clubs employed 16,174 people in 2015 (excluding players and umpires):
  - > 29 per cent full-time
  - > 26.5 per cent part-time
  - > 44.5 per cent casual
- This represented 7075 full-time equivalent jobs.

## FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

The total financial contribution of Australian Football to the Australian economy in 2015 is estimated to be \$5.72 billion. This was \$467 million more than the \$5.26 billion financial contribution calculated in 2014, representing an increase of 8.9 per cent (and an average annual increase of 6.7 per cent since 2007).



**TRAVELLING TO THE TOP**

Matt Priddis celebrates as the West Coast Eagles win through to the 2015 Toyota AFL Grand Final. Thousands of Eagles fans flocked to Melbourne the following week.

**A GAME FOR ALL**

The game continues to be enjoyed by fans of all ages, thanks to the commitment of AFL staff across the country.



As part of the economic impact, AFL matches generated more than \$544 million in domestic tourism tied to AFL matches in metropolitan and regional centres around Australia.

This included more than 288,000 air travellers and 712,000 room nights in various cities.

**THE AFL TEAM**

In May 2015, our Chief Financial Officer of 15 years, Ian Anderson, announced his retirement from the AFL.

The highlights of his career with the AFL included:

- Revenue growth from \$110 million in 2000 to \$458 million in 2014.
- The establishment of AFL finance shared services which provides full financial services to five state bodies and payroll services to 11 AFL clubs.
- The introduction of a national insurance program that provides cover to the majority of community leagues and clubs throughout Australia.
- The signing of a technology-sharing agreement with Major League Baseball that has enabled the AFL to work with this leading US sport on a number of key IT projects.
- The signing of two major AFL partners – Virgin Australia and the Accor Hotel Group.

In June, we announced the appointment of Ray Gunston as General Manager Finance, Corporate & Major Projects.

Ray has had extensive experience as a senior executive and a company director in a variety of industries, including as interim Chief Executive Officer of the Essendon Football Club and before that as Chief Financial Officer of the Tatts Group.

In addition to the Tatts Group, Ray has had executive roles with Westpac, Price Waterhouse, Aluminum Smelters of Victoria, Southern Cross Austereo and the Victorian Government. He is a non-executive director of Sigma Pharmaceuticals and Hotel Property Investments. Ray has also previously held non-executive director roles with AFL Victoria and the Melbourne Renegades.

Ray played a leading role in the transformation of the privately owned Tattersall's into the publicly listed Tatts Group as an ASX 100 listed national and global company followed by initiating and implementing the \$4 billion merger of Tatts and UNITAB. He also played a lead executive role in acquisitions for the Tatts Group.

In August 2015, our General Manager, People, Customer and Community, Dorothy Hisgrove, announced her resignation after more than two years in the role.

Dorothy made a significant contribution to the AFL, leading change that saw a stronger and more diverse organisation. She played a key role in driving major organisational and industry-wide change that will leave an indelible mark and she was a highly valued member of the Executive team.

Following her resignation, we announced a number of changes to our organisational structure.

Former General Manager of Broadcasting Simon Lethlean has been appointed as General Manager of Game and Market Development and will oversee community football, including female football and international.

Our Head of Corporate Affairs, Elizabeth Lukin, was appointed to the AFL Executive as General Manager Corporate Affairs & Communications.

Our Head of HR, Sarah Fair, reports to General Manager Clubs & AFL Operations Travis Auld and also regularly attends AFL Executive meetings.

Travis Auld will also take responsibility for Broadcast Operations and Scheduling.

Simon Clarke was promoted to Deputy General Counsel, taking on broader legal responsibility, including broadcast contract management.

The Brand and Market Insights team, led by Julian Dunne, now operates under Darren Birch, our General Manager, Commercial Operations, to promote greater alignment between commercial activities and marketing.

In closing, I would like to thank all AFL staff throughout Australia for their contribution to the game in 2015 – I am very fortunate to work with such a talented and committed group of people.

**Gillon McLachlan**  
Chief Executive Officer