

MANAGING THE AFL COMPETITION

Principles: To administer our game to ensure it remains the most exciting in Australian sport; to build a stronger relationship with our supporters by providing the best sports entertainment experience; to provide the best facilities; to continue to expand the national footprint.

Outcomes in 2008

- Attendance record for Toyota AFL Premiership Season of 6,511,255 compared to previous record of 6,475,521 set in 2007.
- Total attendances of 7,426,306 across NAB regional challenge matches, NAB Cup, Toyota AFL Premiership Season and Toyota AFL Finals Series matches was also a record, beating the previous mark of 7,402,846 set in 2007.
- For the eighth successive year, AFL clubs set a membership record of 574,091 compared to 532,697 in 2007, an increase of eight per cent.
- The largest increases were by North Melbourne (up 45.8 per cent), Hawthorn (33.4 per cent), Essendon (28 per cent) and Geelong (22.1 per cent).
- The clubs with more than 40,000 members were Adelaide, Fremantle, Collingwood, Essendon, Hawthorn and the West Coast Eagles.
- The average TV audience per round during the Toyota AFL Premiership Season was 4.668 million compared to 4.887 million in 2007, a decrease of 4.5 per cent.
- The national Fox Sports audience per game was 168,808, an increase of 3.3 per cent on the 2007 average per game of 163,460.
- The Seven Network's broadcast of the 2008 Toyota AFL Grand Final had an average national audience of 3.247 million people and was the second most-watched TV program of any kind behind the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics.
- AFL radio audiences increased by five per cent in 2008. An average of 1.3 million people listened to AFL matches on radio in the five mainland capital cities each week of the Toyota AFL Premiership Season.
- The AFL/Telstra network maintained its strong position with more than one million unique visits per round, an increase of nine per cent on 2007.
- Stadium developments were confirmed for Subiaco Oval in Perth and AAMI Stadium in Adelaide.
- Work on the new \$70 million Victor Trumper grandstand was completed at the SCG.
- Matches were played in every state and territory.

TRUE SAINT: While some felt he still had a couple more seasons in him, St Kilda's humble champion Robert Harvey decided to retire in 2008 and was given an emotional farewell on the eve of St Kilda's finals campaign. He bowed out with 383 games to his credit – placing him third on the list of games played – and a stack of honours including two Brownlow Medals. He was joined in the round 21 tribute by son Connor and daughters Remy (right) and Alyssa. Harvey is now part of Carlton's coaching staff in player development.



THE AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL COMMUNITY

Principles: To build a stronger relationship with our supporters at all levels; to continue to expand the national footprint of our game; to grow our existing supporter base; to develop new markets; to provide more opportunities to participate in our game.

Outcomes in 2008

- Domestic participation in Australian Football at a community level reached a record of 693,052 players, which represents growth of 8.5 per cent or 59,948 more participants compared to 2007.
- Total participation in Australia surpassed end-of-2008 forecasts in the *Next Generation* strategy by 72,000 people. *Next Generation* forecast there would be 706,000 registered participants by the end of 2011.
- 26,000 new players in revised primary school program.
- Multicultural and female football programs also contributed to strong growth.
- More than 70,000 females participated in the game.
- New South Wales and Queensland now account for 30 per cent of total participation in the game. In 1997 they accounted for 14 per cent of total participation.
- More than 6000 coaches participated in AFL coaching accreditation courses.
- More than 3600 umpires were recruited in 2008, a nine per cent increase on 2007. This included an increase in the number of female umpires to more than 700 nationally.
- An additional 45,000 registered participants play Australian Football in various countries around the world.
- The West Coast Eagles, Collingwood, Fremantle and Carlton now support AFL South Africa development programs.
- Essendon Football Club is supporting game development in China.
- Teams from 16 countries contested the Australian Football International Cup, including China, India, Japan, Ireland, Great Britain, the United States, Canada, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Nauru and South Africa. The Peace Team, made up in equal numbers by players from Palestine and Israel, was the 16th participant.
- Various events and activities were held to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the establishment of Australian Football.

CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN: Shane Crawford etched his place in Grand Final history when he endured the longest wait to achieve his first premiership. The former Hawk captain and 1999 Brownlow medallist played in a flag-winning side in his 305th game and a few weeks later announced his retirement. A four-time best and fairest and All-Australian, Crawford was finally rewarded for his patience and loyalty. The stage is now set for him to continue his role in the media and spend more time with his growing family.



AFL CLUBS

Principles: To secure the future of the 16-club AFL competition; to make sure our clubs are financially secure and competitive – on and off the field.

Outcomes in 2008

- \$131.8 million distributed to AFL clubs, compared to \$125.5 million in 2007.
- A number of Strategic Partnership Fund projects run in conjunction with AFL clubs across three main areas – fan development and community, membership and ticketing, commercial and finance.
- Funding provided by clubs, the AFL, Victorian Government and local councils saw work progress on the following projects:
 - Training and administration facility for the Western Bulldogs at Whitten Oval.
 - Training and administration facility for Carlton at Visy Park.
 - Training and administration facility for North Melbourne at Arden St Oval.
 - Next stage of the redevelopment of Skilled Stadium for Geelong.
- Agreement reached with City of Casey for Melbourne to use Casey Fields as a summer training base.
- Work due to start in 2009 on training and administration facilities for Richmond at Punt Rd Oval and St Kilda at Seaford.
- Clubs supported to play premiership season matches in Darwin (Western Bulldogs), Canberra (Melbourne and Western Bulldogs), Launceston (Hawthorn) and on the Gold Coast (North Melbourne).
- Hawthorn won its first flag since 1991, beating Geelong in the Toyota AFL Grand Final.
- St Kilda won the NAB Cup Grand Final, defeating Adelaide.
- Every club has reached a preliminary final since 2000.

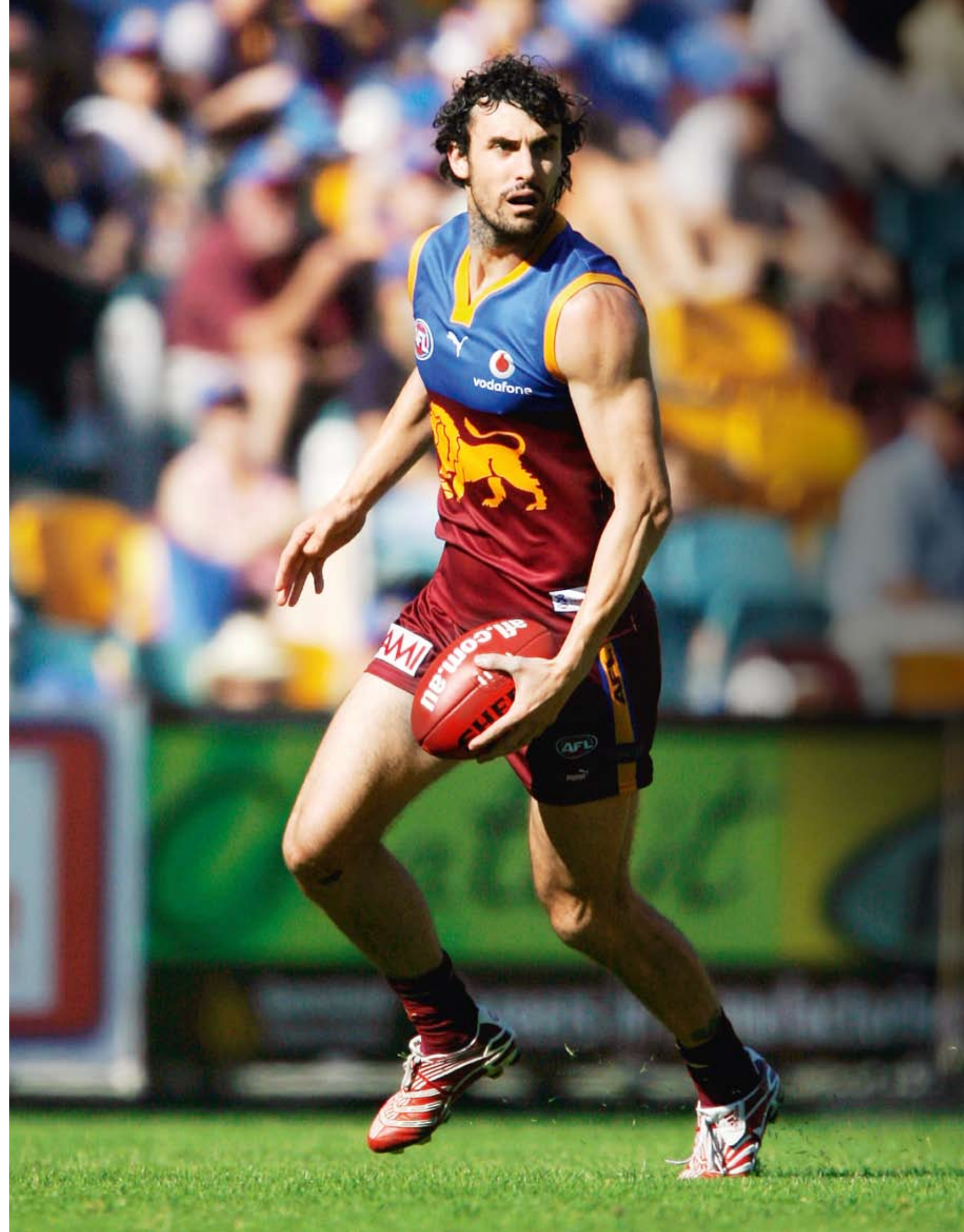
PLAYERS

Principles: To provide the best possible benefits for AFL players; to drive the next generation of elite athletes to choose our game.

Outcomes in 2008

- Total player payments were \$118.9 million (\$7.43 million per club).
- \$12.5 million provided to AFL Players' Association as part of Collective Bargaining Agreement.
- AFL Players' Association delivered programs to players in conjunction with clubs and AFL including:
 - Induction camp for newly drafted players.
 - Work placements.
 - Employment opportunities.
 - Financial education.
 - Career counselling.
 - Education and career guidance.
 - IT skills training.
 - Personal counselling.
 - Indigenous support program.
 - Education and training.
- AFL clubs to have the option of drafting two additional rookies for the 2009 and 2010 seasons linked to the list development rules for competition expansion.
- Revamping of the NAB AFL Under-18 Championships, with games played in various states culminating in a final day featuring three matches televised live by Fox Sports from Telstra Dome.
- Successful introduction of a new format for the NAB AFL Under-16 Championships, with finals played on Toyota AFL Grand Final Day.
- Two Indigenous Sporting Chance academies in Sydney and one in Cairns complete first year in partnership with Federal Government.

LAST HURRAH: Brisbane Lions star Nigel Lappin was one of many big-name players to call it a day in 2008. A triple premiership player and four-time All-Australian, Lappin played 279 games before succumbing to a persistent Achilles injury. At his peak, he was one of the most damaging running players in the AFL. Lappin has accepted a position as assistant coach under Mark Thompson at Geelong.





CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

MIKE FITZPATRICK

CEO'S REPORT

ANDREW DEMETRIOU



THE AFL COMMISSION PHOTOGRAPHED IN THE
AFL BOARDROOM, DOCKLANDS, DECEMBER 2008
1. Chris Lynch 2. Chris Langford 3. Sam Mostyn 4. Bob Hammond
5. Chief Executive Officer Andrew Demetriou 6. Chairman Mike Fitzpatrick
7. Graeme John 8. Bill Kelty 9. Justice Linda Dessau

BALANCING TRADITION, MANAGING GROWTH

While paying homage to the past with the 150-year celebrations, the AFL's focus was on the future, embarking on plans for two new clubs in an expanded competition.

The past year gave everyone associated with Australian Football the chance to reflect on the founding of Australia's only Indigenous game, while also focusing on our future growth. Recognising and celebrating the 150th anniversary of the establishment of the game in 1858 provided that opportunity for reflection, while the AFL Commission's plans to expand the competition by establishing new clubs in south-east Queensland and in Sydney were unanimously endorsed by the 16 AFL clubs.

The two key aspects of 2008 highlight a frequent theme of the deliberations of the AFL Commission – finding the balance between the traditions of the game and managing change.

Expansion, growth and change have been the hallmarks of Australian Football since the first recorded games in 1858 and the initial set of rules were established by Jerry Bryant, James Thompson, William Hammersley and Tom Wills when they met at what is now the MCG Hotel in East Melbourne on May 17, 1859.

From those beginnings, the game expanded to every state and territory in Australia and to countries such as New Zealand and South Africa. Today, 150 years later, South Africa represents a wonderful opportunity to build a new source of talent for AFL clubs and to build a large participation base in an international market.

Like our support for development in South Africa and other countries now participating in our game, the AFL Commission's decision to expand the national competition is a generational one.

Growth in New South Wales and Queensland is not a recent phenomenon – the Sydney Swans were born in 1982 following the relocation of South Melbourne, and the Brisbane Bears made their debut in 1987 with the West Coast Eagles when the then VFL competition was used as the cornerstone of a national competition. In fact, our game was first played in both states in the late 1800s, at least 30 years before other codes were organised.

Development of the game at a community level throughout New South Wales and Queensland was given top priority by the AFL Commission in 1997.

Despite significantly increasing our investment in the development of the game in both states, a review of national development in 2001 headed by former AFL Commissioner Colin Carter concluded that we were under-investing in Queensland and New South Wales and that the game, relative to other sports, was under-represented in both regions.

The AFL Commission's *Next Generation – Securing the Future of Australian Football* financial strategy for the period 2007-2011 identified playing a game in both markets each week of the premiership season by 2015 as a key objective.

Our continued research on competition expansion concluded that the Gold Coast and greater west of Sydney were priority future growth markets.

While significant progress had been made in building the profile of the AFL competition and community participation in the game, there were still significant challenges and having one AFL club in each region would limit our future growth.

While we currently have the Brisbane Lions and Sydney Swans in the two states, other codes have 25 clubs and are considering further expansion.

Our competition expansion plans are arguably the most significant challenge faced by the AFL Commission since the national competition was created in 1987.

It has been important throughout this planning process to collaborate closely with the AFL clubs. This has occurred in a number of ways.

We sought the views of club presidents at meetings with the AFL Commission during 2008 and briefed them on our expansion plans. The presidents unanimously endorsed the plans, while also recognising the significant challenges ahead of us.

Conferences held several times per year involving the club CEOs and our executive have provided other forums where competition expansion was a major agenda item and fundamental to building consensus throughout the AFL system.

One of the major issues we faced, and one where we had to be very conscious of the potential impact on the existing clubs, was the process of establishing the playing lists for two new clubs.

Members of our executive team met individually with each AFL club to outline the options for the establishment of the lists and to seek formal submissions from each club.

A working group consisting of club representatives and members of our executive then met during the year to recommend the list development mechanisms for the establishment of the Gold Coast club.

The input of the clubs was invaluable and led to an outcome that was generally well received and regarded by the clubs as providing a balance between giving the Gold Coast club access to young talent via the NAB AFL Draft and to players with AFL experience, which would allow the new club to be competitive in its early years.

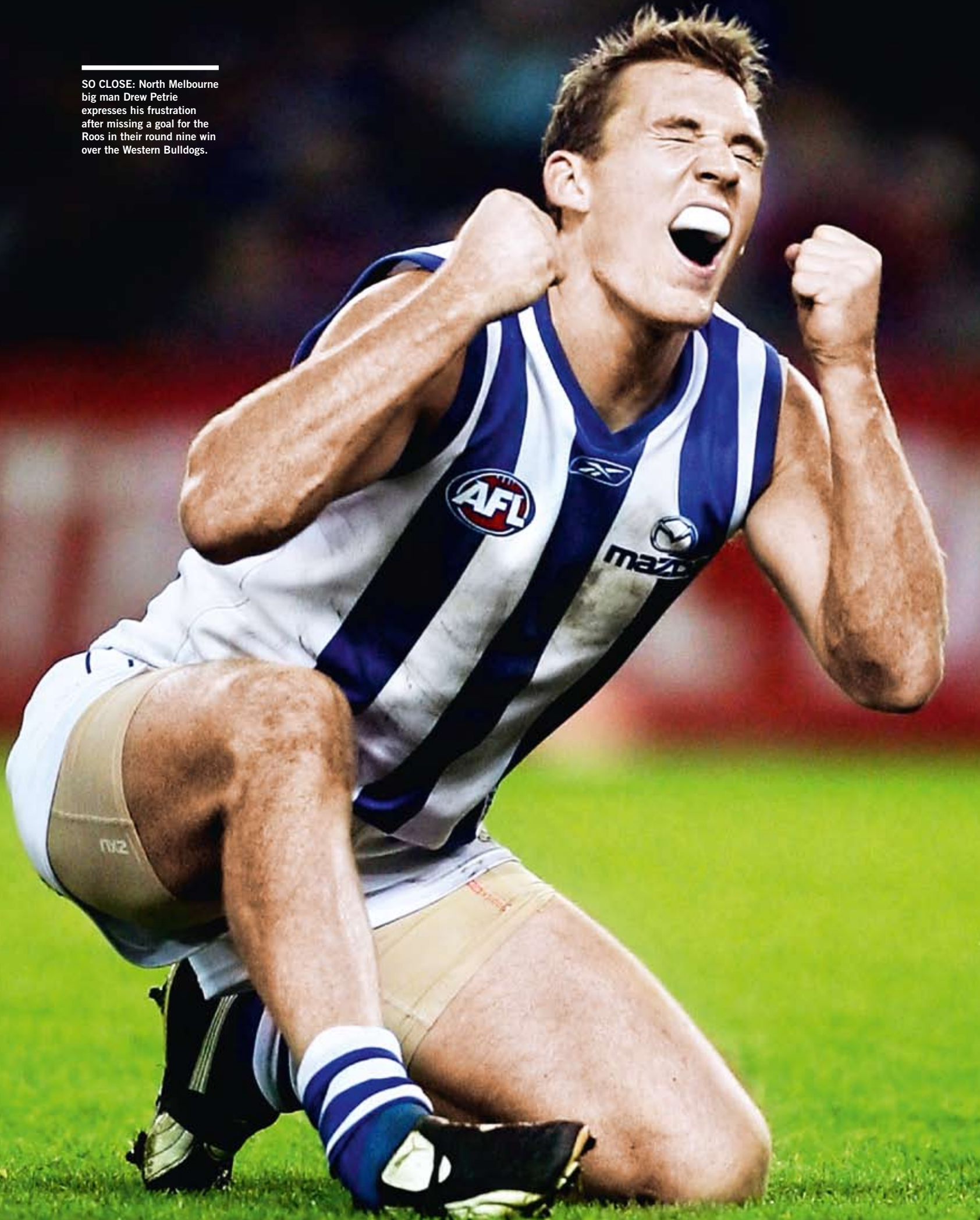
The working group was also conscious of providing sufficient access to new talent for the existing clubs, particularly those near the bottom of the ladder. The recommendations from the working group, which were endorsed by the AFL Commission, are outlined by CEO Andrew Demetriou in his report.

We will continue to engage the AFL clubs in our expansion plans and the list development working group will be reactivated in 2009 to consider recommendations for the establishment of the playing list for the 18th club, which will be based at Blacktown Olympic Park in Sydney.

SUPER SEASON: Geelong star Gary Ablett took his game to another level in 2008, winning the AFL Players' Association Most Valuable Player Award for the second time. He was also named in the All-Australian team and was third in the Brownlow Medal.



SO CLOSE: North Melbourne big man Drew Petrie expresses his frustration after missing a goal for the Roos in their round nine win over the Western Bulldogs.



Another issue of which we are acutely aware is the global financial crisis, which is impacting on all sections of the community.

We will constantly review our plans and closely monitor the impact of the global financial crisis on our clubs and the game itself during 2009 and beyond, but we remain committed to expanding the competition – the long-term strategic significance of the Gold Coast and the greater west of Sydney has not altered.

In our view, the biggest risk for the long-term future of the competition and the game itself would be if we did nothing to expand the competition.

Tasmanian Government

During 2008, the Tasmanian Government indicated that it planned to lodge a submission for an AFL club to be based in Tasmania.

The very detailed and high-quality submission was received in late 2008 and will be considered by the AFL Commission during 2009.

While we acknowledge that Tasmania has a rich Australian Football heritage and is providing outstanding support to Hawthorn, which plays four games per year at Aurora Stadium in Launceston, we have said consistently that the Gold Coast and greater west of Sydney are our two priority growth markets.

Before determining those two priority growth markets, we assessed a great deal of information about a number of regions in Australia and took into account factors such as future population growth, the size and scope of the local business community, current and future stadium infrastructure, current and future demand for AFL matches, current growth in community participation in our game and other codes and the significance of the regions as media markets – newspapers, television and online.

While our focus will be on the two priority growth markets of the Gold Coast and greater west of Sydney, the quality of the Tasmanian Government's submission suggests that, in the longer term, the establishment of a club based in Tasmania requires due consideration.

Financial result, economic climate

The global financial crisis, which started to bite in the second half of 2008, will clearly have an impact on all levels of the game in 2009.

There was some evidence of that towards the end of the 2008 season in the AFL competition in areas such as sponsorship, corporate hospitality and retail sales of licensed merchandise.

Clearly, our game is not immune from what happens around us, but the AFL competition is in a sound financial position – we are debt-free and, with the full support of the clubs and the AFL Players' Association, we have established a Future Fund which will grow to more than \$87 million by 2011, and we will own Telstra Dome at the end of 2024.

Key highlights of the financial performance of the AFL in 2008 included:

- Total AFL revenue increasing by \$17.3 million to a record \$302.1 million in 2008 compared to \$284.8 million in 2007. This is the first time AFL revenue exceeded \$300 million.
- The operating surplus before grants and distributions was \$207.4 million.
- Grants and distributions totalled \$187.9 million. Of this amount, \$131.8 million was distributed to AFL clubs.
- After transfers to reserves of \$17.1 million, the net profit for 2008 was \$2.4 million.

Equalisation policy and match returns

The AFL competition is based on a number of key equalisation policies including a player draft, salary cap and revenue sharing so that every

club has an opportunity to compete and win against any other club on any weekend during the season, regardless of their financial strength.

This uncertainty around the outcome of matches drives supporter interest.

In the nine seasons from 2000, every AFL club has contested at least one preliminary final, nine clubs have reached Grand Finals and seven clubs have won premierships – Essendon, Brisbane Lions, Port Adelaide, Sydney Swans, West Coast Eagles, Geelong and Hawthorn.

By comparison, five clubs won premierships from 1970-89 when the competition operated without full equalisation policies.

Our analysis of the financial returns to AFL clubs under agreements for the use of stadiums showed that there was growing disparity between what tenant clubs at Telstra Dome and the MCG in Melbourne were receiving, compared to the returns enjoyed by clubs in other capital cities.

The conclusion we reached was that the financial disparity was not sustainable and several Victorian-based clubs would be at risk if the issue was not addressed.

Based on similar crowds at the Melbourne venues and those in other capital cities, our analysis showed that some of the Victorian-based clubs were between \$5 million and \$7 million worse off from their stadium returns when compared to clubs in other cities.

In Adelaide, Brisbane, Perth and Sydney, AFL clubs received 70 per cent of the revenue generated by the stadiums for AFL matches, while AFL clubs in Victoria received 30 per cent of the revenue generated by stadiums from AFL matches with the stadium managers retaining the balance.

We have made repeated representations to the managers of Telstra Dome and the Melbourne Cricket Club seeking a more equitable revenue share for the tenant clubs at both venues.

The Victorian clubs established a sub-committee consisting of David Smorgon, President of the Western Bulldogs; Eddie McGuire, President of Collingwood; Frank Costa, President of Geelong; Greg Swann, CEO of Carlton, and Steven Wright, CEO of Richmond, to seek the assistance of the Victorian Government in relation to match returns from the MCG.

The Melbourne Cricket Club agreed that annual crowd numbers attending AFL matches at the MCG are far in excess of contract requirements.

To date, the Melbourne Cricket Club and MCG Trust have refused to engage in any meaningful discussion about reaching an agreement to provide a more equitable distribution of revenue to MCG tenant clubs.

It is also apparent that the Melbourne Cricket Club is offering more attractive financial deals to other codes to play at the MCG.

The new rectangular stadium being built by the Victorian Government at the Olympic Park precinct is also offering more attractive financial returns for tenant clubs than AFL clubs are receiving at the MCG.

We support the view of the clubs that there is a role for the Victorian Government to play in helping to secure the long-term viability of the Victorian-based AFL clubs, given the significant economic contribution of Australian Football to the Victorian economy and to the culture of the state which is the birthplace of Australia's only Indigenous game.

Australian Football makes an annual financial contribution to the Victorian economy of more than \$1.7 billion.

This includes more than \$198 million in domestic tourism each year linked to AFL matches played in Victoria.

It seems incongruous to the AFL Commission that the ground regarded as the home of football provides to AFL clubs which are tenants of the MCG the worst financial return of any venue hosting AFL matches.

The AFL Commission is determined to support the Victorian-based AFL clubs in 2009 to find a solution to an issue which, in our view, cannot continue for much longer and puts at risk the financial viability of several clubs.

Broadcasters

Network Ten, the Seven Network and Foxtel, through Fox Sports and Telstra, successfully completed the second year of their broadcast rights agreement with the AFL which provides national coverage of each game played in the NAB Cup, Toyota AFL Premiership Season and Toyota AFL Finals Series.

This agreement is fundamental to the promotion of the game, as it takes our matches and showcases the outstanding athletes playing for the 16 AFL clubs to all parts of Australia and beyond.

I wish to acknowledge on behalf of the AFL Commission and all of our stakeholders, particularly the supporters of our game, the exceptional level and quality of coverage and overall investment in the game provided by Ten, Seven and Foxtel, via Fox Sports, and Telstra.

Corporate Partners

The AFL Commission was delighted to renew our major partnership with the Toyota Motor Corporation of Australia during 2008.

Toyota has been the premier partner of the AFL since 2004 and extended its association with us for a further three years.

During 2008, the Chairman Emeritus of Toyota in Australia, John Conomos, retired after 27 years with the company and some 40 years in the Australian automotive industry.

Under his leadership, Toyota became the major sponsor of the Adelaide Football Club when it entered the AFL competition for the 1991 season and remains in that partnership with the club today.

In 2004, John led the negotiations for Toyota to become our premier partner and I wish to take this opportunity on behalf of the AFL Commission to wish John and his wife, Barbara, every success in the next phase of their life.

We were also fortunate to extend our major sponsorship agreement with the National Australia Bank for a further year to 2011. NAB's partnership with the AFL includes very important elements of our development programs, including NAB AFL Auskick and our talented player pathway culminating in the NAB AFL Draft.

Our corporate partners are outlined in greater detail later in this report, but I would like to thank each of them for their continued investment in our game.

Community Football

One of the most satisfying aspects of our game is its continued growth at a community level throughout Australia and increasingly overseas.

In any given year, the AFL competition consists of some 700 players on the lists of AFL clubs, whereas total participation in our game throughout Australia in 2008 reached a record 693,052 participants.

This broad base of participation in our game is the foundation on which the AFL competition is built.

In Australia, this level of participation is made possible by the commitment of more than 100,000 volunteers who run a community network, which includes:

- 2600 clubs fielding 12,000 teams in state and community leagues.
- 24,000 coaches and 10,000 umpires.
- 163,885 participants in 2800 NAB AFL Auskick centres.
- 70,000 participants in competitions for females.

Another 45,000 registered players participate in our game in various countries around the world, including the 15 nations represented in the 2008 Australian Football International Cup: South Africa, China, India, Japan, Ireland, Great Britain, United States of America, Canada, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Nauru.

Another key feature of the International Cup was the participation of the Peace Team made up equally of players from Palestine and Israel who were only introduced to our game in early 2008 before teaming up to come to Australia as the 16th team in the competition.

For me, the International Cup was one of the highlights of our celebrations to mark the 150th anniversary of the establishment of Australia's only Indigenous game.

The quality of the matches and the enthusiasm of the participants for a game which in many cases has only recently been introduced to them, reinforced the potential for Australian Football to progressively expand its international participation base.

This should not be interpreted as Australian Football 'taking on the world', but rather the AFL taking opportunities to support people from a vast array of backgrounds who show as much passion for our game as someone who has grown up with it in Australia.

AFL Clubs

Everyone associated with the 16 AFL clubs is to be congratulated for the role they play in continuing to attract record levels of community support as measured by attendances at AFL matches and club membership.

The AFL is built on the principle of maximum competition between clubs on the field and maximum collaboration between the clubs and the AFL off the field. I wish to thank the boards, staff, players and coaches of the 16 AFL clubs for their efforts in 2008, which were fundamental to the continuing appeal of the AFL competition.

AFL clubs and players also engage in a wide range of community activities and support a variety of charities and organisations.

AFL Commission

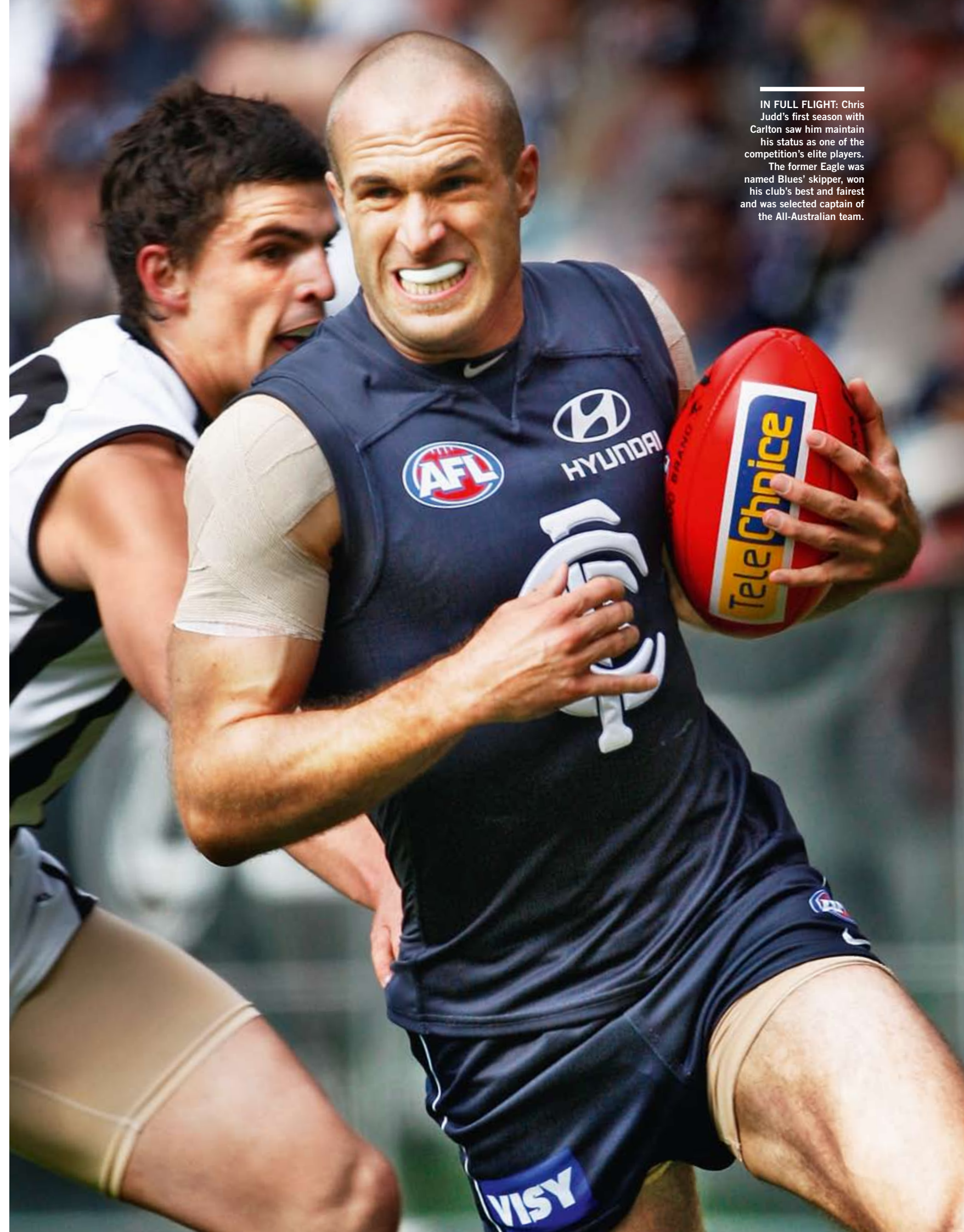
In 2008, we welcomed Justice Linda Dessau and Chris Lynch who were formally elected to the AFL Commission in March after being unanimously endorsed at a meeting of club presidents in November, 2007.

They joined Sam Mostyn, Bob Hammond, Bill Kely, Graeme John, Chris Langford and our CEO Andrew Demetriou as AFL Commissioners.

It is an honour for me to serve as Chairman of such a high-quality group of people and I wish to thank each Commissioner and their families for their individual and collective commitment to the game at all levels.

I also wish to thank our executive team led by Andrew Demetriou and our staff for their efforts during a year in which we continued to experience growth in many key areas of our game, summarised throughout this report.

Mike Fitzpatrick
Chairman, AFL Commission



IN FULL FLIGHT: Chris Judd's first season with Carlton saw him maintain his status as one of the competition's elite players. The former Eagle was named Blues' skipper, won his club's best and fairest and was selected captain of the All-Australian team.

SUPPORTERS PROVIDE ULTIMATE UNDERPINNING

The passion of the fans is fundamental to the continued growth and success of the game at the elite level.

For a game which is covered by more than 1600 accredited media representatives including some 780 journalists, one of the most impactful comments made during 2008 went almost unnoticed. It was made before an audience of about 240 people from all sections of the community which contribute to the success of the AFL competition and the game itself – clubs, players, administrators, corporate partners, supporters and state leagues – who attended the AFL industry conference *Play On: The Future of Australian Football in Focus*, the final event of a year in which we celebrated the 150th anniversary of the establishment of Australian Football.

The comment was a message which everyone involved with our game at all levels should never forget.

The person who delivered the comment was the former Commissioner of the National Football League, Paul Tagliabue, the keynote speaker at our conference.

Mr Tagliabue, who served as NFL Commissioner for 17 years before retiring in 2006, led the NFL during a period of extraordinary growth when it became the most popular professional sports competition in the United States of America – or “America’s passion” as Mr Tagliabue preferred.

He said: “I think sport, certainly your football and our football, begins with three things: the game, the fans and the players. The game and the players are the competition, they play within the rules, they’re penalised if they play outside the rules.

But the fans are the ultimate underpinning. Many of them, as we all know, have played the game, they’ve come to love the game, they’ve coached the game, and without the passion of the fans, the game and the players don’t add up to very much.

But that’s not enough. That’s the beginning. Those are essentials. But what else is required? I think it’s three other things: it’s a structure that works and that changes and that evolves over the decades; it’s management and supervision and, most important of all, it’s leadership at all levels: leadership at the player level, leadership at the coaching level and leadership at the management level.”

That simple message about the importance of the fans must continue to be at the forefront of our thinking.

As we move into 2009 and the global financial crisis impacts on all levels of our community, it will be more important than ever for those of us fortunate enough to be involved in a professional sporting competition to reach out to the community at a time when a lot of our supporters could be doing it tough.

Our AFL clubs and players do an outstanding job in their local communities, devoting more than 70,000 hours to support a wide range of charities and programs, while also promoting the benefits of education, a healthy lifestyle and participation in sport.

Their role, combined with the AFL’s role in community and game development programs, will become even more important in 2009 if the global financial crisis worsens.

History tells us that during tough times, people continued to attend matches in large numbers and we will remain obsessed with doing all we can to ensure that people continue to attend AFL games in the large numbers fundamental to our game.

That is why we have kept our general admission prices at 2008 levels for the 2009 season and why we will be encouraging our clubs and players to continue to reach out to their local communities, particularly by ensuring that our players remain accessible to the supporters on training days, and maintain their involvement in their local communities.

As Mr Tagliabue indicated, the game and the players don’t add up to very much without the fans.

Throughout this report, you will hopefully get a sense of how important that support for the AFL clubs and Australia’s only Indigenous game is, and how the supporters created records in key areas such as attendances, club membership and participation in community clubs and leagues throughout Australia and, increasingly, overseas.

Attendances

The extraordinary level of public support for the AFL clubs and players led to a new attendance record established for the second successive Toyota AFL Premiership Season, with 6,511,255 attending matches in 2008 compared to the previous record of 6,475,521 set in 2007.

In terms of average attendances per premiership season game, the AFL competition – with an average attendance per game of 36,996 – is the third most popular professional sports league in the world, behind the NFL in the United States of America (average 67,738 per game) and Bundesliga soccer in Germany (average 37,644 per game).

Total attendance across regional challenge matches, NAB Cup, Toyota AFL Premiership Season and the Toyota AFL Finals Series was also a record – 7,426,306 – surpassing the previous record of 7,402,846 set in 2007. We wish to thank the supporters and members of the 16 AFL clubs for their continuing passion for the game.

Club Membership

For the eighth successive year, AFL clubs produced another first-class result by setting a membership record of 574,091 compared to 532,697 in 2007, an increase of 8 per cent.

The largest increases were by North Melbourne (up 45.8 per cent), Hawthorn (33.4 per cent), Essendon (28 per cent) and Geelong (22.1 per cent).

ROARING: Richmond was one of several clubs to record a membership increase in 2008. The Tigers attracted 30,820 in 2008, up 2.6 per cent on their 2007 tally.

The clubs with more than 40,000 members were Adelaide, Collingwood, Essendon, Fremantle, Hawthorn, and the West Coast Eagles.

Television Audiences

The average TV audience per round during the Toyota AFL Premiership Season was 4.668 million people, compared to 4.887 million in 2007.

The national Fox Sports audience per game was 168,808, compared to the 2007 average of 163,460.

Hawthorn and Geelong's clash in the Toyota AFL Grand Final was watched by an average national audience on the Seven Network of 3.247 million people and was the second most watched TV program of any kind in Australia in 2008, behind only the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics.

Participation

Domestic participation in Australian Football reached a record of 693,052 in 2008, which represented growth of 8.5 per cent or 54,224 more players compared to 2007.

We are 72,000 players ahead of the *Next Generation* plan, which forecast 706,000 participants in communities throughout Australia by the end of 2011.

Major sources of growth included 26,000 new players in a revised primary school program, while multicultural and female football programs also contributed to strong growth.

Internationally, there are more than 45,000 registered participants in countries around the world.

150th Anniversary

To mark the 150th anniversary of the establishment of Australian Football, a series of events was held throughout 2008 with a major focus on the game at a community level. Key highlights included:

Community football weekend – with no AFL premiership season games scheduled, supporters were encouraged to attend matches in their local communities, while 293 AFL players returned to their original suburban or country club. More than 1.6 million people attended community football matches during the weekend.

Volunteer recognition – more than 3500 volunteers were recognised for their contributions to community football. The state and territory volunteers of the year were guests of the AFL at the Toyota AFL Grand Final.

The Australian Football Experience incorporating the NAB 150 tour visited 110 regional towns throughout Australia and hosted more than 200 events. The National Australia Bank also celebrated its 150th anniversary during this tour.

The Australian Game of Football – published by The Slatery Media Group on behalf of the AFL – records the history of the game. The book had sold more than 30,000 copies before the end of the year and a reprint was scheduled for 2009.

Hall of Fame Tribute Game – this match between Victoria and a Dream Team selected from the rest of Australia – featured the AFL's best players in a tribute to the players of the past, particularly those who are members of the Australian Football Hall of Fame.

Competition Expansion

In 2007, the AFL Commission considered the future structure of the AFL competition and identified the Gold Coast and the greater west of Sydney as our priority growth markets.

In late 2007 after the North Melbourne Football Club rejected a proposal to relocate to the Gold Coast, the AFL Commission recognised that new AFL clubs would have to be created to achieve our competition expansion plans – we could not rely on existing clubs to relocate.

In April 2008, the AFL Commission invited a group of Gold Coast business and community representatives to form a board and participate in a six-month process to establish a new AFL club based in the region.

The group, which established itself as GC17, was led by Minter Ellison Gold Coast Managing Partner John Witheriff, former Brisbane Lions President Graeme Downie, Southport Football Club President Alan 'Doc' Mackenzie, *Gold Coast Bulletin* Editor In Chief Bob Gordon and Gold Coast City Council CEO Dale Dickson.

The criteria set by the AFL Commission to consider a bid by GC17 to be awarded a licence for an AFL club on the Gold Coast was as follows:

1. The ability to generate sufficient revenues to compete in the AFL through membership and business support, including a long-term sponsorship program.
2. The capacity to establish a positive net asset base.
3. The ability to deliver first-class training and administration facilities.
4. The development of a brand identity for the new club that reflects the Gold Coast community.
5. The ability to build community support that engages the whole Gold Coast community, including social and community programs on the Gold Coast.
6. The capacity to build the football team in partnership with AFL Queensland.
7. The ability to build a strong organisation on appropriate governance and business principles.
8. Preparation of business plans for 2008-10 and 2011-15.

In November 2008, the AFL Commission announced that GC17 had met the criteria, including securing more than 42,000 supporters, the backing of 111 businesses, establishing a community engagement strategy and building a business plan.

List development for Gold Coast Football Club

In June 2008, the AFL Commission approved an initial set of recommendations from a list management working group set up by our organisation to consider how the playing list for the new club could be established.

Members of the working group included Ian Robson, CEO of Hawthorn; Steven Trigg, CEO of Adelaide; Cameron Schwab, then-CEO of Fremantle; Graeme Allan, General Manager, Football Operations of the Brisbane Lions; Andrew Ireland, General Manager, Football, of the Sydney Swans; Derek Hine, Recruiting Manager of Collingwood; Stephen Wells, Recruiting Manager of Geelong, and AFL executives Andrew Dillon (Chairman), Adrian Anderson, David Matthews, Tony Peek and Kevin Sheehan.

The initial recommendations adopted by the AFL Commission included:

- Gold Coast Football Club to have the right to pre-sign up to 20 Queensland players of draft-eligible age in 2009, 2010 and 2011.
- Other AFL clubs to be entitled to list an additional two rookies per season for the 2009 and 2010 seasons.

To develop its list, approval was also given for Gold Coast to enter a team in the TAC Cup in 2009.

In September 2008, the AFL Commission announced that it had approved further recommendations from the list development working group which had two major objectives – to provide Gold Coast with the opportunity to secure enough mature players to be competitive upon entry to the competition while not trading away its access to future talent and to minimise the impact on the current 16 clubs.



EYES ON THE PRIZE:
St Kilda captain
Nick Riewoldt and
Essendon's Andrew
Welsh had the ball in
their sights when they
clashed at Telstra
Dome in round five.



JUMPING FOR JOY:
Exciting Melbourne rookie Austin Wonaeamirri led the Demons to their first win for the 2008 season against Fremantle at the MCG in round seven.

The rules adopted by the AFL Commission, based on the recommendations from the working group, included:

- 2009 NAB AFL Draft – the capacity to sign up to 12 17-year-olds born from January-April, 1992.
- 2010 NAB AFL Draft – Gold Coast to have first pick in each round, plus selections 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13 and 15 in round one.
- 2009 NAB AFL Rookie Draft – Gold Coast FC to have selections 1-5 inclusive.
- 2010 NAB AFL rookie draft – Gold Coast to alternate Queensland priority selections with the Brisbane Lions. Gold Coast to have first selection.
- Queensland players – Gold Coast to have access to up to five Queensland players before each of the 2010, 2011 and 2012 NAB AFL Drafts.
- Northern Territory players – Gold Coast to have access to up to three Northern Territory players before the 2010 NAB AFL Draft.
- AFL-listed players – Gold Coast to be able to pre-list 10 players who had previously nominated for the AFL draft or were previously listed with an AFL club. Gold Coast to also have the capacity to sign up to 16 uncontracted AFL players.
- Under the list establishment rules for Gold Coast, any other AFL club losing a player to Gold Coast would receive a draft selection as compensation.
- Compensatory draft selections will be tradeable and can be used by clubs any time within five years. First-round compensation selections cannot be used until the end of the first round in 2010 or 2011 NAB AFL Drafts.
- Clubs will be required to nominate the year in which they plan to use the compensation pick before the first round of the Toyota AFL Premiership Season in that year.

The AFL Commission also approved a recommendation from our executive that the Gold Coast club should have an expanded list size and a total player payments allowance in the club's first four years, as follows:

- 2011: 48 senior list, 9 rookies, \$1 million TPP allowance.
- 2012: 46 senior list, 9 rookies, \$800,000 TPP allowance.
- 2013: 42 senior list, 9 rookies, \$600,000 TPP allowance.
- 2014: 40 senior list, 9 rookies, \$400,000 TPP allowance.
- 2015: 38 senior list, 9 rookies, TPP same as other AFL clubs.

The working group had recommended a TPP allowance and an increased list size should apply for the first three years that the Gold Coast club participated in the AFL.

Government Relations

We continue to place a great deal of emphasis on working with governments at all levels – federal, state, territory and local.

The areas of engagement with government include infrastructure such as major stadiums which host AFL matches and facilities for local community clubs, Indigenous and multicultural affairs, education, health and sport.

Our organisation lodged a submission with the Independent Sport Panel established by the Federal Minister for Sport, Kate Ellis.

The major focus of that submission was a proposal for the Federal Government to establish a national infrastructure fund to support a wide range of sports.

Providing quality facilities is critical to maximising participation in sport at a local community level and also attracting high-quality volunteers.

Australia's major sporting bodies collectively service more than 3.6 million registered participants and more than 800,000 officials and volunteers.



SHARING A DREAM: Gold Coast coach Guy McKenna (left) and chairman John Witheriff at the GC17 official launch at the Southport Sharks Function Centre on the Gold Coast.

We will continue to work with other national sporting bodies to discuss the proposal further with the Federal Government. If established, the infrastructure fund would support more than 9000 community sports facilities throughout Australia.

Personal Conduct Policy

The AFL Commission adopted a new Personal Conduct Policy based on a simple concept that every person involved in the AFL is in a privileged position. This includes players, coaches, umpires, team support staff, board members and club and AFL employees – if you are part of the AFL you are the focal point of Australia's only Indigenous game.

Development of the new policy to deal with the behaviour of individuals within the AFL competition was the result of a detailed review by the AFL Commission of a number of off-field incidents and the response to those incidents by the AFL and the AFL clubs.

Responsible and lawful conduct repays the trust, support and investment provided to clubs, players and the AFL by the competition's key stakeholders – supporters, members, media and corporate partners and various levels of government and is therefore in the best interests of the AFL competition.



MURPHY'S SOAR:
Bulldog Robert Murphy took this fine grab over Hawthorn's Trent Croad during the second qualifying final at the MCG.

The major focus of this policy is 'Notifiable Conduct' – conduct which has or may give rise to a charge or offence which in the event of a conviction, could involve punishment by a term of imprisonment.

While the AFL competition has faced some significant challenges in recent times when dealing with the off-field behaviour of some players, the vast majority of the more than 700 players, however, behave impeccably. They also make an outstanding collective contribution of more than 70,000 hours per year to their communities via support and involvement in a wide range of charities, other community programs for their clubs and appearances to support the AFL's national and international game development activities.

Key factors:

When shaping this policy, we took into account the following:

- Player leadership groups at each AFL club are critical to the success of the policy. Rules alone will not address the issue – it is critical that player leadership groups continue to have a positive impact on the behaviour of individuals and the establishment of high-quality reputations for their clubs.
- A whole-of-competition approach is essential – board members, players, coaches, staff and the AFL.
- AFL clubs are custodians of their own history and integrity based around each club's set of values.
- Given that the membership of AFL club boards is subject to various forms of election, it is the primary responsibility of each AFL club board to deal with any incident involving inappropriate behaviour by a board member.
- The AFL is the custodian of the game and the integrity of the AFL competition.
- The AFL competition accepts it has an obligation to do all it reasonably can to maximise the education and personal development of its people.
- People associated with the AFL competition, however, are expected to take personal responsibility for their actions and accept any consequences which may arise from inappropriate behaviour.
- While education and support are critical, strong rules and regulations, applied consistently across the competition, must also be part of addressing poor off-field behaviour.

Policy objectives:

- To have AFL clubs take the primary role in dealing with matters relating to inappropriate off-field behaviour by players, coaches, board members and senior administrators.
- To reinforce the role of AFL clubs having the primary responsibility for dealing with any inappropriate off-field behaviour by all other employees, support staff and volunteers other than in exceptional circumstances.
- To reinforce the responsibility of the AFL to deal with an incident of inappropriate off-field behaviour under Rule 1.6 in the event that the club, in the opinion of the AFL, has not dealt with the matter satisfactorily. This may include referring any such matter to the AFL Tribunal for its consideration, including the type of sanction deemed appropriate by the AFL Tribunal in the circumstances.
- To reinforce the right of the AFL to deal with an incident of serious misconduct under Rule 1.6 by referring any such matter to the AFL Tribunal and not giving the club the right to first deal with the matter.
- To identify appropriately qualified people to sit on the AFL Tribunal to deal with serious instances of inappropriate off-field behaviour referred to the AFL Tribunal by the AFL.
- To establish formal centralised reporting, recording and analysis processes at the AFL relating to off-field incidents.

- To establish a formal reporting process between each club and its players, coaches, board members and senior administrators relating to off-field incidents involving inappropriate behaviour.
- To amend the Standard Player Contract and other relevant AFL policies and procedures to reflect this policy and to provide more definition of inappropriate and unacceptable behaviour.
- To have as a major focus of the policy conduct which breaches the law by providing some examples of conduct that may be deemed to be 'Conduct Unbecoming'.
- To modernise, centralise and further professionalise the investigation and security aspects of the AFL by establishing an Integrity Services department.
- To place the emphasis on individuals to take personal responsibility for their behaviour and choices.

Toyota AFL Grand Final

Hawthorn won its first premiership since 1991 when it downed defending premier Geelong by 27 points in a memorable Toyota AFL Grand Final and climax to the celebrations marking the 150th anniversary of the game.

Like Geelong, Hawthorn had been through some tough times and had considered merging with Melbourne in 1996 before its members rejected that option.

The club then set about rebuilding itself off and on the field.

In 2001, Hawthorn reached a preliminary final but fell to 15th in 2004 and 14th in 2005 before progressively rebuilding its list with an exciting group of young players who triumphed on Grand Final day in front of 100,012 people, the first time a crowd has exceeded 100,000 for any event held at the MCG since the northern stand was rebuilt.

Congratulations to Hawthorn President Jeff Kennett, CEO Ian Robson, General Manager, Football Operations Mark Evans and Senior Coach Alastair Clarkson, the club board, staff and players for performing at a consistently high level in 2008.

It is also appropriate to acknowledge the role of Ian Dicker, who was President of Hawthorn from 1997-2005 and led the club through the period when it rebuilt itself, established a partnership with the Tasmanian Government, became a tenant club at the MCG and secured a high-quality training and administration facility at Waverley Park.

For the second successive year, Geelong won the Wm C. McClelland Trophy for finishing on top of the ladder at the end of the Toyota AFL Premiership Season.

We also congratulate President Frank Costa, CEO Brian Cook, General Manager, Football Operations, Neil Balme, Senior Coach Mark Thompson, the board, staff and players for their outstanding performances, which saw the club lose only one game during the season before reaching the Grand Final.

During 2007 and 2008, Geelong won 42 of 44 games, the greatest winning ratio over a 40-game period in the history of the competition.

In closing, I wish to sincerely thank our executive team and staff for their contribution to what was a very successful AFL season combined with a series of events and programs to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the establishment of Australia's only Indigenous game.

It is a privilege for me to work with such a high-quality group of people.

Andrew Demetriou
Chief Executive Officer

CHARGING HOME:
The Big V was back on the big stage when Victoria played the Dream Team at the MCG on May 10. Sydney Swans star Adam Goodes was among Victoria's best with 21 disposals.



CELEBRATING 150 YEARS OF AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL

While the Hall of Fame Tribute Match was the centrepiece of the 150-year celebrations, football communities at all levels were also recognised.

This year marked 150 years since the first recorded match of Australian Football was played. Events and celebrations throughout the year recognised the significance of Australian Football at all levels of the game, from the AFL, through to the state leagues, community leagues and clubs, to NAB AFL Auskick and school football competitions.

The *Australian Football 150 Years* celebrations centred on a number of major programs, each of which generated significant positive publicity and community engagement and allowed Australian Football to penetrate new markets.

One of the key objectives of the year was to ensure that all football communities took part in the celebration of our game and many of the events were specifically targeted at local communities.

A number of *Australian Football 150 Years* ambassadors were appointed to take the message across the country, including Kevin Sheedy, Neale Daniher, Nathan Buckley, Luke Darcy, Jason McCartney, Mark Ricciuto and Chris Grant, and a series of columns were distributed to every local suburban and regional newspaper across Australia.

Community Football Weekend, May 9-11

Community Football Weekend was scheduled to provide the football community with the opportunity to celebrate 150 years of Australian Football.

No AFL matches were scheduled on that weekend, with football supporters encouraged to return to grassroots footy. Community football clubs were also urged to plan themed celebrations at their matches, focusing particularly on recognising the role of volunteers.

As part of the celebrations, 293 AFL players attended grassroots football matches, many to the clubs they played with as juniors. More than 1.6 million people attended grassroots football on that weekend, including many past AFL players.

The weekend also generated national print, television and radio media coverage valued at more than \$3.1 million, particularly through suburban and regional press.

ABC Radio devoted more than 11 hours of coverage over two days to stories from dozens of local community clubs in all Australian states and territories.

The Hall of Fame Tribute Match, May 10

The Hall of Fame Tribute Match was held at the MCG and saw 50 of the AFL's best players playing for Victoria and a Dream Team in front of 69,294 spectators.

The match generated a large amount of public interest, particularly surrounding team selection and game-day match-ups. Jonathan Brown (captain of Victoria) and Andrew McLeod (captain of the Dream Team),

played significant roles in driving publicity for the event, which attracted a television audience of about 1.7 million people.

The Dream Team jumper was designed to incorporate the names of 1500 community clubs outside Victoria.

The Australian Football Experience incorporating the NAB 150 Tour

The Australian Football Experience travelled around Australia from February to October, with free community events conducted as part of the NAB 150 Tour.

The tour visited about 110 towns and hosted more than 200 events in every state and territory. Through use of our Australian Football 150 Years ambassador appearances, interactive activities, musical performances and local school visits, the tour engaged people of all ages in football's special year.

The Australian Football Experience included a series of interactive activities built around a Sherrin-shaped dome, capable of holding 80 people, which highlighted the history of the game of Australian Football since 1858.

At each public event local, selected volunteers were presented with a commemorative plaque to recognise their outstanding contributions to Australian Football, further helping to instil the Australian Football 150 Years legacy among local communities.

Volunteer Recognition Program

In the 150th year of Australian Football, several initiatives were introduced to recognise the contribution of volunteers.

Through these initiatives, more than 3500 volunteers received some form of recognition:

- State Volunteer of the Year Awards, with winners from across the country formally recognised at the 2008 Toyota AFL Grand Final by AFL Commission Chairman Mike Fitzpatrick. As part of their award, the volunteers and their partners joined in the 2008 Toyota AFL Grand Final parade.
- 1400 volunteers received recognition over Community Football Weekend with either a commemorative polo shirt or certificate.
- 78 volunteers were presented with a commemorative plaque from an AFL ambassador in regional areas in conjunction with the Australian Football Experience road show. A further 81 volunteers were recognised with these commemorative plaques at regional awards nights.
- Two volunteers were profiled as part of Network Ten's Brownlow Medal coverage.
- Volunteers were profiled through the 150 years e-newsletters that were distributed widely to community level clubs across Australia.



KEY MOMENTS: The AFL commissioned artist Jamie Cooper to capture 150 years of Australian Football. *The Game That Made Australia* highlights key people, moments and events that have helped shape and influence the code since 1858. About 10,000 lithographs of the painting were distributed during the year, with the original on display in the foyer of AFL House, Docklands, Melbourne.

Kick Around Australia, August 7

Kick Around Australia was held on August 7, 150 years since the first recorded match of Australian Football was played. The day encouraged football enthusiasts around the country to have a kick of the footy or wear their teams' colours to celebrate football's birthday.

The AFL Schools Program played a key role in the promotion of the event, with 150 curriculum programs designed so that schools could celebrate the day with footy-themed lessons. More than 700 schools and 200,000 school children took part in the event.

In the wider community, the event was driven predominantly through publicity exercises, which included:

- Writing letters to every federal, state and local member of government, encouraging them to set up their own football-themed media events on the day.
- Sending kits with footballs and goal posts to Australian Defence Force bases around the world so that the troops could play a game of football on August 7. Stories of games and clinics being held in East Timor and Afghanistan were broadcast back into Australia.
- Creating a countdown to August 7 with an online and print media campaign, featuring photos of Australian identities with footballs.
- Sending footballs wrapped as birthday presents to media personnel, who used them as props on various television shows.

The year also saw Australian Football celebrated through a number of non-traditional mediums, allowing the game to penetrate markets not previously explored by the AFL.

- *The Australian Game of Football* (commissioned by the AFL and produced by Slattery Media Group) publication providing a historical account of the past 150 years of football. By November 2008, 30,000 copies had been sold, with a second print run projected for 2009.
- *The Game That Made Australia* – a painting by Melbourne artist Jamie Cooper depicting images of Australian Football at all levels and in all eras throughout 150 years. The painting was a key feature of the 2008



Kevin Sheedy, AFL 150-Year Ambassador

Kevin Sheedy made more than 90 appearances at various football-related activities throughout Australia in 2008. He visited every state and territory, and also visited the United States and South Africa.

During the year, Sheedy:

- Appeared at 150-Year 'Roadtrain' activities around Australia, including Melbourne, Ballarat, Hobart, Adelaide, Canberra, Merimbula, Moyston, Brisbane and Toowoomba.
- Attended the AFL Northern Territory Grand Final in Darwin and the Tiwi Island Grand Final.
- Was a guest of the USAFL at its national championships in Colorado Springs.
- Toured South Africa with the AIS-AFL Academy squad.
- Was keynote speaker at AFL national coaching conference on the Gold Coast.
- Was assistant coach of the Victorian team in the Hall of Fame Tribute Match at the MCG.
- Was involved in management and promotion of the 2008 International Cup in Melbourne and Warrnambool and was keynote speaker at the official dinner at Crown Palladium.
- Was keynote speaker at West Australian Football Hall of Fame function.
- Spoke at the launch of the \$14 million Australian Football stadium in Townsville.

Toyota AFL Grand Final pre-match entertainment. Some 10,000 lithographs of the painting were also distributed to various markets, including schools, community leagues and clubs, Australian Football International Cup participants, 500 small businesses and a selection of major corporations.

- *Footy Shorts* – a short film competition run in conjunction with the Melbourne International Film Festival that asked entrants to make a film based on what footy meant to them. More than 50 entries were received and tickets sold out for two screenings.
- *Focus on Footy* – a photographic exhibition held in the Crown Atrium in Melbourne that featured portraits of the game's personalities and characters, captured by 10 of Australia's leading photographers. The exhibition was the backdrop to the 2008 Brownlow Medal red carpet event.



BROADCASTING & COMMERCIAL OPERATIONS

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER – GILLON McLACHLAN

STRATEGIC PLANNING & CLUB SUPPORT

GENERAL MANAGER – ANDREW CATTERALL

SHINING TIGER: Richmond speedster Richard Tambling was in full flight in the 22-point win over Melbourne at Telstra Dome in round 12.

BUILDING ON PARTNERSHIPS

The AFL has extended long-standing agreements with major sponsors and consolidated relationships with broadcast and media partners.

In 2008, the Broadcasting and Commercial Operations Department consolidated and strengthened its relationship with key partners. In what is one of the biggest sponsorship agreements in Australian sport, the AFL's premier partner and naming rights sponsor, Toyota, extended its long-standing association with the code, agreeing to terms for a further three years, through to the end of the 2011 season. The six-year partnership between the AFL and NAB was also extended until the end of the 2011 season – ensuring the continued growth of NAB AFL Auskick, the NAB Rising Stars Talent Pathway Program and the NAB Cup and NAB Challenge match series.

Importantly, while these partners support football at the AFL level, they maintain a strong focus on grassroots and community football.

I would like to thank Toyota and NAB in particular for their continued support and look forward to working together with both companies until 2011 and beyond.

I also extend my thanks and appreciation to all the AFL's corporate, government and broadcast partners for their invaluable support.

Television

The 2008 Toyota AFL Premiership season was the second under the current domestic broadcast rights agreement. The AFL consolidated the relationships with its television broadcast partners, the Seven Network, Network Ten and Foxtel and achieved a number of outstanding audience results.

The Seven and Ten networks continued to share the terrestrial free-to-air rights, embracing innovation and technological opportunities in their broadcasts of four Toyota AFL Premiership Season matches per round, the Toyota AFL Finals Series and the Brownlow Medal count.

Foxtel continued its partnership with the AFL in 2008, broadcasting the remaining four matches per round on subscription channel Fox Sports and achieving a three per cent year-on-year increase in its average AFL match viewership. As in 2007, the four matches were broadcast live nationally, in the Saturday afternoon, Saturday night, Sunday early and Sunday twilight timeslots.

Audiences

Excluding the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony, the 2008 Toyota AFL Grand Final was the highest rating program/event for 2008, watched by an average national audience of 3.24 million people on the Seven Network. Additionally, the Anzac Day clash between Collingwood and

Essendon sustained its large TV audience in 2008, watched by a national audience in excess of 1.5 million people.

Other highlights of the 2008 season included:

- A national cumulative average audience watching AFL matches each week of the premiership season of 4.6 million people.
- The continuation of live Friday night football broadcasts into New South Wales and Queensland markets on Fox Sports Plus Main Event Channel 518.
- The broadcast of all matches for teams located outside Victoria back into their home states on terrestrial free-to-air television.
- A national cumulative average audience for each of the four weeks of the 2008 AFL Finals Series of 3.6 million people.
- An average viewership of more than 1.1 million people for the telecast of the 2008 Brownlow Medal.
- The six most watched matches during the Toyota AFL Premiership season involved Hawthorn, Collingwood, Essendon, Geelong Cats, Adelaide, Richmond, Carlton, Melbourne and Sydney Swans, with an average national audience as follows:
 - Collingwood v Essendon, Anzac Day (round six) – 1,501,000 viewers.
 - Hawthorn v Geelong, Friday night (round 17) – 1,200,000 viewers.
 - Adelaide v Richmond, Sunday (round 19) – 1,179,000 viewers.
 - Collingwood v Carlton, Sunday (round 12) – 1,166,000 viewers.
 - Melbourne v Geelong Cats, Friday night (round 19) – 1,142,000 viewers.
 - Sydney Swans v Collingwood, Saturday night (round 14) – 1,135,000 viewers.
- The most watched Toyota AFL Premiership season match on subscription television was the Round 14 Fremantle v Essendon clash, which attracted an average viewership of 288,000 viewers on Fox Sports 1.

Radio

AFL radio audiences continued to grow in 2008, increasing by 5.2 per cent across the five mainland capital cities, with an average of 1.3 million radio listeners per week across the five surveyed AFL match timeslots.

Radio broadcasts of AFL matches were delivered live into each capital city, with guaranteed coverage of each club into their respective markets. Triple M, 3AW, SEN and ABC continued to provide outstanding service into the Melbourne radio market, as well as relay calls reaching regional Victoria. The AFL also received valuable support outside Victoria through ABC's national radio coverage on *Grandstand*, Triple M's broadcast of Sydney Swans games into Sydney and Brisbane Lions matches into Brisbane, 6PR's broadcast of all West Coast Eagles and Fremantle matches into Perth, FIVEaa's broadcast of Adelaide, Port Adelaide and other games into Adelaide and K-Rock's broadcasts into Geelong. Additionally, the Brisbane Indigenous Media Association



RIDING HIGH: Exciting Essendon defender Patrick Ryder was at his high-flying best against Port Adelaide in round seven. It was acrobatic feats such as this that helped the AFL draw a national average television audience of 4.6 million each week.



WIDE-EYED WONDER:
The 2008 season enthralled fans of all ages, including this young St Kilda supporter who was delighted by the round 10 match against Melbourne.

provided important coverage into remote communities via the National Indigenous Radio Service network.

In addition to live radio broadcasts, radio networks made available match calls to the AFL website for web-streaming purposes. There were 584 AFL match broadcasts streamed on the AFL website, and an average of 1967 users per radio network match stream. A total of 1,149,055 streams were lodged for the 2008 Toyota AFL Premiership Season.

Online

The AFL/Telstra Network remained Australia's leading sports website during the 2008 season for unique users, with an average of more than one million unique visits per round – an increase of nine per cent on the 2007 season.

Features of the AFL/Telstra Network in 2008 (and Telstra's Next G mobile platform) included full match replays, live scores and statistics, in-quarter and post-quarter highlights, a revamped interactive ladder predictor, live radio streaming of all matches, and exclusive player and coach text and video commentary. Competitions and interactive features such as the Aurion V6 AFL Dream Team, NAB AFL Tipping, the AFL Army Award and Toyota Mark and Goal of the Year competition continued to grow in popularity with website visitors.

The official Collingwood website was again the most popular AFL/Telstra club website during the 2008 season, averaging 135,000 unique visits a month. The Hawthorn, Carlton and Geelong Cats club websites each drew more 100,000 unique visits a month during the season.

The AFL also created a specific website to celebrate 150 Years of Australian Football. The website was a major vehicle for 150 Years events and promotions and offered opportunities for community leagues and clubs to provide information about their history, players, volunteers and events.

AFL Fixture

The 2009 fixture was again prepared using Optimal Planning Solutions' specialised sports scheduling software. The AFL's 2009 fixture will feature a number of initiatives, including the trial of timeslots outside the normal standard round of one Friday night match, two Saturday afternoon games, two Saturday night games and three Sunday matches. It was decided to retain the 2008 fixture feature whereby clubs were not required to play each other once by round 15. Highlights of the 2009 fixture include:

- The opening round of the season to include a Friday night re-match of the 2008 Grand Final between Geelong and Hawthorn.
- Four Anzac Day matches on Saturday, April 25, with Essendon to host Collingwood at the MCG, Hawthorn to play West Coast Eagles at Aurora Stadium in the first twilight/night match at the venue, North Melbourne to play Richmond at Telstra Dome, and Fremantle hosting a home night match against Sydney Swans to again honour Len Hall.
- Premiership season matches played in all states and territories.
- The scheduling of three matches at Gold Coast Stadium (rounds seven, 10 and 14) with Carlton, St Kilda and Richmond each to host a match at the venue.
- Sydney Swans to again host four matches at ANZ Stadium, against Hawthorn (round two), West Coast Eagles (eight), Collingwood (12) and Geelong Cats (20).
- A Monday night premiership season match between Collingwood and St Kilda in round seven.
- No consecutive travels involving a trip to Perth for any club.

Corporate Partners

The AFL is delighted to be associated with such leaders in Australian business and industry as:

Premier Partner



Protected Partners



Official Partners



Promotional Partners



Toyota Motor Corporation Australia

In 2008, Toyota concluded its fifth year as title sponsor of the AFL Premiership Season, AFL Finals Series and Grand Final, Toyota AFL Mark and Goal of the Year, the Brownlow Medal function and key events in support of AFL Grand Final week. Toyota has quickly established itself as a key element of all things AFL.

Toyota's partner integration and active leverage of the relationship is embodied via:

- The extension of the Great Moments in Football advertising campaign with two new commercials in 2008 featuring Bruce Doull and Kevin Bartlett taking to 10 the number of executions in this campaign.
- Its naming rights partnership with the Victorian team for the Hall of Fame Tribute Match in May.
- Ongoing development of the Good for Footy community support program that has delivered more than \$1 million to regional and community football clubs throughout the country.
- A growing commitment to engage and interact with AFL fans via the Toyota AFL Grand Final week 'Live' site at Federation Square and the provision of vehicles to support major Grand Final week activity, including the Toyota AFL Grand Final parade and Toyota AFL Grand Final retiring legends motorcade.
- Its naming rights partnership of the Toyota International Rules Series against Ireland.

Foster's Australia

As Carlton Draught is the "beer behind footy", we look forward to working with Foster's in coming years to maintain that brand association with our game at all levels nationally.

The highlights of the partnership with Foster's included:

- Carlton Draught's irreverent take on its AFL association via its 'Bound for Glory' television campaign.
- Presenting Powderfinger, the AFL's key musical act on Grand Final day during pre-match entertainment and post-match at the Centre Square hospitality facility.
- Crown Lager hosting the Brownlow Red Carpet event and the Brownlow After Party, which continue to grow as key elements on football's night of nights.

Coca-Cola

Coca-Cola remains a strong supporter of football at all levels and continues to support a range of activities from grassroots through to the AFL level. In 2008, Coca-Cola again supported 15 of the 16 AFL clubs in addition to its partnership with the AFL.

Coca-Cola continues to leverage the Powerade brand via the AFL through connecting the hydration needs of the elite athletes playing our game and its suite of products.

The ongoing development of specific Powerade products for pre-match, in-match and post-match recovery needs are a standard part of the game.

The highlights of the partnership with Coca-Cola included:

- Naming rights sponsorship of the Coca-Cola AFL All-Australian team announcement and function.
- Naming rights sponsorship of the Grand Final post-match concert at Federation Square featuring The Script and Gyroscope and giving the crowd of more than 15,000 the chance to see Hawthorn's premiership team.

National Australia Bank

NAB continued its long association with the AFL in 2008 with an ongoing focus on identifying and helping the next generation of AFL players achieve their dreams.

This association starts with NAB AFL Auskick, through the successful NAB AFL Rising Stars program and culminates in young players making their AFL debuts via the NAB Cup.

In a historic step for our Indigenous game, the AFL, in partnership with NAB, played the opening match of the 2008 NAB Cup pre-season competition in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates.

As both Australian Football and NAB celebrated their 150th anniversaries in 2008, we partnered with the NAB 150 Roadshow via our interactive football showcase The Australian Football Experience. This event took our game to more than 200 regional centres and local communities throughout the country.

Qantas

Qantas is the official airline of the AFL and this year also continued as principal partner of the Qantas AFL Kickstart program, a key component of the AFL's Indigenous programs.

As part of this program, Qantas and the AFL brought together 50 Indigenous footballers from around Australia to Melbourne in July to participate in the Qantas AFL Kickstart camp, a week-long series of activities that do much more than prepare footballers for a playing future. Activities included:

- Training sessions with AFL coaching staff.
- Tours of the National Sports Museum and the MCG.
- Playing a match on the MCG as a curtain-raiser to the round 16 Saturday clash between Richmond and Essendon.
- Team-building and personal development activities with the involvement of AFL players and other Indigenous community role models, including Qantas ambassador Catherine Freeman.

This camp not only gives these footballers an insight into life on an AFL list, but more importantly it prepares and helps them develop as leaders in their local communities.

Defence Force Recruiting

The AFL formed a partnership with Defence Force Recruiting in 2007 and actively engaged with football fans, match attendees and viewers to highlight the career options with Australian Army, Air Force and Navy.

The AFL Army Award reflects public recognition of on-field player actions that demonstrate the key elements of life in the Army – courage, teamwork and initiative. It was fitting that in 2008 this award was won by one of Richmond's emerging stars and future leaders, Brett Deledio.

Events and Hospitality

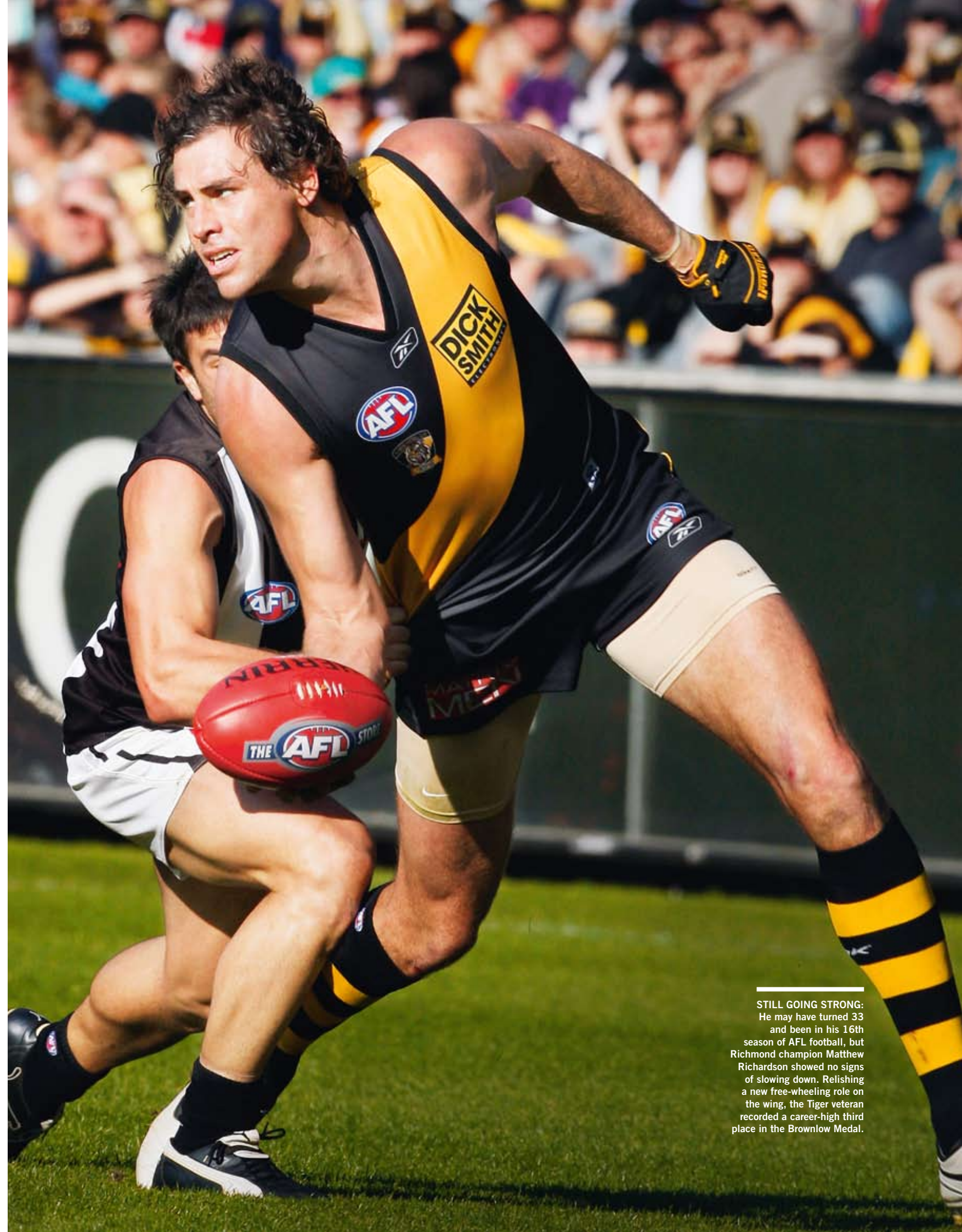
This year was a busy one for the AFL Events and Hospitality Department, with the Australian Football 150 Years celebrations creating a number of new events.

The department has four areas of operations: match-day functions, major events, the Premiership Club and Grand Final week events.

Match-Day Functions

Match-day functions are official functions held during the NAB Cup, Toyota AFL Premiership Season and all Toyota AFL Finals Series matches.

During the NAB Cup, about 1200 guests were entertained across six functions in different locations around Australia.



STILL GOING STRONG: He may have turned 33 and been in his 16th season of AFL football, but Richmond champion Matthew Richardson showed no signs of slowing down. Relishing a new free-wheeling role on the wing, the Tiger veteran recorded a career-high third place in the Brownlow Medal.

GAME-BREAKER: Young Adelaide star Bernie Vince shows his delight after kicking a goal in his best-on-ground performance in the six-point win over arch rival Port Adelaide in round three.



LEADERS: Former Hawthorn great Jason Dunstall interviews captain Chris Judd (Carlton) and vice-captain Tom Harley (Geelong) at the All-Australian function.

The premiership season saw the AFL entertain more than 3500 guests at key games at Telstra Dome and the MCG in Melbourne and ANZ Stadium in Sydney.

The AFL held official functions at each of the finals matches around the country and throughout the year 31 match-day functions were held, with more than 7800 guests.

Major Events

The Toyota AFL Premiership Season launch, Hall of Fame induction dinner, NAB Rising Star lunch, Coca-Cola All-Australian function and Brownlow Medal count were key major events on the AFL calendar.

The Australian Football Hall of Fame induction dinner saw the attendance this year of 50 of the best players in the competition who were taking part in the Hall of Fame Tribute match.

The Brownlow Medal function, in particular, covered by Network Ten, was regarded as one of the best Brownlow nights ever.

Grand Final Week Events

The Toyota AFL Grand Final week 'Live' site at Federation Square saw unprecedented attendances, driven by strong media support from our partners.

Some 247,600 fans visited the site, up from 212,500 visitors in 2008, a 14 per cent increase. This was due to an increase in the quality and quantity of activities and stage presentations and increased PR activity through the expanded involvement of our broadcast partners.

The department also coordinated the Grand Final parade and the Grand Final pre-match entertainment. The parade attracted more than 90,000 fans to the city.

The pre-match entertainment included a motorcade for retiring greats and 2008 Hall of Fame inductees, performances by rock band Powderfinger and Ian Moss and the arrival of the cup from the top of the Great Southern Stand.

The two leading females from the musical *Wicked*, Lucy Durack and Amanda Harrison, sang the national anthem.

The Seriously Party, a joint venture between the AFL and Network Ten, saw footballers and television personalities join to celebrate Grand Final week on the Wednesday night before Grand Final day.

The September Club, our corporate partners village on Grand Final day, hosted 1750 guests, up 250 from last year. Guests enjoyed a full day's entertainment, with hospitality pre-match, tickets to the game and post-match hospitality and concert with Pete Murray.

Centre Square, in its second year, established itself as the place to be on Grand Final day. The AFL worked with clubs to build a corporate hospitality village where more than 3000 guests enjoyed pre-match hospitality, tickets to the game and a post-match concert with Pete Murray and Powderfinger.

Premiership Club

There was a 20 per cent increase in membership of The Premiership Club, with some 400 members in total.

All major events for the Premiership Club were well attended, including the season launch and functions on Anzac Day and during the finals.

The introduction of a dedicated customer service resource continued to be a major benefit enjoyed by members.

In 2009, initiatives will include an exclusive members-only lounge bar at Telstra Dome.

Consumer Products

Retail sales of AFL licensed products increased by 10 per cent in 2008, reaching an estimated \$165 million through more than 20,000 unique products.

There was 40 per cent growth in the DVD category, thanks to the success of the Geelong Cats and Hawthorn premierships titles and back catalogue, as well as the introduction of new club DVD gift packs.

The player product range also increased to include player figurines and a sticker range, boosting revenue to the players by more than 35 per cent on the 2007 season.

The Australian Football 150 years celebrations saw a choice of official AFL Australian legal tender commemorative coins, publishing of *The Australian Game of Football* book and a range of Big V and Dream Team guernseys.

Two new AFL stores opened in Victoria, in Doncaster and Werribee, bringing the total to 18.

AFL Publishing

The AFL's publishing partner, The Slattery Media Group (AFL Publishing), produced a range of publications, including the AFL's weekly game-day publication the *AFL Record*, along with special commemorative titles including *Harvs: St Kilda Legend* and *Hawthorn – A Perfect 10*.

A key undertaking in 2008 was the production and release of *The Australian Game of Football*, a detailed chronicle of the game's first 150 years. More than 30,000 copies were sold this year.



GREAT READING: Among the official AFL publications produced in 2008 were (from left) *AFL JSquad*, the *AFL Record* and *AFL Record Season Guide 2008*.

Attendance

The 2008 Toyota AFL Premiership Season saw a new attendance record of 7,083,015, eclipsing the benchmark set during the 2007 season by 35,734.

The season was capped off with 100,012 fans attending the 2008 Toyota AFL Grand Final, the highest figure since 1986.

Overall attendance for the year, including the NAB Cup and NAB Challenge series matches, was 7,426,306, also a new mark.

The top five clubs in terms of their average attendance per home game were:

■ Collingwood	59,213
■ Carlton	48,589
■ Essendon	46,368
■ Richmond	43,548
■ Adelaide	40,678

The highlights of attendance by venue included:

- 46 premiership season matches at the MCG attended by 2,264,466 people at an average of 49,228.
- 46 premiership season matches at Telstra Dome attended by 1,740,573 people at an average of 37,839.
- Four premiership season matches at ANZ Stadium attended by 183,360 people at an average of 45,840.

Ticketing

Nationally the AFL generates more than 6.5 million tickets per annum, across 12 key venues with multiple ticketing and membership programs. More than 60 per cent of ticket volume is delivered through the two major Victorian venues, the MCG and Telstra Dome.

The AFL announced that ticket prices for the 2009 AFL premiership season would remain at 2008 levels.

As part of the *Next Generation* strategy launched in 2006, the AFL committed to keeping general admission prices as affordable and accessible for as many fans as possible.

Club Membership

For the eighth consecutive year, AFL clubs recorded a record level of total membership, with 574,091 members, an increase of eight per cent on the previous record of 532,697 in 2007. One in every 37 Australians was a member of an AFL club in 2008.

Eleven of the 16 AFL clubs posted a year-on-year increase in membership, highlighted by an increase of 45.8 per cent for North Melbourne, 33.4 per cent for Hawthorn and 28 per cent for Essendon. Geelong, Collingwood and Carlton all secured membership growth of more than 10 per cent.

Twelve of the 16 AFL clubs – Adelaide, West Coast Eagles, Fremantle, Collingwood, Essendon, Hawthorn, Carlton, Geelong Cats, Port Adelaide, North Melbourne, Richmond and St Kilda – had a membership base of more than 30,000.

AFL Membership

AFL Membership grew in 2008, reaching a total figure of 49,150. The breakdown of membership included 29,966 full members, 16,924 silver members and 2,260 absentee members. Some 41,882 were club support members, representing 8.5 per cent of the total club membership nationally.

ATTENDANCE SUMMARY, 2007-2008

	2008	2007	Variance	% Variance
NAB Regional Challenge	103,393	108,417	-5024	-4.63%
NAB Cup	239,898	244,484	-4586	-1.88%
Toyota AFL Premiership Season	6,511,255	6,475,521	35,734	0.55%
Toyota AFL Finals Series	571,760	574,424	-2664	-0.46%
TOTALS	7,426,306	7,402,846	23,460	0.32%

ATTENDANCE BY VENUE, 2007-2008

	2008			2007			Variance
	games	Attendance	Average	games	Attendance	Average	
MCG	46	2,264,466	49,228	45	2,123,400	47,187	4.33%
Telstra Dome	46	1,740,573	37,839	46	1,674,219	36,396	3.96%
Subiaco	22	808,831	36,765	22	860,916	39,133	-6.05%
AAMI Stadium	22	709,713	32,260	22	768,482	34,931	-7.65%
Gabba	11	309,405	28,128	12	340,033	28,336	-0.74%
Skilled Stadium	8	185,106	23,138	8	175,718	21,965	5.34%
ANZ Stadium	4	183,360	45,840	3	190,177	63,392	-27.69%
SCG	7	177,809	25,401	8	201,776	25,222	0.71%
Aurora Stadium	4	70,113	17,528	4	69,610	17,403	0.72%
Gold Coast Stadium, Carrara	3	25,519	8506	3	33,958	11,319	-24.85%
Manuka Oval	2	24,987	12,494	2	25,783	12,892	-3.09%
TIO Stadium (Marrara Oval)	1	11,373	11,373	1	11,449	11,449	-0.66%
TOTALS	176	6,511,255	36,996	176	6,475,521	36,793	0.55%

HOME GAME ATTENDANCE BY CLUB, 2007-2008

	2008		2007		Variance
	Attendance	Average	Attendance	Average	
Adelaide	447,455	40,678	461,910	41,992	-3.13%
Brisbane Lions	309,405	28,128	317,325	28,848	-2.50%
Carlton	534,483	48,589	457,418	41,583	16.85%
Collingwood	651,345	59,213	603,881	54,898	7.86%
Essendon	510,051	46,368	575,232	52,294	-11.33%
Fremantle	394,643	35,877	412,213	37,474	-4.26%
Geelong Cats	324,211	29,474	347,016	31,547	-6.57%
Hawthorn	439,732	39,976	365,052	33,187	20.46%
Melbourne	338,551	30,777	324,903	29,537	4.20%
North Melbourne	304,338	27,667	308,850	28,077	-1.46%
Port Adelaide	262,258	23,842	306,572	27,870	-14.45%
Richmond	479,027	43,548	420,807	38,255	13.84%
St Kilda	407,370	37,034	417,135	37,921	-2.34%
Sydney Swans	361,169	32,834	391,953	35,632	-7.85%
West Coast Eagles	414,188	37,653	448,703	40,791	-7.69%
Western Bulldogs	333,029	30,275	316,551	28,777	5.21%
TOTALS	6,511,255	36,996	6,475,521	36,793	0.55%

Membership Shared Services

The AFL continues to provide membership administrative support and guidance to clubs through the AFL Membership shared service program. In 2008, four clubs (Melbourne, North Melbourne, St Kilda and the Western Bulldogs) utilised the service with positive outcomes. In 2009, three additional clubs (Collingwood, Geelong Cats and Hawthorn) will also join the membership shared service program, with about 250,000 members being supported by this initiative.



TO THE VICTOR THE SPOILS: Geelong skipper Tom Harley and Hawthorn captain Sam Mitchell with the premiership cup at the Grand Final Parade.

AFL MEMBERSHIP CLUB SUPPORT

Club	AFL Club Support Adults	AFL Club Support Conc	AFL Club Support Juniors	TOTAL AFL Club Supports	% of TOTAL
Adelaide	348	50	29	427	1%
Brisbane Lions	512	70	66	648	2%
Carlton	4518	703	758	5979	14%
Collingwood	7525	1037	1402	9964	24%
Essendon	5021	672	778	6471	15%
Fremantle	126	10	11	147	0%
Geelong Cats	2746	445	341	3532	8%
Hawthorn	2041	269	266	2576	6%
Melbourne	1288	214	161	1663	4%
North Melbourne	1384	168	238	1790	4%
Port Adelaide	148	15	23	186	0%
Richmond	2991	384	655	4030	10%
St Kilda	1593	259	314	2166	5%
Sydney Swans	607	92	76	775	2%
West Coast Eagles	229	13	25	267	1%
Western Bulldogs	937	165	159	1261	3%
TOTALS	32,014	4566	5302	41,882	100%

CLUB MEMBERSHIP

Club	Adults	Concessions	Juniors	TOTAL Members At 30/06/08	% Variance
Adelaide	37,747	4977	5996	48,720	-4.4%
West Coast Eagles	33,565	6124	5174	44,863	-2.4%
Fremantle	31,286	4131	7949	43,366	0.1%
Collingwood	29,985	4122	8391	42,498	10.1%
Essendon	26,517	4075	11,355	41,947	28.0%
Hawthorn	27,546	3150	10,740	41,436	33.4%
Carlton	25,476	3717	10,167	39,360	11.1%
Geelong Cats	24,139	5335	7376	36,850	22.1%
Port Adelaide	26,125	2010	6050	34,185	0.3%
North Melbourne	20,379	3464	8757	32,600	45.8%
Richmond	18,585	3485	8750	30,820	2.6%
St Kilda	20,175	3639	6249	30,063	-1.1%
Melbourne	21,925	2153	5541	29,619	5.5%
Western Bulldogs	18,520	3751	6035	28,306	-1.5%
Sydney Swans	18,842	3595	4284	26,721	-7.1%
Brisbane Lions	17,235	2354	3148	22,737	3.5%
TOTALS	398,047	60,082	115,962	574,091	8.0%

AFL Stadia and Venues

Working with stadium managers and all levels of government to provide world-class facilities for people attending AFL matches continued to be a major priority for the AFL Commission in 2008.

Providing high-quality facilities and a safe environment in which people of all ages can attend AFL matches is critical to increasing crowds, with projects at various stages of development in cities including Adelaide, Perth, Melbourne, Sydney and the Gold Coast.

Perth

In February 2008, West Australian Premier Alan Carpenter announced a \$1.1 billion multi-purpose stadium would be built at Kitchener Park, Subiaco, as the new home for the West Coast Eagles and Fremantle.

After a change in government in Western Australia, the new Premier, Colin Barnett, announced the project would be reviewed as part of a broader review of major capital works.

Mr Barnett subsequently announced the West Australian Government would proceed with the replacement of the stadium at Subiaco Oval. The government indicated it would choose between proceeding with the new stadium or the complete rebuilding of Subiaco Oval, section by section.

The quality of facilities for the public in some sections of Subiaco Oval has fallen well behind what is available at other stadiums in which

AFL matches are played, while the capacity is restricting the number of people who can attend games involving the West Coast Eagles and Fremantle.

Progressing the stadium development in Perth will be a major project for 2009.

Adelaide

During the year, the South Australian Government announced it would provide \$100 million to assist the South Australian National Football League redevelop AAMI Stadium, the home of Adelaide and Port Adelaide and the SANFL.

In late 2008, however, the government announced it would defer the provision of the funding for three years, due to the global economic crisis.

The South Australian Government, however, agreed to provide \$12.6 million to the SANFL, a figure it had previously committed. The SANFL indicated this funding would be used to upgrade member and public facilities at AAMI Stadium.

The SANFL has developed a master plan for AAMI Stadium, recognising that, while the venue has served football well since it opened 35 years ago, facilities for supporters are outdated.

Other upgrades, including stadium lighting and transport, will begin in 2009 with completion in 2010.

Sydney

Work was completed on the \$70 million Victor Trumper Stand at the SCG, which will be officially opened in AFL mode in round four of the 2009 season when the Sydney Swans host Carlton in the first Saturday afternoon game staged in Sydney.

The SCG Trust has also completed a master plan for the continued redevelopment of the SCG, which will see capacity increased to 54,000.

Construction of a joint AFL and cricket facility at Blacktown Olympic Park started in 2008. The new AFL club to be established in Sydney will be based at this facility, which is being built in partnership with Blacktown City Council and the New South Wales Government.

Melbourne

The Australian Football Hall of Fame and Museum opened in the Olympic Stand at the MCG during 2008.

Community Facilities

In conjunction with the various state and territory football bodies, the AFL also supports the development of facilities for community clubs and leagues.

The AFL's community facilities fund has supported projects in all parts of Australia for more than 440 local clubs and with a total value of \$144 million.



STATE-OF-THE-ART: Work has been completed on the new \$70 million Victor Trumper Stand at the SCG. It will be unveiled to AFL football in round four, 2009, when the Sydney Swans play Carlton in a historic first Saturday afternoon clash.



PAYING THEIR RESPECTS: Essendon and Collingwood players line up before the Anzac Day clash which drew 88,999 fans, the biggest attendance of the home and away season.

LEAGUE EXPANSION THE KEY

The AFL's major long-term strategic plan for competition expansion has seen the groundwork laid for new teams in Queensland and New South Wales.

Among the key functions performed by the Strategic Planning and Club Support Department in 2008 was managing and overseeing the AFL Commission's major long-term strategy of competition expansion. Considerable work was undertaken in the past year in establishing a new club based on the Gold Coast by 2011 with the GC17 bid group. The AFL Commission is expected to make a final decision in 2009 on awarding a licence for the Gold Coast Football Club to participate in the AFL.

As indicated in Chief Executive Officer Andrew Demetriou's report in this document, the AFL Commission announced in November, 2008, that the submission by the GC17 bid group had met the criteria set by the AFL Commission for the Gold Coast club to be established.

Work also continued with the group led by General Manager for AFL NSW/ACT Dale Holmes to establish a second club based in Sydney.

The club will have its training and administration base at Blacktown Olympic Park, where work started on the joint AFL and cricket facility which is being developed in partnership with Blacktown City Council and the New South Wales Government.

The first stage of this facility, which will include two AFL standard grounds, will be completed in May, 2009.

Strategic Partnership Fund

The Strategic Partnership Fund exists to co-fund joint projects between the AFL, clubs, state bodies and partners that contribute to growth and improvement across the industry.

In 2008, the AFL Commission approved up to \$1 million in funding for more than 20 projects that were grouped into three broad streams:

- Finance and commercial.
- Membership and customer management.
- Community and fan development.



LOOKING AHEAD: AFL Chief Executive Officer Andrew Demetriou opened the industry conference, the final event of the game's 150-Year celebrations.

The strategic partnership fund was also the primary source of funds for the Australian Football industry conference, held in November, 2008.

Some of the major strategic partnership fund projects included:

- Conducting a detailed analysis of the total football economy at the MCG and Telstra Dome to determine the share of revenue generated that is captured by the AFL clubs.
- Development of spatial mapping software that combines participation registrations for community and school football with facilities audits and population statistics to enable better planning for growth.
- Development of standards to enable Australian Football to be played on artificial turf surfaces, helping community clubs combat effects of drought and participation growth. An approval program has been developed to help local councils work with manufacturers to develop appropriate facilities.
- Implementation of a new events and sponsorship management system at two AFL clubs, and further development of software to enable AFL club doctors to better manage player medical issues.
- Continued advancements in membership and customer management across the clubs, including the live trialling of new membership packages at Collingwood and Port Adelaide, the Auskick Club Connect program that helped 30,000 Auskickers and their families experience a live AFL game of their choice, and the successful launch of the Saints Central web experience with over 8000 registered users.
- Continued development of the Bulldogs Friendly School Program to take the Western Bulldogs and AFL to diverse communities in Melbourne's western suburbs, the development of programs for Melbourne FC to engage with the local community in the City of Casey and support for Hawthorn FC to connect with local communities and schools in Tasmania.

AFL Industry Conference

The department played a leading role in the organisation of an AFL industry conference which brought together more than 240 people from all sections of the game and was the final event of the year in which we celebrated the 150th anniversary of the founding of Australian Football.

Titled *Play On – The Future of Australian Football in Focus*, the conference discussed and debated a range of topics, including future challenges and opportunities, fan and community development, diversity, leadership, how fans will experience the game through new media and technology, the role of sports science, and government and sport.

Former NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue was a keynote speaker at the conference. He was NFL Commissioner from 1989 until his retirement in 2006 and, before that, served as a legal advisor to the NFL for 20 years.

During his period in office, the NFL enjoyed rapid growth and stable relations with the NFL Players' Association to become America's most popular sport and arguably the most successful professional sports league in the world. An edited version of Mr Tagliabue's keynote address starts on page 46.

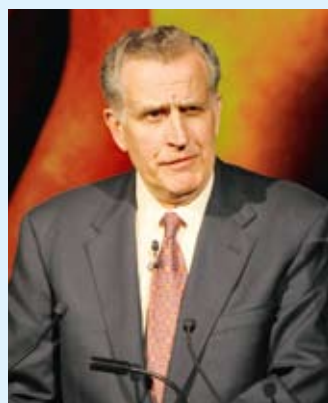


BATTLE LINES: Collingwood's 2008 best and fairest Dane Swan does his best to hold out St Kilda defender Max Hudghton in the round eight clash at Telstra Dome.

‘IF IT AIN’T BROKE, FIX IT ANYWAY’

My NFL experience taught me several critical things about leadership, perhaps under three headings: anticipate, innovate and reconcile.

- Anticipate the future, create the future.
- Innovate – this is critical because society changes, our populations change. Revisiting the game and its structure and its rules is critically important.
- The third point – reconcile. It’s another way of saying build consensus. It’s another way of saying make certain that everyone is pulling in the same direction, that all the oars are synchronised, that you can have differences of opinion; you can have differences of philosophy; you can have sharp differences on tactics but at some point those competing views have to be reconciled and a consensus has to be created and everyone has to pull in that direction.



Leadership

Leadership comes at all levels and in many, many ways – and the leadership from the bottom is far more important than the leadership from the top. I found in my years with the NFL that one of the critical elements of leadership is listening – listening to the fans, listening to the players, listening to the coaches, listening to everybody in your organisation, the people who are out there working with your partners, working with the teams, working with the fans, working with community organisations. They, in many cases, have a better sense of

what your needs are, what your strong points are, what your failings are.

So they lead. They lead in part by organising and creating programs but they also lead by coming back to the organisation with ideas and with a sense of what the fans want and what would be great for the game.

I think your success has been grounded on the fundamentals: a great game, tremendous players, passionate fans and, as a result, you’ve become Australia’s No. 1 sports attraction and a sports attraction that is recognised globally.

Strategic goals

Let me move on to another set of subjects and just talk a little about how we tried to grow our game, what our strategic goals were in the NFL.

About 15 years ago, we had our key people, including some owners, in an off-site conference similar to this and we tried to distil our strategic goals and tried to make explicit what had been implicit in the first five or seven years of my term as Commissioner and we came up with six very simple goals and put them on less than a page.

The first goal for the NFL was to continue to cultivate America’s passion for the sport of NFL football.

Our second goal that we articulated a decade and a half ago was to ensure that the game on the field is outstanding: competition is our product.

The third goal was to have fan-friendly stadiums for all teams in the league and to pursue policies and to present a product that would fill those stadiums every week and, in the past five seasons, we’ve sold out

about 97 per cent of our games; in the past five seasons in a 32-team league, probably 27 or 28 of those 32 teams have sold every ticket for every game.

Our fourth goal that we identified a decade and a half ago was to guarantee great television. Today, I guess the word is ‘media’. Great television that reaches a mass audience but also serves the local market of every one of the component teams. This requires a substantial effort balancing the mass audience with the local audience and it becomes particularly complicated now in the digital and online technological revolution.

Our fifth goal was to continue to support the development of the game at all levels, especially among America’s youth, to ensure that the game at all levels remains strong for future generations.

And here our key point, I think, was to support the development of the game at all levels, not to take it over, not to control it, not to substitute our judgement for the judgement of parents, coaches, administrators, school administrators as well as club and not-for-profit program administrators but to support the game which we’ve done through grants, which we’ve done through coaching clinics, which we’ve done in many ways but we have been very steadfast about not taking it over and dominating it through the NFL.

Our sixth goal was to continue to expand our presence in our fan base, both domestically and internationally. I think in many ways if you do the first five, you achieve those first five goals, you will necessarily expand, you will have done the things that will enable your fan base to grow and hopefully to grow internationally as well as in your home market.

League structure

Your business model, like ours, is a complex combination of two simple ideas: robust competition on the field; tremendous competition and conflict between the teams on the field; passionate fans supporting those teams, thrilled at the competition on the field, but cooperation and partnership off the field; cooperation and partnership in developing the game, innovating the rules of the game, developing television arrangements that work for the fans of all teams and being open to change and innovation for the future.

Your model, like ours, includes critically important elements of revenue sharing. Your model, like ours, includes League management of television. Your model, like ours, includes complex and effective arrangements for the fair and competitive allocation of players, with one element being a salary cap, and your model, like ours, includes League responsibility for the quality of the game, not just officiating but for the rules, not just for the hiring of the best talent in the League office but efforts to help each of the teams grow and develop extraordinary talent to manage the game at the team level.

So, in short, the way I look at your League, it’s done three things that I think are critically important. First, it has lived with a simple rule – “If it ain’t broke, fix it anyway.”

When I took over as Commissioner, I had come from a legal background. I had come from a family with a father who was a small businessman and, so many times in my earlier life, people would say, “There are only 24 hours in a day, so if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.”

I quickly realised in the NFL and in competitive team sports in the United States, you had to flip that 180 degrees; you had to get through to your organisation the simple point, “It can always be better. If it ain’t broke, fix it anyway”, because whatever you’re doing, whatever you’re responsible for, there’s a better way of doing it.

So no one in the organisation is entitled to go out of a meeting or go meet business partners or fans or teams and say, “Well, in my area it

ain’t broke, so we’re going to stay with the status quo.” You can’t have that and you haven’t had that.

Second, you’ve had a governance structure, a commission structure and leadership, which has produced consensus and that requires something that’s very difficult to tolerate in an organisation: conflict. Conflict is hard to deal with. Conflict between people, clashes of ideas, makes most of us uncomfortable, especially when it’s your responsibility to deal with conflicting managers, coaches, player groups, owners.

But it cannot be avoided when you have strong, healthy, smart, creative people in your organisation. You are going to inevitably have different points of view and you will inevitably want to encourage different points of view, because out of the clash of ideas will come new and better ways of doing things.

So the challenge is not to stifle the conflict or avoid the conflict; that produces mediocrity. The challenge is to have a governance structure and leadership at all levels which resolves the conflict in a sensible way that produces an identity of common interests, common values and common grounds for solutions, and you have had that.

The third thing is part of the second point I just mentioned but it stands on its own.

It’s to recognise that what you’re doing every day, every week, every month, every season, every decade is a balancing act.

You’re balancing tradition and innovation. You’re balancing continuity and change.

You’re balancing the best of the past; you’re balancing those things that the fans love, that the fans are familiar with, the history of the game, the history of their teams, the history of their community support of their teams, the history of their teams’ great rivalries: great rivalries which they’ve won and great rivalries and matches which they’ve lost.

But you have to preserve all of that. You have to keep looking ahead, you have to keep innovating without losing the tradition, you have to keep changing and improving, making it better, fixing it if it’s not broken while maintaining continuity with the past. This is a complicated thing. I think you’ve done it extremely well.

Let me close with a couple of comments about the future in two parts: First, your future here at home in Australia and, second, your global future.

When I looked at the NFL in the last five years of my term as CEO and tried to tell our owners, tell our managers, tell our coaches, tell our players what would be our key challenges going forward, I inevitably came back to three and the thing that always struck me was that the three were very different kinds of challenges.

The first was to adapt to the new electronic media, to the technological revolution that our nations and the world are witnessing and experiencing: broadband on demand, interactive, wireless. These were words that I didn’t know in the 20 years that I represented the League. I don’t think they were at the top of my list of issues when I spoke to the owners during the search process in the summer of 1989.

The second big challenge for everyone ahead is to recognise we’re all dealing with more diverse societies.

Diversity has been one of the great strengths of your nation; it’s been one of the great strengths of our nation. We have that in common. We have in common nations which are physically of similar size and we have in common histories with indigenous peoples but we have 325 million people and you have 20-25 million people. But, nonetheless, what has been striking to me in the week that I’ve been here and the years that I have followed your League is the intelligent and proactive way in which you have dealt with diversity.

You have addressed the diversity of Australia, including the Indigenous peoples and the women and the new immigrants from continents from which in the past decades you probably had few immigrants.

We are all experiencing this and we all need to be responsive to those audiences, starting with what we’re all doing, bringing those young people into the game and, through the game, having them understand not just the values of sport, but the values of our societies and enabling them to take away from those sporting experiences, self-esteem and leadership skills that will enable them to thrive in other roles in life.

The third challenge is a continuation of something you’ve done well and I think we’ve done well in the NFL, which is to continue to ensure that there is public respect for everyone associated with the game, with the League, with the AFL in your case, with the NFL in our case.

People will not support individuals they don’t respect.

The public will not support enterprises that it won’t respect. So if you’re going to continue to be supported, and you know this as well as I, it starts with the top, the Commissioner, the team managers, the Commission itself, the players, the coaches, everyone associated with the game, has to understand that there are extraordinarily high expectations for their conduct, for their conduct on the field and for their conduct off the field and that ultimately the success of the enterprise, the passion of the fans and the future of the game, depend upon respect for those associated with the game.

Globalisation

When I speak to groups in the States, I remind them of one thing. We may be a very large population, some 325 million; we may be important, sometimes wisely, sometimes perhaps not so wisely, in global affairs but we’re a tiny slice of the globe today – 325 million Americans, 20-25 million Australians. So, remember, that there are more than six billion other individuals in other nations who are in economies that have been freed up from state control, economies in which there have been political systems that have enabled people to strive and achieve in ways that they haven’t been able to strive and achieve, to learn and to compete, to succeed and fail in past generations, and sport is taking root with many of these people. Not all at once, obviously. It will be an evolutionary change.

In some nations and in some parts of some nations, the standard of living will rise more quickly than for other people in the same nations or in other nations.

But, inevitably, I think we’ll see greater participation in sports, greater access to education. Improvements in quality of life that represent challenges for all of us. But the new reality, I think, is clear and it was summarised pretty well in an edition of *The Economist* in London just before the Olympics:

“Sport has always been international, whether it be the Olympics or exhibition matches or some leagues that have been in competitions that have been international, but now it has clearly become a global business.”

“What is new is the degree of global commercialisation and the spread of sport to emerging markets. Another sign is the international integration of sports labour markets, the talent pool of players. For instance, Brazilian footballers turn up in leagues from the Faroe Islands to Vietnam.”

I think the point here for your sport is that you have amazing athletes making amazing plays in a competition that is structured extraordinarily well. So my recommendation is that, as complex as it is, and it will require hard decisions and investment, continue to take your game beyond Australia; continue to engage in the global world of sports.

Melbourne, November 27, 2008





FOOTBALL OPERATIONS

GENERAL MANAGER – ADRIAN ANDERSON

AS THE CROW FLIES:
A desperate lunge from
Adelaide's Chris Knights
unbalances speedy
Kangaroo Matt Campbell
at AAMI Stadium in
round seven.

HALL OF FAME MATCH HIGHLIGHTS QUALITY SEASON

It was a year of celebration and consolidation for the AFL in 2008 but there will be minor rule changes and interpretations in place for the 2009 Toyota AFL Premiership Season.

The leading 50 players in the AFL provided the highpoint of the 150-year celebrations of Australian Football in 2008, coming together in May for the Hall of Fame Tribute Match at the MCG. The game pitted Victoria against the Dream Team and was played just across from Yarra Park where the first recorded match was contested in 1858 between Melbourne Grammar and Scotch College.

Conceived as a tribute to the great players who had gone before them, the match saw almost every elite AFL player on the field for the one clash for the first time in the game's history.

Victoria, captained by 2007 All-Australian vice-captain Jonathan Brown and coached by Geelong premiership coach Mark Thompson, edged out the Dream Team, led by 2007 All-Australian captain Andrew McLeod under the guidance of Port Adelaide's Grand Final coach Mark Williams.

The AFL greatly appreciated the support of Thompson, Williams, Brown and McLeod, who played key roles in the success of the concept.

The AFL's players, along with the AFLPA, unanimously supported the development of the Tribute Match, with all player and coach match fees donated to charity.

The quality of football produced in front of a crowd of nearly 70,000 reflected the changing game style since the start of the 2007 season, with both sides displaying all their skills in a fast, attacking, contested match.

No new law changes were enacted in 2008, as part of a year of consolidation following significant changes between 2004-06 to ensure the game retained its continuous and free-flowing nature.

The quality of football across the season matched the highest standards set in 2007, particularly from teams such as premier Hawthorn, the Western Bulldogs and the Geelong Cats, who suffered just one loss for the year before their upset defeat to the Hawks on the last Saturday in September.

Laws of the Game

The AFL Commission approved changes to the Laws of the Game for the 2009 Toyota AFL Premiership Season and 2009 NAB Cup, following an extensive period of consultation through 2008.

These were:

1. Four minor rule changes for the 2009 Toyota AFL Premiership Season.
2. Two new interpretations for the 2009 Toyota AFL Premiership Season.
3. One change to the AFL regulations for the 2009 Toyota AFL Premiership Season.
4. Introduction of three 2009 NAB Cup/NAB Challenge rules that may be introduced for the 2009 Toyota AFL Premiership Season.

5. A revision of the rules used in the 2008 NAB Cup, which has seen some rules retained and others discarded to bring the NAB Cup more in line with the Toyota AFL Premiership Season.

1. Minor rule changes for the 2009 Toyota AFL Premiership Season

- a. Recall of badly offline bounces: An umpire will recall a field or centre bounce when the bounce does not allow for the ball to be contested by both teams.
- b. Free kick for misconduct: A free kick can be paid for incidents of misconduct, such as interfering with an injured player. Previously, misconduct was the only offence which was reportable but for which a free kick could not be paid.
- c. Restart of play following a stretcher: If one team has possession when play is stopped for a stretcher, that same team will retain possession when play is re-started.
- d. 50m penalty awarded after all clear is given but before play has re-started: A free kick to the defending team during this time will be taken where the infringement occurred or 50m from the kick-off line. A free kick to the attacking team during this time will be taken from the centre of the kick-off line or where the infringement occurred.

2. New interpretations for the 2009 Toyota AFL Premiership Season

- Scoring line to be drawn so the back of the line is equal with the back of the padding on the goal posts rather than being through the centre of the posts (to ensure goal umpires are using a consistent frame of reference regardless of their line of sight).
- If the field umpire impedes a player when in the act of setting the mark for a shot on goal, the field umpire will stop play and reset the mark so no player is disadvantaged in this situation.

3. Change to AFL Regulations for the 2009 Toyota AFL Premiership Season

The penalty for an interchange breach will be a free kick plus 50m penalty from wherever play is stopped. Previously, the ball was taken to the centre of the ground and then a 50m penalty was awarded.

In addition to these changes, four boundary umpires will be used on a permanent basis from the 2009 NAB Cup onwards following a successful trial from round 21 through to the Grand Final in the 2008 Toyota AFL Premiership Season.

4. NAB Cup/NAB Challenge rules for potential introduction in the 2009 Toyota AFL Premiership Season

- a. A free kick will be awarded for any deliberate rushed behind. Clubs had raised the issue of deliberate rushed behinds as part of the consultation process. A clear majority of clubs and coaches thought



MARK OF A CHAMPION:
Veteran Swan Michael O'Loughlin shows his flair against Hawthorn at the MCG in round 15. O'Loughlin is the club's games record-holder and is second on the goalkicking list.

that deliberate rushed behinds were having a negative impact on the game and supported the trial of a rule to discourage the tactic.

The option of a free kick for a deliberate rushed behind was adopted because it is the simplest option, the greatest deterrent, and is most consistent with the Laws of the Game.

- b. Umpires to award a 50m penalty in addition to a free kick for players who tackle or hold an opponent after the opponent has disposed of the football, for the purpose of preventing them from taking part in the next act of play or being able to run on to the next contest.
- c. Continue the trial of the no-go zone behind umpires at centre bounces. Each of these three trial rules will be evaluated following the 2009 NAB Cup and NAB Challenge to determine whether it is appropriate for them to be introduced for the 2009 Toyota AFL Premiership Season.

5. Other NAB Cup rules

Feedback from the clubs and coaches indicated they would like to see the rules of the NAB Cup brought more in line with the rules of the Toyota AFL Premiership Season to assist with player preparation.

The following alterations were made to the rules that were part of the 2008 NAB Cup:

- a. Interchange system – removal of the restriction on the number of interchanges permitted that was used in the 2008 NAB Cup and introduction of a system of two substitute players in addition to six standard interchange players.
- b. Removal of the rule allowing play on when ball hits the goal or behind post.
- c. Removal of the ball being thrown back into play 10m in from boundary line.

The rules used in the 2008 NAB Cup to be retained for the 2009 NAB Cup are:

- a. No marks for backward kicks in the defensive half of the ground.
- b. Nine points for a goal from outside 50m.
- c. Ball to be thrown up around the ground.
- d. Distance for a kick to be awarded a mark retained at 20m.

The AFL wishes to acknowledge the clubs, coaches, players, states and fans for their input into the 2008 process, along with all members of the Laws Committee for their work over the year.

During the year former Carlton champion Andrew McKay was appointed to the new role of Game Analysis Manager. McKay serves as an internal resource to monitor and analyse trends in the game, make recommendations for research and drive the consultation process with the clubs on Laws-related matters.

The Laws Committee consists of Adrian Anderson (chairman), Kevin Bartlett, Luke Darcy, Brendon Gale, Matthew Pavlich, Rowan Sawers, Michael Sexton and McKay.

John Halbert retired in 2008 after nine years as a representative. The AFL thanks John for his outstanding contribution. He was a key member of a committee that recommended bold changes which have played a central role in ensuring our game remains a great spectacle and is safe to play.

The following minor changes came into effect under the Laws, for the 2008 season:

Emergency umpire ability to end quarters

Rule 10.4.2 amended to read: “Play in each quarter shall come to an end when any one of the field umpires or **emergency field** umpires hears the siren.”

Relocation of centre square and circle

Rule 4.3 amended to read: “Where a controlling body is satisfied that the area within the centre square and centre circle will prevent the bouncing of the football or is otherwise in an unsuitable condition, it may direct the relocation of the centre square **and or centre circle.**”

2008 NAB Cup Trial Laws

In 2008, the AFL trialed a cap on the number of interchanges allowed for each team in the NAB Cup.

The trial was part of an ongoing research project examining the possible links between increasing interchange rotations, game speed and injury. Subsequent research demonstrated this trial resulted in a reduction in game speed of about seven per cent on the previous year.

Clubs were permitted a maximum of 16 interchanges a quarter (64 a game), with the number of interchange players rising from six to eight for the 2008 NAB Cup.

At centre bounces, a no-go zone for players was marked within which players were not to position themselves when the umpire:

- a) was preparing to bounce;
- b) was in the act of bouncing; or
- c) was exiting via his usual exit path from the stoppage.

Laws of the Game – Interchange Rules

The Sydney Swans were sanctioned \$50,000 for having 19 men on the field during part of the final stages of the last quarter of the round six match against North Melbourne, played at Telstra Dome.

The AFL investigated the matter after receiving a report from the match-day interchange steward, whereby player Jesse White went on to the field late in the last quarter after teammate Kieren Jack had immediately replaced Lewis Roberts-Thomson.

As part of the review of this matter, the AFL determined that its laws relating to the interchange procedures were out-moded for the demands of the modern game.

From round nine, new procedures were introduced and further modified through the season whereby a free kick would be awarded if:

- A team has 19 men on the field (this included a situation where a replacement player enters the playing surface before his teammate has left the playing surface).
- A player does not enter or leave the playing surface through the interchange area (previously he was disqualified from participating in any of the remainder of the match).

The field umpire was able to award a free kick from wherever play was stopped or the centre circle, whichever was the greater penalty. A 50m penalty would then be applied.

Club feedback saw the approach further streamlined and made more efficient for the 2009 season. The penalty for an interchange infringement has been modified to a free kick and 50m penalty.

AFL Tribunal Summary

The 2008 season saw the lowest number of Tribunal hearings on record and the lowest number of charges not sustained by the Tribunal. The AFL was pleased to see a decrease in players charged for contact with a player who had his head over the ball, in line with the 2007 injury survey figures which revealed the lowest number of head and neck injuries to players.

The 2008 season also saw a significant drop in fines and more than 80 per cent of players accept the charge laid by the Match Review Panel. Please note that the Match Review Panel system was introduced in 2005, hence the asterisk for the 2004 year.

AFL TRIBUNAL SUMMARY 2004-08

	2004*	2005	2006	2007	2008
Charges	173	150	137	150	128
Tribunal hearings	123	26	32	42	22
Number of cases not sustained at Tribunal	40	6	11	12	6
Number of players accepting the penalty as set out by the Match Review Panel	-	124	105	108	106
Percentage of players accepting the Match Review Panel classification	-	83%	77%	72%	83%
Matches lost through suspension	117	77	71	71	77
Financial sanctions	\$223,100	\$108,600	\$66,900	\$114,800	\$65,700
Reprimands (includes offences <100 pts)	0	21	36	38	31

AFL Tribunal Review

Changes made for the 2008 season were minor, following excellent feedback from the AFLPA and the 16 clubs. A new offence was added to the Table of Offences: 'Misconduct – Instigator of a Melee', where a player's conduct results in retaliatory action which leads to a melee.

In other specific changes, the words 'unreasonable and unnecessary contact to the face' were added to the wording of the offence for 'Misconduct – Eye Gouging', while the Player Rules and Regulations were widened so that the General Manager of Football Operations or the Tribunal Chairman could take action against any person who did not co-operate with the Tribunal.

At the end of the 2008 season, clubs were asked for feedback in two areas – dangerous tackles and late bumps towards a player off the ball.

Clubs were asked whether further protection was required for a player bumped off the ball when he would not reasonably be expecting contact.

Integrity Services

The AFL appointed Brett Clothier to the new position of Manager of Integrity Services during 2008.

Clothier, a solicitor, joined the AFL from a senior role within Racing Victoria's Integrity Services Department. His key roles are to review and manage Integrity Services at the AFL, further develop the process of managing information received from bookmaking and betting agencies, and the implementation of the Personal Conduct Policy.

North Melbourne club director Ron Joseph was found to have placed two losing bets totalling \$300 on the club in its qualifying final match against Geelong in September, 2007.

Joseph co-operated fully and accepted responsibility for his actions. There was no evidence of any bet against North Melbourne on any occasion and it was determined that:

1. All directors and staff of the North Melbourne Football Club attend an education session conducted by the AFL in relation to their responsibilities under the AFL Regulations and AFL Player Rules; and
2. A financial sanction of \$50,000, all of which is suspended to apply in the event of any further breach of AFL Regulation 19.3 by the North Melbourne Football Club or any person associated with the North Melbourne Football Club.

The AFL also investigated a matter brought to its attention by Hawthorn player Xavier Ellis, in which a relative bet on AFL matches using his account details.

The investigation confirmed no breach of the AFL Regulations, finding that no bets were made by Ellis and he had no knowledge of the bets made by his relative.

AFL Injury Survey

The AFL has conducted and published an annual injury survey for the past 16 seasons, since 1992.

This is the longest injury surveillance system in Australian sport and has helped guide AFL Research Board projects to study injuries which are common, severe or increasing in incidence among AFL players. The information also assists the deliberations of the Laws of the Game Committee.

Results from the 2007 season study which were released in May this year showed that 2007 was the lowest year on record for the incidence of head and neck injuries.

The study found that the AFL injury profile was moving further towards being predominantly one of non-contact injuries, as key contact injuries such as head, neck and rib injuries continued to reduce in incidence. A low incidence of head and neck injuries also followed the reduced tolerance of head-high contact in recent years and the specific new law banning front-on contact.

Hamstring strains remain the most common and most prevalent injury in the game at AFL level. These injuries, along with groin injuries, were at higher than recent levels in 2007. Hamstring injuries and groin injuries continued to account for the largest amount of lost playing time.

AFL Coaches' Association Agreement

The AFL and the AFL Coaches' Association (AFLCA) reached a formal agreement with the AFL, aimed to develop a clear educational and career pathway for senior and assistant coaches, while increasing their commitment to the promotion and growth of the game at all levels.

The AFLCA listed its key aims would be to:

- Provide a forum for coaches to discuss opportunities and challenges.
- Recognise leadership and excellence in coaching.
- Develop skills and expertise for all coaches, particularly assistant coaches.
- Provide career transition and support to coaches and assistant coaches, both into and out of coaching.
- Define coaching pathways and develop talent.
- Promote coaching as a profession.

Former AFLCA Chief Executive Neale Daniher played a key role in the formalising of the relationship, which will also provide career transition and support services to minimise the impact on coaches when they choose to move or are forced to do so.

AFL coaches are key stakeholders in the game and it was important in 2008 to further build the relationship.

Illicit Drugs Policy



In August 2008, the AFL Commission adopted a series of improvements and enhancements to its out-of-competition Illicit Drugs Policy and AFL players volunteered to step up their campaign against illicit drug use.

A trial of hair sample testing was conducted when AFL players returned from their holiday period – the first testing of its type in Australian sport.

Other policy changes included a further increase in testing of up to 1500 tests every year and the penalty for a third failed test extended to a maximum of 18 weeks, up from 12 weeks.

The changes to the out-of-competition Illicit Drugs Policy were announced by the AFL and the AFLPA, after extensive consultation and feedback from experts in the field of drug and alcohol prevention

and treatment, the Federal Government and AFL clubs. The changes demonstrated that AFL players, who had volunteered to undertake testing, were continuing to show leadership in the fight against drugs by volunteering to trial holiday period hair testing.

The AFL has two drug policies – the 1990 Anti-Doping Code, which tests for performance enhancing drugs 365 days a year, and is the same one used by all other sports in Australia, and the Illicit Drugs Policy, which was introduced in 2005. The Illicit Drugs Policy is above and beyond the WADA policy and is about testing players out of competition for illicit drugs that are harmful to their physical and mental health.

Australia’s leading drug and medical experts backed the policy while the AFL refused to have a policy that was ‘name and shame’ and not based on a medical response.

Other changes to the AFL out-of-competition Illicit Drugs Policy included:

- Sanctions now applying the first and second time a player fails an out-of-competition illicit drugs test. A fine of \$5000 applies to the first failed test and a six-week suspension applies on the second. Both sanctions are suspended and are activated on the third failed test, bringing the suspension up to a maximum of 18 weeks.
- Testing being increased, with up to 1500 illicit drug tests to be conducted over a 12-month period.
- Every AFL player being tested out of competition for illicit drugs at least once a year.
- Greater target testing of players returning to the club out of season, from the end of 2008.
- The suspension for a failed third test for marijuana was increased to a maximum of 12 weeks in line with the other illicit drugs, on the advice of experts of marijuana’s increasingly harmful effect on mental health.
- The expansion of the illicit drugs to be tested for, with the list now including Ketamine and GHB, currently not tested for by any sport or under the WADA code.
- When a player who has failed a test is traded to (or drafted by) another club, the new club’s chief medical officer will be informed of the failed test(s).
- Where multiple failed tests have occurred at a club, the club’s CEO will be formally informed of the failed tests but the identity of the player(s) involved will remain confidential.
- A player’s failed test will now lapse after a period of four years.

IDP TESTING BREAKDOWN 2005-2007

Year	Total detections	2nd failed test	Test numbers	Detection %
2005	19	3	472	4.03
2006	9	0	486	1.85
2007	14	3	1152	1.2
TOTALS	42	6		

THE BREAKDOWN OF DETECTED SUBSTANCES 2005-2007 BY TYPE IS:

Year	2005	2006	2007	TOTAL
Cannabinoids	6	0	4	10
Stimulants	12	8	10	30
Mixed	1	1	0	2
TOTALS	19	9	14	42

AFL Anti-Doping Code

The AFL Anti-Doping Code was introduced in 1990, with all testing done in partnership with ASADA.

As part of the annual review of the code to ensure AFL football remains at the forefront of clean competition, the following initiatives were introduced for the 2008 season:

- An increase in blood sample collection, with the aim of a more strategic approach to detecting performance-enhancing drug use.
- Adoption of an EPO analysis program, involving profiling through intelligence collected from this blood testing.
- IRMS analysis based on steroidal profiling and TE ratio data. IRMS analysis is an ultra-sensitive technique used to determine the existence of synthetic testosterone versus naturally produced testosterone.
- The AFL agreed to allow ASADA to store selected urine samples in long-term storage for up to eight years and to re-analyse these samples at a later date if and when improvement in analysis techniques is discovered.

Draft Working Party

The AFL Commission approved a number of recommendations of the AFL and AFLPA Player Movement Working Party, which had been examining the competition’s draft and trading rules.

The key changes were:

- A player not contracted on or before October 31 would be eligible to nominate for that year’s National Draft.
- The eligibility age for the National Draft was increased by four months, so that the player must turn 18 on or before December 31 in the year of that Draft. This will not apply until the 2009 NAB AFL Draft.
- Players who have not yet made their AFL debut, but may previously have been on a senior or rookie list, would now be eligible to be listed as mature-age rookies. This was to apply immediately for the 2008 NAB AFL Draft.
- The removal of rules restricting clubs to a maximum of five players traded out in a single year, and the maximum of three players involved in a single player-trade.

The working party also examined but decided against recommending any changes in the areas of:

- Altering the time or number of Drafts from the current system of National Draft, Pre-Season Draft and Rookie Draft.

It was agreed the AFL and the AFLPA should continue to further examine the concept of free agency; together with changes to the veteran’s list rules, with a view to reaching an agreement by December 31, 2008.

The working party comprised senior AFL staff Adrian Anderson, Andrew Dillon, Rod Austin and Simon Lethlean, AFLPA representatives Brendon Gale, Matt Finnis, Bernie Shinnars and Laura Sigal and Adelaide Chief Executive Steven Trigg.

Justice Gillard Report

The AFL Commission received the report of Justice Bill Gillard relating to an investigation into the West Coast Eagles early in 2008. At the same meeting, the Commission considered the findings of the Cowan Scudamore Report into the West Coast Eagles and the submission from the club in response to the Gillard Report.

The Commission accepted Justice Gillard’s findings the West Coast Eagles had not breached rule 1.6 since the club met with the Commission on April 29, 2007. In that time, Justice Gillard found the club had engaged in a number of educational programs, formed committees to strengthen discipline and engaged professional help to assist in discipline and to warn of the dangers of illicit drug taking.

Alcohol Policy

The AFL and AFL Players' Association circulated a draft policy document on responsible alcohol consumption, as part of a move to introduce a framing policy with guidelines that all AFL clubs could use to develop their own responsible alcohol policies.

The AFL framing policy listed a set of objectives for players and club staff, including the development of approaches for responsible consumption, effective pathways for treatment of alcohol-related problems, creating responsible drinking cultures and using player welfare-oriented and education-based approaches to promote responsible alcohol consumption.

Research commissioned by the AFL in 2006 on the subject of alcohol consumption by players guided the development of the AFL Responsible Alcohol Framing Policy.

The research, conducted by Associate Professor John Fitzgerald of Melbourne University and Paul Dietze from the Burnet Institute, received widespread support from drug and alcohol prevention experts.

An example of the proactive efforts by playing groups was the move by Geelong players Tom Harley, David Wojcinski and James Kelly to spearhead the Just Think responsible alcohol and anti-violence campaign aimed at young people in the Geelong area.

That campaign grew into a wider community campaign across the Leader Community Newspaper group, supported by the AFL and AFL player ambassadors such as Brownlow medallist Adam Cooney, Josh Fraser and Matthew Lloyd.

Concussion Management

In 2008, the AFL released a broad-based policy to cover the management of concussion at all levels of the game.

The brochure was designed for community clubs, following a detailed research project by the AFL Research Board and the AFL Medical Officers Association.

The key directive for community clubs was that it is vital for player safety that concussion is managed correctly and that players do not return to play or training until they are fully recovered.

AFL Ruling – Patrick Dangerfield, Adelaide Football Club

The AFL ruled that Adelaide player Patrick Dangerfield would be permitted to play for the Geelong Falcons in the 2008 TAC Cup while he completed his final year of schooling.

Dangerfield, 17 at the time, was selected by Adelaide at pick 10 in the 2007 NAB AFL Draft, and remained in Victoria in 2008 to complete his schooling at Oberon High School.

Adelaide made a submission that Dangerfield be allowed to play in the TAC Cup to facilitate successful completion of his secondary education, and this was granted in light of the player's exceptional circumstances.

All-Australian Selection Panel

Dual West Coast Eagles premiership centre half-back Glen Jakovich was appointed an All-Australian selector to replace the late Chris Mainwaring.

Jakovich, who played a club-record 276 games for the Eagles from 1991-2004 and won the best and fairest in 1993, 1994, 1995 and 2000, joined Andrew Demetriou (chairman), Adrian Anderson, Rod Austin, Kevin Bartlett, Mark Bickley, Gerard Healy and Robert Walls on the panel. The All-Australian selectors, along with Kevin Sheehan, also choose the winner of the NAB AFL Rising Star Award.

International Rules Series

The International Rules Series was contested again in 2008, after a break of one year, and Ireland regained the Cormac McAnallen Trophy with a 2-0 series sweep of the matches at Subiaco and the MCG.

The AFL was pleased to appoint Mick Malthouse as Australia's coach. Malthouse played a central role in ensuring the series was played hard but in a spirit of true sportsmanship.

With North Melbourne's Brent Harvey as captain, Australia was a narrow loser in both games, falling one point short in the opening match and suffering a four-point defeat in the second game.

Carlton's Kade Simpson was the Jim Stynes medallist, as Australia's best player of the series, while Malthouse was supported by a re-cast match committee, comprising former stars Nathan Buckley, Glen Jakovich and Matthew Lappin.

Ben Cousins – AFL Commission Ruling

In November 2008, the AFL Commission ruled Ben Cousins would be allowed to re-register as an AFL player, subject to a number of conditions.

Cousins was suspended in November, 2007, after being found guilty of bringing the game into disrepute.

It was resolved that Cousins' application to be eligible for the 2009 football season be granted subject to the following conditions:

- Cousins shall ensure that any club to which he is drafted has an appropriate drug and alcohol management program in place for its players that has met the approval of the AFL Medical Officers.
- That, in addition to any testing under the AFL Illicit Drugs Policy or the AFL Anti-Doping Code, Cousins will be subject to:
 - Urine testing up to three times per week;
 - Hair testing up to four times during the year. Cousins must co-operate fully with any request to provide a sample for testing, co-operate fully with any instruction or direction in relation to the provision of such a sample, must not fail to provide a sample immediately upon request; delay, hinder or obstruct the taking of a sample or tamper with any sample. Cousins must consult and co-operate with the AFL Medical Officers and attend any drug rehabilitation program or medical expert nominated by them.
- That, should any illicit drug or any indication of an illicit drug be detected in a sample, should Cousins fail to complete a drug test, should Cousins fail to comply with any instruction or direction of the AFL Medical Officers or should Cousins fail to comply with any other of these conditions, the General Manager – Football Operations or Commission may deal with the matter in such manner as the General Manager – Football Operations or Commission in their absolute discretion thinks fit and without limiting their power they may immediately suspend Cousins from playing AFL football pending the outcome of any investigation and/or hearing.

Umpiring Report

The AFL Umpiring List underwent significant change for 2008 with the retirement of four of the best-performed umpires of the modern era.

Field umpires Brett Allen (seven Grand Finals) and Darren Goldspink (six) announced their retirements before the season, having accumulated seven All-Australian awards between them.

Long-serving goal umpires Anthony Black (seven Grand Finals) and Craig Clark (six) also retired, paving the way for younger, less-experienced umpires to gain more exposure and responsibility.

No changes to rules or interpretations for the 2008 season resulted in the umpires consolidating their application of the introduced rules and interpretations from previous seasons.

This had a positive impact on their decisional accuracy, which increased slightly from 86.7 per cent in 2007 to 87.1 in 2008.

Umpires are comprehensively reviewed on their performance in each game, with all decisions classified as either correct, missed or unwarranted.

FOOTBALL OPERATIONS

General Manager – Adrian Anderson

The new initiative of umpire visits to AFL clubs helped in further educating players and clubs and in strengthening the understanding of the Laws of the Game for players and coaches.

In 2008, four boundary umpires were used for the first time in the premiership season, being introduced for round 21 and retained for the finals, resulting in significantly fewer errors and enabling boundary umpires to assist in goal umpiring decisions.

Boundary umpire Darren Wilson was appointed to his 11th consecutive Grand Final, equalling Lindsay Lancaster's record from the 1930s and 1940s.

AFL umpires continued their involvement with the Down Syndrome Association, while more than 200 umpires and key personnel were part of a pre-season seminar.

More than 20,000 copies of the AFL Decisional DVD were distributed to key stakeholders to improve understanding of the laws and interpretations, while the department continued to trial 'multi-skilling' of umpires as well as 'four field umpire' and 'four boundary umpire' systems.

All-Australian Umpire – Brett Rosebury (field)

Grand Final Umpires – Michael Vozzo, Scott McLaren, Shaun Ryan (field); Darren Wilson, Jonathon Creasey, Ian Burrows, Adam Coote (boundary); Peter Nastasi, Steve Axon (goal)

International Rules Series Umpires – Stephen McBurney (field); Adam Coote (boundary); Peter Nastasi, Steven Axon (goal)

GAMES FOR EACH FIELD UMPIRE

Name	State	TOTAL	2008 Games
Armstrong, Jason	QLD	13	13
Avon, Michael	SA	145	13
Chamberlain, Ray	VIC	87	23
Donlon, Chris	VIC	66	22
Ellis, Martin	VIC	244	19
Farmer, Luke	WA	33	17
Fila, Gary	SA	16	10
Grun, Stefan	SA	63	3
Head, Matthew	VIC	144	20
Hendrie, Craig	WA	55	7
James, Mathew	VIC	185	18
Jeffery, Scott	VIC	150	22
Kamolins, Chris	VIC	48	13
Keating, Todd	WA	12	12
Kennedy, Hayden	VIC	436	24
Margetts, Dean	WA	105	11
McBurney, Stephen	VIC	287	25
McInerney, Shane	VIC	268	23
McLaren, Scott	VIC	321	25
Meredith, Simon	VIC	89	23
Mollison, Jacob	VIC	11	11
Nicholls, Kieron	VIC	154	9
Nicholls, Mathew	VIC	86	21
Rosebury, Brett	VIC	148	26
Ryan, Heath	VIC	13	13
Ryan, Shaun	VIC	136	26
Schmitt, Justin	VIC	175	21
Stevic, Matt	VIC	95	23
Stewart, Shane	TAS/VIC	13	13
Sully, Damien	VIC	37	11
Vozzo, Michael	VIC	215	24
Wenn, Stuart	VIC	232	19



PERFECT BOUNCE: Umpire Ray Chamberlain sends the ball skywards as he practises before the St Kilda-Geelong clash at Telstra Dome in round four.

Umpiring Milestones

300 matches – Scott McLaren, David Flegg (goal), Matthew Vitoritti (boundary)

250 matches – Shane McInerney

200 matches – Michael Vozzo, Mark Harrison (goal), Mark Canning (goal), Scott Hutton (boundary)

150 matches – Scott Jeffery, Kieron Nicholls, Leo Corrieri (goal), Mark Thomson (boundary)

100 matches – Dean Margetts, David Shawcross (goal), Matthew Payton (boundary), Glenn Gibson (boundary), Chris Morrison (boundary)

RETIREMENTS

Name	Position	Games	Grand Finals
Martin Ellis	Field	244	2001
Matthew Head	Field	144	
Matthew Vitoritti	Boundary	300	2001, 2003
Amin Chehade	Boundary	225	
Dan O'Donnell	Boundary	82	
Colin Hood	Goal	311	1994

1990-2008 SUMMARY OF AFL PLAYER EARNINGS

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
	Played	Played	Played	Played	Played	Played	Played	Played	Played	Played	Played	Played	Played	Played	Played	Played	Played	Played	Played
\$0 - \$60,000	442	448	409	373	337	307	260	178	152	121	87	71	51	51	35	47	34	24	10
\$60,001 - \$100,000	88	100	125	126	147	162	173	217	191	143	132	102	116	102	111	119	99	92	90
\$100,001 - \$200,000	8	17	19	33	45	91	126	159	209	249	237	219	194	184	188	183	198	177	168
\$200,001 - \$300,000	-	-	1	1	1	9	12	17	26	52	80	92	100	102	107	101	109	134	142
\$300,001 - \$400,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	5	5	7	22	34	36	47	57	47	57	60	77
\$400,001 - \$500,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	8	14	20	31	24	21	30	35	39
\$500,001 - \$600,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	9	8	12	18	10	13	18	
\$600,001 - \$700,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	3	3	4	4	7	7	5	3
\$700,001 - \$800,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0	3	5
\$800,001 - \$900,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4	3	4	2	-
\$900,001 - \$1,000,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
\$1,000,001 +	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
TOTALS	538	565	554	533	530	569	573	576	583	576	568	539	529	530	542	547	549	546	554

NB: Details listed relate only to players who participated in at least one senior match during the season. Schedule above shows Total Player Earnings including ASAs.

2008 AFL TOTAL PLAYER EARNINGS

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Movement % 2007-08
GROSS PLAYER PAYMENTS (GPP)	62,186,000	71,985,000	80,951,208	88,957,912	97,701,770	101,843,018	108,645,462	110,960,485	114,215,259	121,340,818	128,847,606	6.19%
DEDUCTIONS:												
Finals/Relocation & Living & other Allowances	1,093,000	1,073,000	844,209	812,883	1,478,536	1,657,728	1,660,839	2,096,184	1,816,889	2,242,291	2,137,838	-4.66%
Retention and Cost of Living Allowances	991,000	838,000	1,112,500	1,178,125	1,390,625	1,484,375	1,406,450	1,291,500	1,175,574	680,488	728,263	7.02%
Veterans' allowance 50% deduction	N/A	1,721,000	2,549,017	2,595,883	2,542,428	2,553,503	4,870,772	5,326,653	5,014,770	5,137,978	4,843,849	-5.72%
Other deductions	-	-	646,799	703,427	837,984	237,500	1,098,720	338,705	941,007	2,082,388	2,379,364	14.26%
Total deductions	2,084,000	3,632,000	5,152,525	5,290,318	6,249,573	5,933,106	9,036,781	9,053,042	8,948,240	10,143,145	10,089,314	-0.53%
PLAYER PAYMENTS LESS DEDUCTIONS	60,102,000	68,353,000	75,798,683	83,667,594	91,452,197	95,909,912	99,608,681	101,907,443	105,267,019	111,197,673	118,758,292	6.80%
Injury Allowance	8,176,000	5,688,000	3,500,608	4,266,984	3,850,200	3,531,000	4,314,200	4,332,000	4,836,000	4,936,629	5,684,600	15.15%
GROSS PLAYER PAYMENTS LESS INJURY ALLOWANCE	51,926,000	62,665,000	72,298,075	79,400,610	87,601,997	92,378,912	95,294,481	97,575,443	100,431,019	106,261,044	113,073,692	6.41%
TPP Limit	52,400,000	68,000,000	76,000,000	83,000,000	89,000,000	95,000,000	97,840,000	100,800,000	103,564,992	111,100,000	118,900,000	7.02%
Gross Player Payments less Injury Allowance	51,926,000	62,665,000	72,298,075	79,400,610	87,601,997	92,378,912	95,294,481	97,575,443	100,431,019	106,261,044	113,073,692	6.41%
Margin/(Excess)	474,000	5,335,000	3,701,925	3,599,390	1,398,003	2,621,088	2,545,519	3,224,557	3,133,973	4,838,956	5,826,308	20.40%
Additional Services Agreements (ASAs)	N/A	N/A	3,413,383	4,186,233	5,311,316	5,176,700	5,840,950	6,071,450	6,579,394	6,725,773	7,440,463	10.63%
AVERAGE GROSS PLAYER EARNINGS (including ASAs)***	Listed \$101,957	Listed \$117,398	Listed \$126,996 Played \$140,295	Listed \$149,749 Played \$165,062	Listed \$167,229 Played \$177,076	Listed \$176,019 Played \$189,484	Listed \$184,656 Played \$200,971	Listed \$187,251 Played \$204,271	Listed \$192,962 Played \$208,104	Listed \$203,280 Played \$218,560	Listed \$213,953 Played \$233,281	

***Played figure is a result of GPP plus ASA for those players who played games divided by number of players who played ***Listed figure is a result of Total GPP plus ASA divided by the number of players listed

Total Player Payment (TPP) Rules

Football operations, through the Total Player Payment Assurance and Advice Department, has responsibility for monitoring clubs' total player payments and enforcement of the TPP rules – a key equalisation plank of the competition. The TPP rules are viewed as fundamental to the development and on-going success of the AFL and the long-term future of the 16 clubs. The TPP limit increased seven per cent in 2008, with almost the full extent of the increase being passed on to players by clubs with gross player payments increasing 6.2 per cent from \$121.3m to \$128.8m. The Additional Services limit for the provision of marketing services by players also increased seven per cent from \$7.76m to \$8.3m, however, the spend on these services by clubs increased 10.6 per cent from \$6.73m to \$7.44m. The average payment for a *listed* player in 2008

was \$213,953, an increase of 5.25 per cent over 2007. The AFL applied the following sanctions during 2008:

- Adelaide was sanctioned \$20,000 for breaches of the AFL Player Rules, with \$10,000 of the sanction being suspended until October 31, 2009. The club, which voluntarily disclosed the breaches as soon as they were discovered, failed to lodge arrangements between a player and associates of the club within the required timeframes, as required by the TPP Rules.
- St Kilda was sanctioned \$10,000 for breaching the TPP rules through an administrative error. The club voluntarily advised the AFL of all the required information and the club's full co-operation was taken into account regarding the penalty.

NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

GENERAL MANAGER – DAVID MATTHEWS

WORLD STAGE: The 2008 International Cup was a celebration of Australian Football and it certainly was a joyous occasion for South African teammates Steven Malinga (left) and Bayanda Sobetwa.



COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION REACHES NEW HIGH

Australian Football continued to grow and develop in 2008 with participation levels at an all-time high, as the game expands its horizons both domestically and internationally.

The AFL's key priorities include growing the game and increasing participation.

In 2008 Australian Football participation reached a record 693,052, growth of 8.5 per cent or 54,224 more participants than the previous year. The *Next Generation* plan forecast that it would take until 2011 for participation to reach 700,000 but that forecast has now been revised given the rapid growth over the past two years. *Next Generation* also forecast that 30 per cent of participants would come from NSW and Queensland by the end of 2011, but this figure was achieved in 2008.

Much of this growth was due to the revised primary schools competition, which is driven by AFL School Ambassadors and which includes inter- and intra-school competitions, while participation in multicultural and female programs also increased. In 2008 there were a record 209,773 primary and secondary school participants across Australia.

NAB AFL Auskick participation grew by 1.7 per cent (following 9.4 per cent growth in 2007) to a record 163,885 participants. The continued development of the female participation pathways saw the number of women and girls taking part in dedicated female programs grow strongly in 2008 to a record 18,986 – almost doubling in number since 2005.

One of the barriers to further growth of Australian Football is the availability of suitable facilities that can cater for the growing numbers, which is why the AFL is supporting an artificial turf project as a possible solution for over-used ovals and the issue of climate change. This project is in partnership with Cricket Australia.

The priority of supporting improved facilities for all levels of the game over the past three years resulted in the AFL Community Facilities Fund managing projects valued at \$144 million and providing support for 444 local community clubs.

The expansion of the game internationally was evident during the third International Cup tournament in Melbourne in August and September. There were 15 participating countries, plus the Peace Team made up equally by players from Palestine and Israel, up from 11 three years ago. There are now more than 45,000 international participants across the globe with South Africa leading the way with more than 17,000 active participants.

The department is also engaging with the community now more than ever. The appointment of Jason Mifsud as AFL Foundation CEO will oversee the further development of the multicultural, Indigenous, volunteer and community engagement programs.

The strength of the AFL's talent identification program is that it strives to attract the best young athletes to the game. This was evident on the Gold Coast, where eight players have signed with GC17, the proposed Gold Coast-based AFL club. The talented player pathway is expanding with the development of AFL state academies and centres of excellence.

The NAB AFL Under-16 Championship finals were played at the MCG on AFL Grand Final day and the NAB AFL Under-18 Championships were expanded, with matches played in WA, SA, NSW and Victoria and the final at Telstra Dome in front of more than 5000 spectators.

Other highlights included:

- Twenty-four AIS-AFL graduates selected at the 2008 NAB AFL Draft.
- AFL players and development staff conducting more than 23,000 school visits and clinics reaching more than 1.5 million children.
- The development of two school curriculum packages designed to motivate, engage and educate students about Australian Football.
- The Footyweb network including 269 leagues and 2563 community clubs – saving the industry more than \$1 million a year.
- The AFL's Indigenous programs reaching more than 87,000 Indigenous people.
- The AFL's multicultural schools program implemented in 101 schools, exposing more than 8000 students from diverse backgrounds to the game.
- Growth of 22 per cent in participation of the umpiring mentoring program.

Participation

Total Australian Football participation in 2008 was 693,052. This was an increase of 8.5 per cent on 2007 participation (638,828) and was the third successive year in which rapid growth was achieved.

Australian Football participation only includes formal participants and players in organised competitions and programs of at least six weeks in duration – and does not include children taking part in one-off clinics.

The Australian Football Participation Census is compiled annually with data from each of the 95 AFL development regions (39 metropolitan and 56 regional).

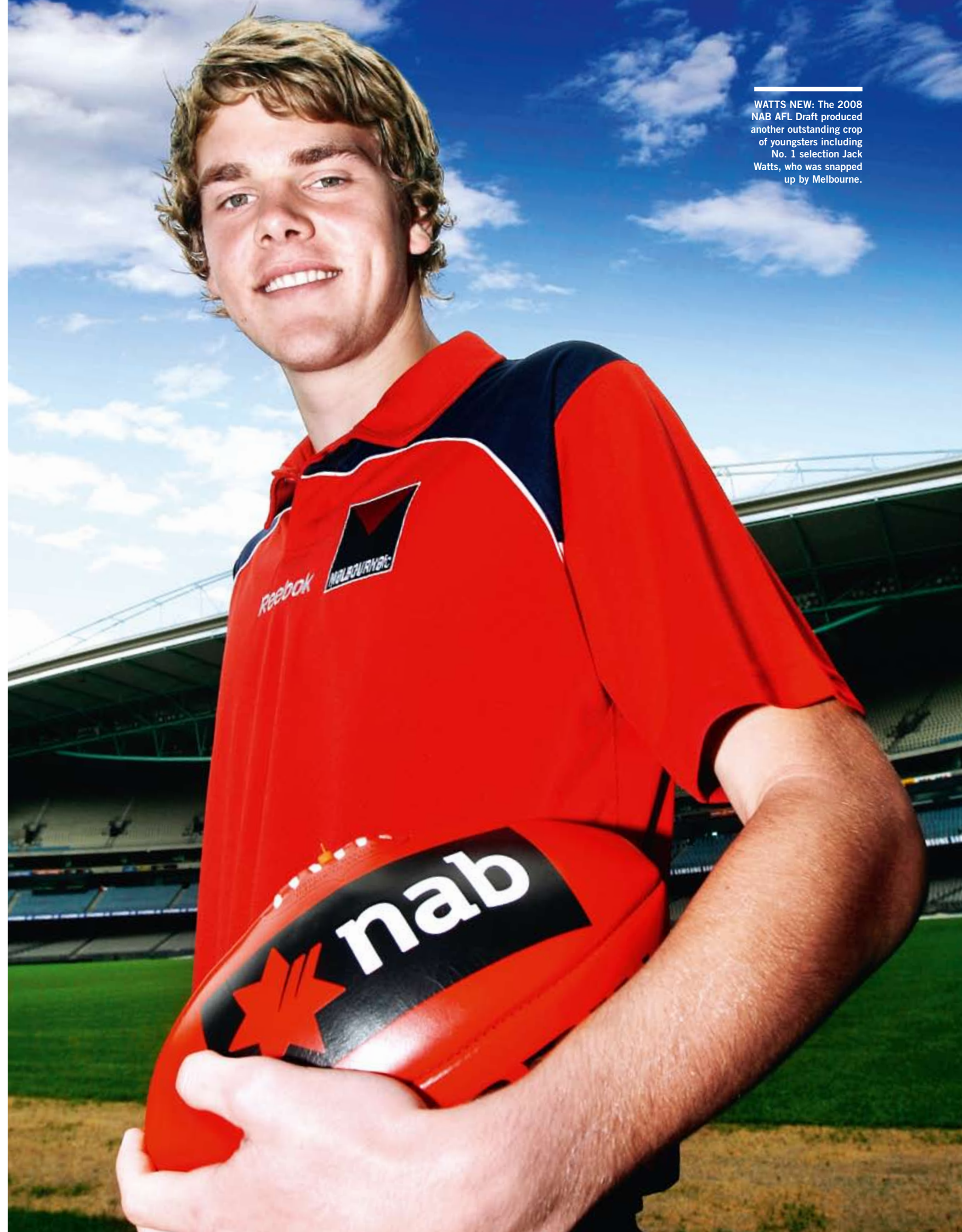
A breakdown of the 2008 participation segments reveals there were:

- 290,590 participants in club competitions.
- 163,885 participants in the NAB AFL Auskick program.
- 209,773 participants in school competitions.
- 3890 participants in recreational football.
- 5928 participants in veterans' competitions.
- 18,986 participants in dedicated female competitions.

NAB AFL Auskick

NAB AFL Auskick continues to provide an outstanding introductory football experience to children and their families. The program is the cornerstone of the AFL development strategy as it introduces boys and girls and their families to Australian Football through a sequentially

WATTS NEW: The 2008 NAB AFL Draft produced another outstanding crop of youngsters including No. 1 selection Jack Watts, who was snapped up by Melbourne.





THRILL OF A LIFETIME: The NAB AFL Auskick program provided 23,000 children the enjoyment of playing grid games at half-time during AFL matches.

developed coaching and match program in a fun and safe family environment. It provides the ideal opportunity for boys, girls and parents to participate and have fun, while focusing on the development of fundamental movement and game-specific skills.

The AFL is extremely grateful to the many volunteers and family members who coordinate their local centres each week. Volunteer coordinators are the lifeblood of the program and each year the AFL, our program partner NAB and state football bodies recognise the outstanding achievements and contribution of coordinators who have excelled in the role through special recognition awards.

It is through their passion and commitment that NAB AFL Auskick continues to prosper.

In 2008, 163,885 children participated in the program at 2913 centres around the country, with 23 per cent or 30,523 being young girls.

In 2008, 23,000 NAB AFL Auskick participants were also provided with the opportunity to play grid games at half-time of AFL matches. This opportunity provides an experience of a lifetime for the participating boys and girls.

NAB AFL Auskick ambassador Robert 'Dipper' DiPierdomenico again visited all states and territories promoting the program to more than 12,000 children. Dipper was also the star attraction for the 95 regional NAB AFL Auskick Grand Final competition winners. Children were selected from each AFL development region across the country and flown to Melbourne with a parent to participate in the Toyota AFL Grand Final week activities, which included marching in the parade, participating in the pre-match entertainment and grid games at half-time.

AFL Schools

The school system has traditionally been the nursery for young children wanting to participate in Australian Football. The AFL is committed to ensuring that appropriate school-based participation opportunities are available for all students.

The growth in Australian Football participation has been driven over the past two years through initiatives, programs and resources designed to enhance Australian Football's presence in schools, while – importantly – also meeting the needs of teachers and schools. In 2008, there were 209,773 students participating in primary (146,753) and secondary (63,020) school competitions and programs greater than six weeks in duration.

The comprehensive AFL Schools program includes the following:

Inter-school primary and secondary school competitions (male and female)

The AFL development staff network works in collaboration with the school system to provide opportunities for male and female students to participate in structured inter-school football competitions. In 2008, inter- and intra-school teams increased by 28.6 per cent to 11,281 in competitions that were greater than six weeks in duration. The total included 8379 primary school and 2902 secondary school teams.

Intra-school football competitions (AFL Sport Education)

To decrease the barriers and impediments (bus costs, crowded curriculum, etc) for schools to participate in school competitions the AFL has developed the AFL Sport Education program which enables teachers and students, with support of AFL development staff, to facilitate their own intra-school competition. Students manage their own season of sport (AFL) and not only fulfil the role of a player but learn other roles such as umpiring, team management, coaching, leading a team, captain, sports journalist and publicity officer.

Female football competitions

To provide greater opportunities for female students wishing to participate in Australian Football, the AFL development network conducts dedicated female competitions. In 2008, 15,271 female students participated in dedicated female competitions.

PARTICIPATION LEVELS 2005-08

■ 2005 ■ 2008



Carnivals and knock-out competitions

In addition to inter- and intra-school competitions the AFL development network conducts carnivals and knockout competitions to introduce schools and students to Australian Football. In 2008, more than 130,000 students participated in these activities.

Promotional clinics and visits

Promotional clinics and visits are used to introduce students to the game and to promote ongoing participation opportunities. In 2008, the AFL development network conducted more than 23,000 school visits and clinics reaching a massive 1,226,000 children.

Northern States Cup

An exciting initiative introduced in 2008, the Northern States Cup, provides a prestigious secondary schools competition for schools in Queensland, NSW, ACT and the Northern Territory. The competition is conducted for students in year nine (under 14), with the winners of each state-based competition playing off for the cup.

Curriculum packages

The AFL has developed a range of leading curriculum packages designed to motivate, engage and educate students about Australian Football and the value of living a healthy, active lifestyle. Australian Football is our country's only Indigenous game and the AFL has an objective for all Australian children to have an understanding and appreciation for its unique position within Australian society. The curriculum packages have been developed by leading experts to achieve this objective and to ensure they complement the values and principles underpinning the curriculum/syllabus frameworks in each state and territory.

Two new curriculum packages were developed in 2008 and are now available to schools:

- *You Can Kick Goals* – developed in partnership with the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, the curriculum package promotes and teaches the important community and cultural values in Australian society. This resource consists of three distinct teaching and learning manuals and student handbooks written specifically to meet the needs of Australian teachers and students in middle, upper primary and lower secondary. The resource focuses on five broad value themes: fair play, respect yourself and others, teamwork, harmony and leadership.
- *It's More Than a Game* – a curriculum resource package that contains 27 teaching units linked to activities covering each of the eight key learning areas. Each activity includes sub-activities, teacher notes and student worksheets. To complement the activities the resource also contains video clips, history, AFL club information, uniforms, grounds, player images, club songs, mascots and the rules.

AFL School Ambassador Program

The AFL understands that the ongoing training, support and nurturing of teachers is critical to Australian Football's long-term presence in schools. A number of key initiatives have been developed to motivate, educate, recognise and reward teachers for their ongoing support of the game. The AFL School Ambassador Program was established in 2007 with the aim of establishing an alliance between schools and the AFL development network to further develop and promote Australian Football in classrooms and on the sporting fields. The School Ambassador Program continues to grow, with more than 3380 teachers actively involved in 2008.

The following teachers were recognised as AFL School Ambassadors for outstanding service to the game in 2008:

Teacher	School	State
Narciso Batanero	Oakbank Area School	SA
Liam Whitwell	Balaklava High School	SA
Nicole Hughes	Beeliar Primary School	WA
Stephen Thomson	Comet Bay College	WA
Perry Home	Eaton Primary School	WA
Simon Foat	Helensvale State High School	QLD
Kristen Knight	Freshwater School	QLD
Ty Stewart	Westbury/Beaconsfield Primary School	TAS
James Dalton	St Virgil's College	TAS
Angelique Kirwin	Gray Primary School	NT
Clint Beard	Essington High School	NT
Bob Bevan	Lavington Primary School	NSW
Robert Murie	The Hills Sports High School	NSW
Bradley Lynch	Caroline Chisholm High School	ACT
Matt Jones	St John's Regional College	VIC
Patrick D'Arcy	Hallam Valley Primary School	VIC

Medibank Private 1Seven Program

The Medibank Private 1Seven Program – a national health and wellbeing program for Australian children – was launched in primary schools in August of 2006. 1Seven promotes the benefits of a healthy diet and participation in physical activity with the basic message captured in the slogan: **Move More. Eat Well.**

The AFL, with the support of Netball Australia, currently promotes and delivers the 1Seven program to more than 1300 primary schools across Australia. In 2008, more than 600 AFL and netball players delivered the 1Seven message while 80 schools received 1Seven sports kits. The interactive website offers an array of information for teachers, parents and students including health articles, lesson plans and activities, interactive games, podcasts, nutrition information in various languages and school awards.

Facilities

The AFL Community Facilities Fund supports projects from all over the country and has so far supported 444 local clubs in projects with a value of \$144 million. Partnership with government at all levels is essential and appreciated.

Further support to communities investing in facility development also comes from the AFL through scheduling community camps and regional games in areas that have invested in facilities.

Major steps have also been taken to prepare for the future with synthetic surfaces being approved for community level football and the AFL is working with stakeholders to begin to roll out venues of this type. The artificial turf project is one step in the battle with climate issues which impact on green open space, which is essential for the survival of the game. The AFL has also partnered with Cricket Australia for facility development, given that 87 per cent of our clubs share their venue with a cricket club.

In 2008 the new planning and mapping project with Adelaide University was finalised which aims to better coordinate all available data so we can work better with government.

Community Club Football

In the face of challenges such as the drought, capacity constraints including volunteers and facilities and increasing competition from other sports and leisure activities, community club football grew by



FEMALE FOCUS: There are now dedicated football programs and competitions for females all over the country. Participation levels grew dramatically in 2008 to the point where there are more than 18,000 participants and the AFL has made the establishment of a female football pathway a priority in coming years.

2.6 per cent to 290,590 participants in 2008 (99,288 juniors, 107,052 youth and 84,250 seniors).

Across the country community football clubs fielded 12,024 teams, made up of 4342 juniors (aged 8-12), 4357 youth (13-18) and 3325 senior teams. All community club segments recorded growth.

The focus over the next three years must be to build community facilities and infrastructure to support community volunteers and long-term sustainable growth. A project is currently underway to explore the use of artificial turf into the future to facilitate increased capacity/usage of ovals.

Female Participation

Participation in dedicated female football programs and competitions grew by 54 per cent in 2008 to 18,986. The further development of a dedicated female football pathway is a major priority for the AFL in the coming years. Significant developments have occurred in recent years with the introduction of community-based youth girls' competitions in Victoria, Queensland, ACT, Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia.

Some 78,224 females participated in NAB AFL Auskick school and community football competitions in 2008.

Youth Girls Academies were also established in Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia. The Academies focus on the participants'

development on and off the field. As well as football development, the programs included leadership, media, nutrition, injury management and drug and alcohol seminars. Participants were required to complete a basic umpiring course, a Level 1 junior coaching course and a set number of volunteer community service hours.

Next Generation Match Policy

In 2008 the AFL, in collaboration with the Australian Sports Commission and state football bodies, completed the *Next Generation* Australian Football Match Policy for the conduct of games for players aged 5-18. The policy aims to:

- Provide clear direction to leagues and clubs for the provision of appropriate pathways for all boys and girls in safe, enjoyable and accountable environments.
 - Ensure that junior football is delivered in a uniform manner across all states and territories.
 - Maximise the recruitment and retention of players and umpires through programs and match rules appropriate to each age level.
- The AFL and state football bodies look forward to working collaboratively with affiliated leagues over the course of 2009 to implement the policy.

NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

General Manager – David Matthews

AFL Recreational Football

AFL Recreational Football is designed so that *'Everyone Can Play'*. It's a safe, easy-to-play, non-contact game for people of all ages and ability in male, female or mixed competitions in a social environment.

Community-based Recreational Football competitions continued to grow in 2008 with 3900 participants. Competitions are predominantly played during the summer months with more than 70 competitions kicking off across the country in the 2008/09 summer season.

NAB AFL Rising Stars program

The NAB AFL Rising Stars program provides recognition and a clearly identifiable player pathway. It comprises the following elements:

- NAB AFL Rising Star.
- NAB AFL Draft.
- NAB AFL Draft Camp.
- NAB AFL Under-18 Championships.
- AIS-AFL Academy.
- NAB AFL Under-16 Championships.

NAB AFL Rising Star Award

The NAB AFL Rising Star is now one of the most recognised AFL awards and also enjoys strong weekly media coverage. The weekly nominations were well reported in print, on radio and television and online.

The winner of the 2008 NAB AFL Rising Star was Fremantle's Rhys Palmer. The 19-year-old midfielder from Bullcreek-Leeming in Perth was presented with the Ron Evans Medal and a National Australia Bank personal investment portfolio. Rhys won the medal with 44 votes, followed by Hawthorn's Cyril Rioli, Richmond's Trent Cotchin and Carlton's Matthew Kreuzer.

NAB AFL Draft

The NAB AFL Draft was conducted in Melbourne on Saturday, November 29, and was one of the biggest days on the AFL calendar. More than 100 media representatives attended the event which was broadcast on Fox Sports, SEN 1116 and afl.com.au website. The excellent coverage before and after the draft kept football in the spotlight during the post-season.

Victorian Jack Watts from the Sandringham Dragons was the No. 1 selection. In all, 77 players were added to AFL lists.

2008 NAB AFL DRAFT SELECTIONS (FIRST ROUND)

1	Jack Watts	TAC Cup	Sandringham Dragons/Brighton Grammar	Melbourne
2	Nicholas Naitanui	WAFL	Swan Districts	West Coast Eagles
3	Stephen Hill	WAFL	West Perth	Fremantle
4	Hamish Hartlett	SANFL	West Adelaide	Port Adelaide
5	Michael Hurley	TAC Cup	Northern Knights	Essendon
6	Chris Yarran	WAFL	Swan Districts	Carlton
7	Daniel Rich	WAFL	Subiaco	Brisbane Lions
8	Tyrone Vickery	TAC Cup	Sandringham Dragons	Richmond
9	Jack Ziebell	TAC Cup	Murray Bushrangers	North Melbourne
10	Phil Davis	SANFL	North Adelaide	Adelaide
11	Steele Sidebottom	TAC Cup	Murray Bushrangers	Collingwood
12	Lewis Johnston	SANFL	North Adelaide	Sydney Swans
13	Tom Lynch	TAC CUP	Sandringham Dragons	St Kilda
14	Ayce Cordy	TAC Cup	Geelong Falcons	Western Bulldogs
15	Mitchell Brown	TAC Cup	Sandringham Dragons	Geelong Cats
16	Ryan Schoenmakers	SANFL	Norwood	Hawthorn

2008 NAB AFL DRAFTS: WHERE DRAFTED PLAYERS CAME FROM

ORIGIN	NATIONAL DRAFT	ROOKIE	GC17 LISTED	TOTALS
Victoria	39	20	0	59
South Australia	13	5	0	18
Western Australia	16	12	0	28
Queensland	2	2	8	12
NSW/ACT	1	7	0	8
Tasmania	4	1	0	5
Northern Territory	2	1	0	3
International		5	0	5
TOTALS	77	53	8	138

AIS-AFL Academy

The AIS-AFL Academy provides 30 of the country's best young footballers with development both on and off the field. Led by AFL high performance coach Alan McConnell, the academy squad is exposed to physiology, psychology, biomechanics, football and nutritional experts from around the country. Michael Voss, Nathan Buckley, Luke Darcy and Jason McCartney continued their roles as assistant coaches and mentors. We take this opportunity to thank Michael for his contribution and wish him well in his new role as coach of the Brisbane Lions.

The 11th intake toured South Africa in March-April, with the tour including a representative match. The squad also played matches against WAFL senior sides East Perth and West Perth in Perth at each end of the tour.

There were 24 AIS-AFL Academy graduates selected at the NAB AFL Draft, including eight in the top 10.

NAB AFL Under-18 Championships

The NAB AFL Under-18 Championships were played from June 25-July 9 at the MCG, Subiaco Oval, AAMI Stadium and Telstra Dome.

In a revised format, NSW/ACT and Tasmania qualified for Division Two to play in an expanded Division One fixture. The final day of competition featured a triple-header at Telstra Dome.

Vic Metro won Division One and Tasmania won Division Two. Jack Watts (Vic Metro) won the Larke Medal as best player in Division One and Mitch Robinson (Tasmania) won the Hunter-Harrison Medal for being the best player in Division Two.

NAB AFL Under-16 Championships

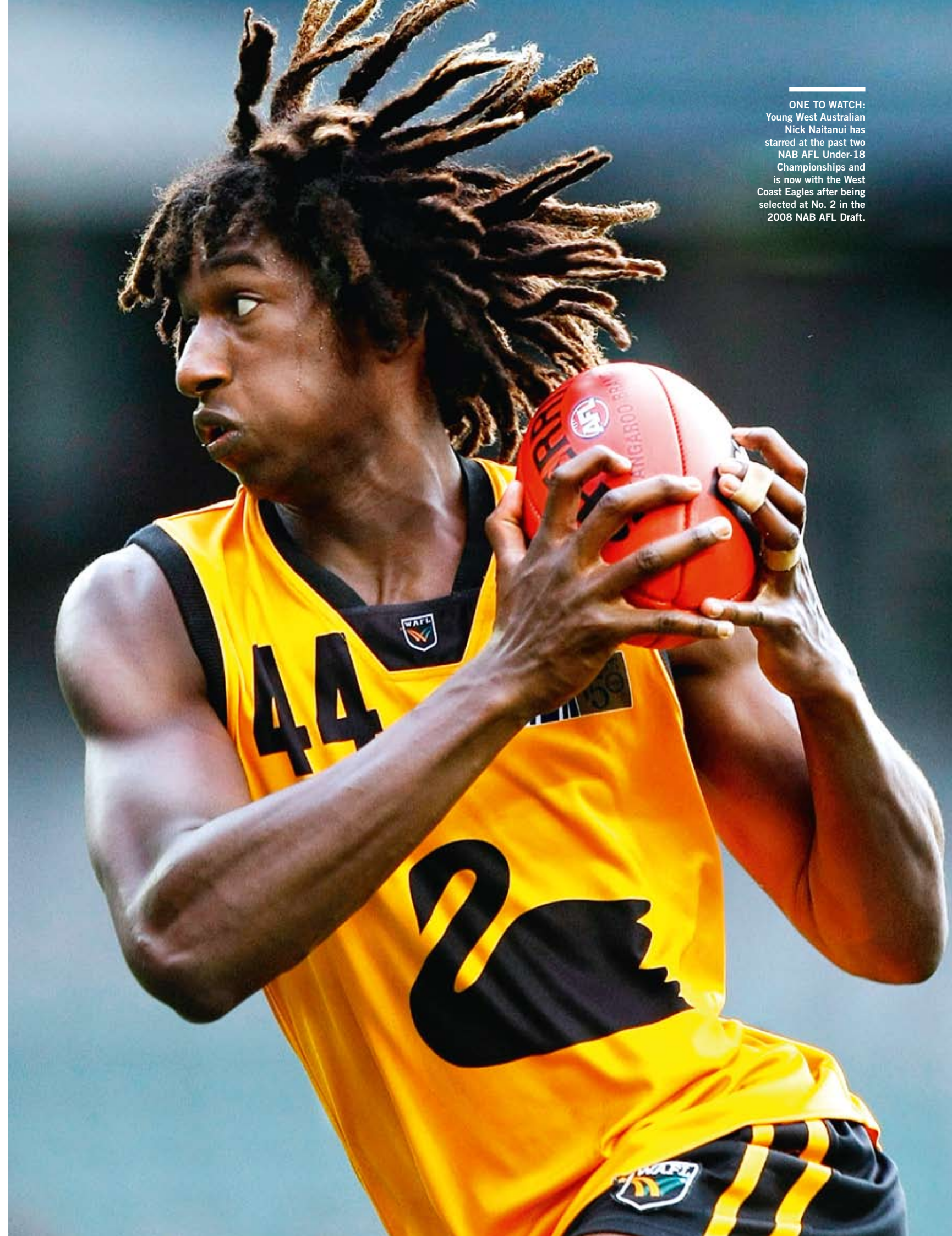
The NAB AFL Under-16 Championships were played from July 25-August 3 on the Gold Coast. For the first time, Division One teams played Division Two teams in warm-up matches and the division finals were played as curtain-raisers to the 2008 Toyota AFL Grand Final. The finals were broadcast live via the AFL website.

Vic Metro defeated Western Australia to claim its fourth consecutive title and Tasmania defeated Northern Territory to win Division Two. Josh Toy (Vic Metro) won the Kevin Sheehan Medal for the best and fairest player in Division One and Maverick Weller (Tasmania) was awarded the Alan McLean Medal for the best and fairest in Division Two.

Telstra AFL Community Camps

The 2008 Telstra AFL Community Camps again heralded the AFL season. Communities in each state and territory had the opportunity to watch training sessions and participate in AFL Auskick clinics or fundraising activities. More than 57,000 children in 380 primary and secondary schools met players, with more than \$50,000 raised for junior football or the local communities.

ONE TO WATCH:
Young West Australian Nick Naitanui has starred at the past two NAB AFL Under-18 Championships and is now with the West Coast Eagles after being selected at No. 2 in the 2008 NAB AFL Draft.





THE WORLD LISTENS: Collingwood defender Harry O'Brien, who was born in Brazil, has played a significant role in promoting the AFL's multicultural program, highlighted this year with the release of *You Can Kick Goals*, a comprehensive teaching and learning resource produced in conjunction with the Federal Government. It aims to teach children about the game and important community and cultural values in Australian society.

Carlton, Collingwood, Fremantle and West Coast Eagles conducted camp activities in South Africa. Players conducted footyWILD clinics in townships and an exhibition match between Carlton and Fremantle was played at SuperSport Park in Centurion.

Footyweb

Footyweb is a national participation system provided free of charge to all 269 leagues and 2563 community clubs across Australia, storing information on all football players, NAB AFL Auskick participants, umpires, coaches and volunteers involved in grassroots football, saving the industry more than \$1 million a year.

Footyweb provides all participants and administrators with a tool to run football competitions efficiently and reduce the administrative burden on volunteers and club registrars. It includes:

- Fixtures, ladders, online results and clearances.
- Websites with full content management capabilities.
- Online registration, maintenance and communication tool for NAB AFL Auskick participants, local players, umpires, coaches and volunteers.
- The opportunity for new revenue streams to grassroots football.

In 2008 Footyweb expanded further in all states, with an increase in the number of participants on its database to more than 430,000 nationwide, representing more than 70 per cent of Australia's total participants. In 2009 the Victorian Country Football League will move to Footyweb, adding a further 80 leagues, 800 clubs and more than 80,000 participants, ensuring the Australian Football industry has a national database of all participants, a crucial asset for planning for our next generation.

Indigenous Development

The AFL's Indigenous programs reach over 87,000 Indigenous people or 36 per cent of Australia's total Indigenous male population.

In partnership with Indigenous Australia, governments and corporate partners, Australian Football can make a significant and measurable impact. The AFL invests \$4 million each year in Indigenous programs that are designed to have the potential to bring about generational change. There are 10 programs:

- Qantas AFL KickStart.
- Flying Boomerangs Youth Leadership.
- AFL Ambassadors for Life.
- AFL Club Fostership.
- AFL Indigenous All-Stars match and AFLPA Camp.
- AFL SportsReady.
- AFL Indigenous Employment Strategy.
- Indigenous Academies.
- AFL Foundation.
- Indigenous Round.

Qantas AFL KickStart

The Qantas AFL KickStart program uses Australian Football as a vehicle to promote participation, education, health and leadership in Indigenous communities. The program partners with government and key stakeholders to tailor messages for different regions and communities.

In addition, the annual, week-long Qantas AFL Kickstart Camp is held in Melbourne for 50 boys aged 14 and 15. This personal development and leadership program includes the selection of the Flying Boomerangs (25 players picked to participate in an international tour including a three-match series) and a Certificate II course in Indigenous leadership.

Engagement of Multicultural Communities

Through the Multicultural Program the AFL uses Australian Football as a tool to build community capacity and create a sense of belonging for newly arrived and existing immigrants and refugees.

The program is gaining momentum across the country, with key personnel now based in Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia. Multicultural development officers are playing a key role in engaging diverse communities with AFL clubs Adelaide, Collingwood, Essendon, Fremantle, Hawthorn, Richmond and the Western Bulldogs.

Through a partnership with the Department of Immigration and Citizenship's Living in Harmony project, 20 diversity and cross-cultural awareness training seminars were held across Australia for 1500 industry people, including community league and club volunteers.

In Victoria a partnership with the Victorian Government's Sport and Recreation department saw the AFL Multicultural Schools Football Program implemented in 101 schools, exposing more than 8000 students from diverse cultural background to the game. In addition, more than 18,000 people from multicultural communities visited an AFL game, most for the first time, and more than 1700 participants visited the National Sports Museum and MCG. Four new Auskick centres were established to cater for young people from diverse communities living in high-rise housing estates.

Other program highlights for 2008 included a citizenship ceremony conducted on-field at Telstra Dome prior to the Collingwood-Sydney Swans match, and three local sides representing Africa, Asia and the Kingdom of Tonga participating in the Multicultural Challenge section of the International Cup. A partnership with Sports Without Borders continues to provide grants for young people to play Australian Football.

Inclusion of people with disabilities

Through the Australian Sports Commission's 'Sports CONNECT' project, the AFL is working to ensure Australian Football is inclusive and accessible to the 20 per cent of the population who have some form of disability and to increase the number of people with disabilities who are involved in Australian Football.

The completion of the first phase of the AFL's disability action plan identified new opportunities to include people with disabilities with Australian Football. Achievements to date include:

- The AFL disability action plan registered with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.
- A survey conducted of AFL staff attitudes towards people with a disability.
- Disability awareness training for AFL staff.
- Game development resources audited with the view to establishing a guide for benchmarking the representation of people with disabilities.
- The development of a disability inclusion section on the AFL website.

International Development Participation

In addition to the 693,052 participants in Australia, there are also 45,204 players overseas with key statistics showing:

- Participation in 41 countries, with 14 nations affiliated with the AFL.
- 295 teams participating across 47 leagues
- 45,204 participants (about 27,000 juniors, 8000 youth and 10,000 seniors).



INTERNATIONAL LEADERS: The captains of the 16 teams playing in the Australian Football International Cup (back row from left) Jonathan Boyle (Great Britain), Stefan Leyhane (Canada), Donnie Lucero (USA), Fia Too-Too (Samoa), Kamal Abualthom and Uri Kandel (Peace Team), Andrew Congalton (New Zealand), Fredrik Romar (Finland), Mike Finn (Ireland), Trent Depaune (Nauru), Pål Finnsson (Denmark), Andreas Svensson (Sweden), Alistair Sioni (PNG), Zhao Yong-Gen (China), Mtutuzeli Hlomela (South Africa), Mario Shelton (India) and Michito Sakaki (Japan).

Talent

With the competition expansion in our planning, coupled with an emerging international program, the AFL Commission agreed to changes to the current international scholarship rules that effectively create further incentives for AFL clubs and international affiliates to pursue international talent. The changes:

- Increased the number of international scholarship players able to be signed from two per year to eight per year.
- Reduced the cost per player for scholarships where the player remains domiciled from \$10,000 to \$1000.

Clubs immediately responded to these changes, with seven players taken on international rookie scholarships.

Australian Football International Cup

The third Australian Football International Cup involving 15 countries, plus the Peace Team made up equally by players from Palestine and Israel, was held in Victoria in August-September. Teams were made up solely of amateurs who were nationals of the country they represented. All players must have lived the majority of the years aged 10-16 as a citizen of their nation.

Forty-four matches over 13 days were played in Melbourne, Geelong and Warrnambool. Papua New Guinea defeated New Zealand in the final played as a curtain-raiser to the Hawthorn-Western Bulldogs qualifying final.

A highlight of the tournament was the involvement of 13 Jewish and 13 Palestinian players in the Peace team. The team was testament to the power of sport to break down barriers and was coached and mentored by Robert DiPierdomenico who is now an official sports ambassador for the Peres Centre for Peace.

The participating nations were Canada, China, Denmark, Finland, Great Britain, Ireland, India, Japan, Nauru, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Peace Team, Samoa, South Africa, Sweden and the USA.

The next Australian Football International Cup is scheduled for 2011.

Umpiring Development

Recruitment

In 2008, the total number of umpires increased by three per cent with recruitment up by nine per cent compared to 2007, continuing the upward trend since 2006. There was also an increase in female umpire numbers, which now exceed 700 nationally. This indicates AFL-funded programs such as female umpire exchanges and the first All-Female Umpiring Day held in the Bellarine Football League (games between Geelong Amateurs and Port Arlington) where all umpires in every grade were females, are starting to have a real impact on female recruitment.

Umpire Coaches

In 2008, the AFL identified the continuing need to develop umpire coaches through the AFL Umpire Coach Professional Development Program to provide the support needed to ensure umpires are retained within football. There are 486 umpire coaches working throughout the country of which 219 are now accredited. This year's program included the first national AFL Umpire Coaches' Conference held in late October. The AFL Umpire Coach Professional Development Program is leading the way in coach education and is being modelled by other sports, as well as the Australian Sports Commission.

AFL Mentor Program

In its fourth year, the AFL Mentor Program grew by 22 per cent. This program continues to provide more than 1000 young umpires nationally with a mentor in order to assist in their first year of umpiring. First-year umpires wear a green shirt to signify they are starting out.

AFL Umpire Promotional Visits

Through the AFL Umpire Promotional Visits Program, AFL umpires participated in 56 visits to local umpiring groups, 22 school visits, 15 AFL umpire road shows, 48 umpire development coaching

sessions and numerous other visits to NAB AFL Auskick centres, football clubs and community events during the year.

AFL High Performance Umpiring Academy

The AFL has developed an AFL High Performance Umpiring Academy to commence in 2009. Funding has been provided by the Australian Sports Commission to contribute to the program. The Academy will consist of seven potential AFL umpires from around Australia, and will involve the AFL Umpiring Department, the Australian Sports Commission's National Officiating Scheme and the AIS-AFL Academy program. Brett Allen was appointed to the position of head coach/manager for the program.

Coaching Development

Accreditation courses

In 2008 more than 6000 coaches participated in AFL coach accreditation courses, with 5672 taking part in Level 1 courses and 355 in Level 2. Twenty-six attended the six-day AFL High Performance Coaching Course held at the Australian Institute of Sport in conjunction with the AIS-AFL Academy Camp and the NAB AFL Draft Camp. Every state and territory conducted a Level 2 course in 2008.

Specific courses conducted directly by the AFL during the year included the High Performance Coaching Course, with 15 of the 26 participating coaches currently working in AFL clubs, and the annual AFL/AFLPA Level 2 coaching course in January attended by 21 recently retired or experienced players nominated by the AFLPA. A specific kicking coaching course was tested during the year and will be implemented nationally in 2009.

AFL Coaching Ambassadors

Long-standing AFL coaching ambassadors Stan Alves and David Parkin, along with AFL 150 Years ambassador Kevin Sheedy, AFL Coaches' Association CEO and AFL Technical Director of Coaching Neale Daniher, Denis Pagan and David Wheadon presented at Level 2 coaching courses around Australia. The ambassadors also played important roles in AFL coaching and development activities.

AFL National Coaching Conference

The AFL's sixth National Coaching Conference was conducted on the Gold Coast and hosted by AFL Queensland from February 1-3. More than 400 participants attended the conference, with 47 per cent from Queensland.

Coach Recognition Awards

Australian Football Coaches' Association (AFCA) awards functions were held in Victoria, South Australia, Queensland and Western Australia for the first time to recognise outstanding coaches in coaching categories including NAB AFL Auskick, junior, youth, female and senior.

Coaching Effectiveness Research

The AFL Research Board conducted a major research project into coaching effectiveness. The research, conducted by Stride Sports Management, is aimed at providing clubs with a set of objective and evidence-based criteria which can be used in the selection, evaluation and retention of AFL coaches in addition to addressing issues related to their ongoing performance appraisal and personal and professional development.

Agreement with AFL Coaches' Association

The AFL entered an agreement with the AFL Coaches' Association in which AFL club senior and assistant coaches will increase their commitment to the promotion and growth of the game by undertaking a number of game development activities and appearances each year in line with AFL development priorities.



FOR THE LOVE OF THE GAME: The State Volunteers of the Year (from left) Eddie Motlop (Wanderers FC, NT), Ken Warren (Ganmain FC, NSW/ACT), Ross Laycock (Brothers AFC, Queensland), Tasma Lapham (North Launceston FC, Tasmania), Allan Chandler (Coburg Districts FC, Victoria), Jo Dennis (Sturt FC, South Australia), Craig Cahill (Eaton Boomers FC & South Bunbury FC, Western Australia) and Andrew Hughes (AFL volunteers officer).

Community Development

Club and League Development Resources

The AFL is committed to continually improving the environments in which the game is played. The National and International Development Department provides resources and programs to assist leagues and clubs to continue their own growth, development and sustainability. These include the Quality Club and League Programs available in each state, the AFL Kids First Program implemented nationally last year and the AFL Club Management Program educational resources, which are also available via afl.com.au, the AFL's official website.

In 2008, as an outcome of an AFL Research Board project, the AFL, in association with the AFL Medical Officers' Association, produced information to assist clubs and their match staff with the management of concussion. This will be distributed to all clubs and is available on the AFL website.

Volunteers

In 2008 the AFL developed several initiatives to recognise the contribution of volunteers in conjunction with the celebration of 150 Years of Australian Football.

Through these initiatives, more than 3500 volunteers received some form of recognition. These initiatives included:

- Seven volunteers acknowledged as State Volunteer of the Year winners taking part in the 2008 Toyota AFL Grand Final Parade and acknowledged at the 2008 Toyota AFL Grand Final by AFL Commission Chairman Mike Fitzpatrick. Each state conducted its own State Volunteer of the Year program.
- Two volunteers profiled as part of Network's Ten's Brownlow Medal coverage.
- 1400 volunteers recognised during Community Football Weekend with either a commemorative polo shirt or certificate.
- 78 volunteers presented with a commemorative plaque from an AFL Ambassador in regional areas in conjunction with the Australian Football Experience that travelled around Australia, with another 81 volunteers recognised with these commemorative plaques at regional awards nights.



GRADUATES: The 11th AIS-AFL Academy intake (standing from left) James Veale (conditioning coach), Hamish Osborne (doctor), John Wassell (head trainer), Nathan Buckley (assistant coach), Michael Hurley, Liam Jones, Declan Bevan, Jackson Trengove, John Butcher, Ayce Cordy, Tom Hill, Jack Fitzpatrick, Ben Griffiths, Jack Watts, Tom Lynch, Nick Ames (physiotherapist), Corey Bowen (umpire) Jason McCartney (assistant coach), Michael Voss (assistant coach), Craig Notman (AFL talent coordinator). Seated: Matthew Broadbent, Tyson Davis-Neale, Jake Melksham, Tom Scully, Jack Ziebell, Alan McConnell (AIS-AFL Academy high performance coach), Matthew Thomson, Kane Lucas, Steele Sidebottom, Clinton Garlett, Lewis Johnston. Front: Anthony Morabito, Liam Shiels, Alex Carey, Michael Walters, Jesse Haberfield, Nick Suban, Kieran King, Sam Blease, Nick Heyne.

- Volunteers profiled in e-newsletters distributed to community level clubs across Australia.

In addition to these initiatives several other programs continued.

The Volunteer Recognition program, which has run since 2004, recognised more than 1600 volunteers using a club-accessible database to provide community volunteers who achieved one year, five years, 10 years, 25 years or 50 years service to the game.

The AFL also continued its Merit Award program recognising two people from each state who made outstanding contributions to their local club or league.

Telstra Assistance Fund

For the second year 250 community football clubs and centres from around Australia were awarded Telstra Assistance Fund packs containing training equipment valued at \$1000 each.

Australian Country Football Championships

The AFL supported the 10th Australian Country Football Championships held in Shepparton, Victoria, and provided AFL ambassadors to attend the event.

Responding to Climate Change

In the face of climate change, the AFL is committed to doing all it can to reduce its impact on the environment and to ensuring the sustainability of the game at grassroots level.

Since the finals series in 2006, together with corporate partner Origin, the 10 participating clubs and the AFL have offset about 63,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions. More than 37,000 supporters have joined in the 'Green for Footy' program.

By the end of 2009, Origin expects its AFL 'Green for Footy' program will offset about 90,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions generated from AFL House and at NAB Cup, Toyota AFL Premiership season and finals series matches. Origin will offset these greenhouse gas emissions by undertaking emission reduction activities, or purchasing green credits from a third party, to match the amount of emissions identified.

A green team has been established at AFL House to develop the office carbon reduction strategy. In October the green team delivered a two-hour training session for staff, which was led by CEO Andrew Demetriou

and Don Henry, the Executive Director of the Australian Conservation Foundation, to highlight the impact of climate change on Australian Football and how individuals can reduce their impact on the environment.

The AFL commissioned the University of Ballarat to research alternative turf options. Together with Cricket Australia, the AFL released the criteria for artificial turf to be developed, which will be suitable to be used on Australian Football grounds.

Message from the Australian Sports Commission

Australia, for its small population and remoteness of location, continues to confound the world with its achievements on the international sporting stage. This position has been reached by the development of a comprehensive and effective national sport system that encourages sport and physical activity for all Australians and creates opportunities to enable those who are talented and motivated to reach their potential. This system has evolved with the strong support of the Australian Government, state/territory and local governments, the private sector and sporting organisations at all levels.

At the national level primary responsibility for developing and directing sport lies with national sporting organisations. On behalf of the Australian Government, the Australian Sports Commission plays central leadership, coordination, funding and advocacy roles in the operation of the Australian sport system, largely through the national sporting organisations. Indeed the Australian Government, through the Commission, is the major investor in Australian sport.

In 2007/08 the Australian Government, through the Commission, provided the AFL with funding of \$490,000 for the development of the sport and its continued enhancement at the grassroots and elite levels, including the AIS-AFL Academy program.

The Australian Sports Commission recognises that the AFL has continued to work to build its membership base and has provided significant financial support to its member associations. The AFL has also continued a number of very worthwhile programs in the areas of Indigenous development and programs to increase participation opportunities for athletes with a disability.

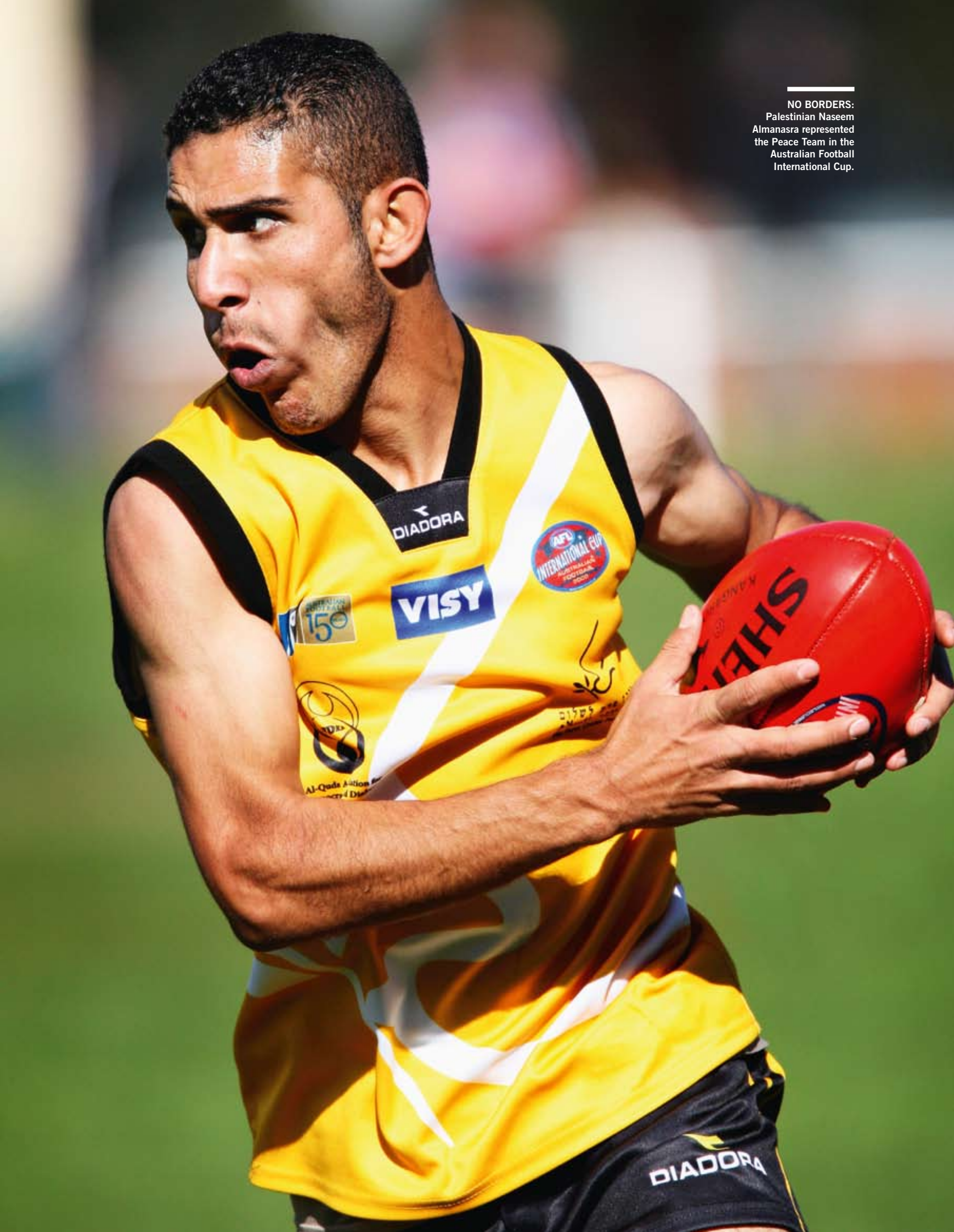
On behalf of the Commission, I look forward to working with the AFL in future for the betterment of Australian sport.

Brent Espeland

Acting Chief Executive Officer,
Australian Sports Commission



NO BORDERS:
Palestinian Naseem Almanasra represented the Peace Team in the Australian Football International Cup.



AROUND THE REGIONS

A snapshot of the programs and initiatives in each state and territory and internationally.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

- Total participation reached 83,896 – up 20.6 per cent on 2007.
- Attendances at SANFL matches increased by 12.2 per cent.
- Central District won its seventh premiership in the past decade, equalling the record set by the Port Adelaide Magpies in the 1950s.
- The 2008 'Be Active' Grand Final at AAMI Stadium attracted a crowd of 34,128 – the largest Grand Final attendance since 2002.
- The South Australian Football Commission endorsed the introduction of an Under-18 competition and condensed Under-16 competition, replacing the traditional Under-17 and Under-19 competitions for 2009, consistent with the under-age football structure throughout the rest of Australia.
- The Commission also established a Community Football Board to oversee football operations across the state.
- The South Australian Football Hall of Fame welcomed five inductees: Doug Thomas, Nigel Smart, Keith Thomas, Geoff Kingston and Peter Woite.
- Nine-time Port Adelaide premiers player Geof Motley was inducted into the Australian Football Hall of Fame.

VICTORIA

- Total participation reached 233,509 – up 1.8 per cent on 2007. Since 2000, participation has grown by 15 per cent, despite the impact of the drought.
- Victoria produced 52 per cent of players at the 2008 NAB AFL Draft.
- The TAC Cup and VFL grand finals were played at Telstra Dome on AFL Grand Final eve. North Ballarat and Murray Bushrangers won the respective Grand Finals.
- AFL Victoria and Cricket Victoria developed a dual-recognition coaching course.
- With the support of Essendon Football Club, AFL Victoria established a Youth Girls Academy for promising players to develop skills both on and off the field.
- AFL school ambassadors increased by 43 per cent to 1128.
- AFL Victoria secured a significant investment from the State Government to improve VFL grounds, adding to drought-relief funding already provided.
- New State Government partners included the Department of Health (problem gambling), 'Go for Your Life' (active participation and healthy eating) and ConnectEast (EastLink Freeway) joining VicHealth and TAC.
- The MCC Foundation increased its support for school football programs.

TASMANIA

- Total participation reached 33,454 – up 3.2 per cent on 2007.
- The Tasmanian Devils withdrew from the VFL competition at the end of 2008 as part of the establishment of a Tasmanian State League in 2009.
- The establishment of the Tasmanian State League competition will:
 - Improve the quality of Tasmanian football at community level; and
 - Unite the state, while preserving the integrity of – and supporting – the respective regional tier three competitions.
- Ten clubs will be the inaugural members of the Wrest Point Tasmanian State League: Burnie, Devonport (North West Region); Launceston, North Launceston, South Launceston (Northern Region); Glenorchy, North Hobart, Hobart, Clarence and Lauderdale (Southern Region).
- Tasmania won the Division Two titles at the 2008 NAB AFL Under-16 and NAB AFL Under-18 Championships. Six of the 30 AIS-AFL Academy inductees were Tasmanian.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

- Total participation reached 111,138 – up 9.8 per cent on 2007.
- One in 12 West Australians are directly involved in football. This equates to about 176,000 who have played, coached, umpired or volunteered.
- More than 40,000 organised games per season (2500 per week).
- 2800 umpires officiate at games for players aged five-to-eight.
- 756 AFL School Football ambassadors (primary and secondary) secured.
- Primary school 'faction football' grew from 52 participating schools in 2007 to 107 in 2008, with 636 teams and 9540 players.
- Introduction of secondary school 'faction footy' saw 326 teams and 4890 students involved.
- Successful introduction of 'parent umpire' scheme.
- Female football talent academy established.
- Overall female football participation growth in 2008 was 40 per cent across all age groups.
- Introduction of Quality Club program to every football stakeholder in Western Australia (metro and rural).
- Major focus on improving community club facilities at all levels.
- Employment of a multicultural manager to target development of multicultural communities.
- The ongoing development of the District Centre of Football Excellence model based around the nine WAFL clubs.

NORTHERN TERRITORY

- Total participation reached 19,792 – up 12.6 per cent on 2007.
- Participation growth across the Northern Territory since 2006 up 24 per cent.
- Establishment of a Northern Territory team to play in AFLQ in 2009, a \$1.6 million project.
- Formation of an independent board to run the club and five full-time positions based in Darwin and Alice Springs to manage the team.
- Runner-up in the NAB AFL Under-16 Division Two Championships.
- Third in the NAB AFL Under-18 Division Two Championships.
- Ten new AFL junior leagues created in Indigenous communities.
- Increased focus on AFLNT talent and umpiring academy programs.
- Focus on regional participation and growth outside Darwin and Alice Springs.
- Development and submission of AFLNT facility plan to Northern Territory Government, a \$2.6 million plan.

QUEENSLAND

- Total participation reached 97,917 – up 18.8 per cent on 2007.
- The AFL Queensland Hall of Fame was established with seven inaugural 'Legends' named: Arthur Collinson, Harry O'Callaghan, Dick Verson, Tom McArthur, Jason Dunstall, Leigh Matthews and Michael Voss.
- Record-breaking umpire Tom McArthur was also inducted into the Australian Football Hall of Fame. He is the first resident Queenslander to be inducted.
- AFL Recreational Football teams topped 100. Competition for males and females of all ages was conducted at community football venues across south-east Queensland and northern New South Wales, plus Gladstone and Mt Isa.
- School-based participation grew by 15 per cent and there was more than 100 per cent growth in female participation in school competitions.
- The \$14 million Tony Ireland Stadium, at Thuringowah, Townsville, was launched with a game between Queensland and Western Australia.
- The ever-expanding AFLQ Indigenous program was highlighted for the second year in a row by a visit for 96 children from eight Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities to the Gabba during the AFL's Indigenous round: Mornington Island, Kowanyama, Aurukun, Lockhart River, Palm Island, Woorabinda, Cherbourg Aboriginal Communities and Badu Island (Torres Strait).
- Aspley was promoted to the State League Division One for 2009 to ensure the code maintains a strong presence on the north side of Brisbane.
- The Western Magpies' first division licence was renewed for 2009 after four years at the secondary level to provide a key focus in the western suburbs.
- AFLQ reached agreement with AFL Northern Territory to field a team in the AFLQ from 2009.
- The Queensland Government continued to support the development of Australian Football facilities statewide, contributing \$800,000 via the community development program.

NEW SOUTH WALES/AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

- Total participation reached 113,346 – up 6.8 per cent on 2007, including increases in:
 - Greater Sydney junior clubs, including Auskick (10.65 per cent);
 - Primary inter-school competition (39 per cent or an additional 157 teams), and secondary school programs (56 per cent).
- The school ambassador program has 570 active ambassadors supporting the game and the 'Welcome to AFL' program, which saw more than 2000 families from club and inter-school programs experience a Sydney Swans game at ANZ Stadium, the majority for the first time.
- The development of infrastructure continued to be a priority with two quality venues to become operational in 2009:
 - Bruce Purser Reserve, in the heart of Sydney's north-west region, will be home to Sydney AFL Premier Division club, East Coast Eagles and the Kellyville Magpies juniors.
 - Blacktown Olympic Park will feature two AFL standard ovals, a 1500-seat grandstand and quality football, media, corporate and administrative facilities. It has been developed with the support of the NSW Government, City of Blacktown and Cricket NSW.
- An additional 72 priority facility projects are currently being progressed. Developments include Drummoyne Oval, Gipps Road Oval in western Sydney, Sydney Showgrounds, Monarch Oval in Campbelltown and Hollymount Park in Wollongong.



INTERNATIONAL

- Total participation in other countries reached 45,204 and is now recorded in the AFL's annual census.
- Participation is spread across 47 leagues in 41 countries.
- South Africa has thrived through the delivery of 'footyWILD', the South African version of the game, with 17,296 participants. The support of the West Coast Eagles, Fremantle, Carlton and Collingwood has been invaluable.
- The AFL Indigenous Youth team, the Flying Boomerangs, and the AIS-AFL Academy squad, separately toured South Africa.
- A record 16 teams participated in the third Australian Football International Cup played in Melbourne and Warrnambool in August. Several new entrants included China, India, Sweden, Finland and the Peace Team. Developed by the Peres Centre for Peace and coached by Robert DiPierdomenico, the Peace Team engaged players from Israel and Palestine in one of the best stories of the year.
- The AFL appointed Andrew Cadzow as the regional manager for Oceania. Based in Brisbane, Andrew's experience in Papua New Guinea will be shared across the various nations in the Pacific.
- Geelong coach Mark Thompson was the guest at the USAFL National Championships in Colorado in October.
- The AFL is building its relationship with the City of Melbourne and the sister city relationship with Tianjin in China to construct the first purpose built community ground overseas.
- A NAB Cup match was played in Dubai between Collingwood and Adelaide and in partnership with Austrade. An exhibition match was held in Pretoria between Carlton and Fremantle.



MARKETING, COMMUNICATIONS & PUBLIC AFFAIRS

GENERAL MANAGER – COLIN McLEOD

CROWING: Brett Burton was at his brilliant best early in the 2008 season before a knee injury grounded him after round 15.

FOCUS ON SUPPORTERS VIA MEDIA COVERAGE

The AFL continued to be the most reported sport in Australia in 2008, with a concentrated effort on connecting with supporters and grassroots clubs.

The Marketing, Communications and Public Affairs Department is responsible for the marketing of the game, public, media and community relations and issues management. The department works closely with stakeholders, including AFL clubs, state leagues, AFL corporate partners, government, the media and community organisations.

In 2008, media coverage of the game was again substantial, dominating all mediums. The AFL continued to draw unprecedented interest, remaining the most reported sport in Australia.

Significant efforts were also taken by the AFL to connect directly with supporters, particularly community club supporters, through supplying regional and suburban media with localised and interesting content through many of the Australian Football 150 Years programs. Importantly, this enabled the AFL to directly connect with supporters and grassroots clubs, enhancing community relations and enabling the code to reinforce its values and principles directly to supporters in every part of the country.

In 2008, a strategy to improve direct communications with the industry was developed to keep stakeholders informed of AFL developments. The establishment of the AFL Players Say No to Drugs (aflplayerssaynotodrugs.com.au) website, which provided an informative, player-endorsed resource explaining both AFL drug policies in detail, was a primary example of this.

In 2008, the AFL accredited more than 1600 media representatives, including 780 journalists, who represented more than 160 media organisations across all Australian states and territories as well as servicing media outlets at national, state and community level, and an increasing number of international outlets seeking information about AFL initiatives.

More than 680 media releases were produced this year, in excess of 800 media interviews and media conferences organised and coordinated and a number of major briefings on issues such as the expansion strategy, fixture, relaunch of the Illicit Drugs code, laws of the game, draft concessions for the Gold Coast team and Australian Football 150 Years activities.

The media department also provided ongoing strategic issues management advice on a range of subjects for the AFL, clubs and state bodies.

The 2008 Toyota AFL Grand Final saw media attendance (excluding Channel Seven's match-day broadcast crew) of 282 journalists, broadcasters and photographers covering the game for 82 newspaper, television and radio outlets covering metropolitan, suburban and regional Australia.

More than 70 speeches, including 22 during the finals series, were prepared by the Media Department for the AFL CEO, Chairman and other senior staff.

The department also provided the media support for the Australian Football 150 Years celebration, which resulted in more than 1150 localised media releases and alerts being sent to regional, suburban and metropolitan media outlets across the country to promote events.

There were a number of events that produced strong outcomes and reached key performance measures based on the media and public relations campaigns built around them. These included:

Community Football Weekend

The department worked with state leagues and community clubs to create a campaign that encouraged people to go back to their grassroots football clubs. It developed more than 400 media releases distributed to local media and personalised columns by Andrew Demetriou were sent to every regional and suburban newspaper in the country, generating more than \$3.1 million in print, TV and radio coverage, resulting in more than 1.6 million people attending grassroots football matches across the weekend.

Kick Around Australia Day

The department worked with all levels of government, the Australian Defence Force, AFL clubs and businesses to build coverage through incorporating celebrities and 150 Years ambassadors in various public relations activities. Coverage was conservatively estimated at more than \$1.2 million. More than 200,000 school children took part in related activities.

Hall of Fame Tribute Match

A strategy to maximise metropolitan media opportunities with coverage of the players in the Hall of Fame teams resulted in massive coverage in metropolitan press and on television.

Volunteer Recognition Program

Promotions were developed to acknowledge more than 3500 volunteers across the country for their contributions to Australian Football.

Community Camps

In its sixth year, the community camps program in 2008 included for the first time a media tour to cover the community camps of Collingwood, Fremantle, the West Coast Eagles and Carlton held in South Africa. Extensive coverage was generated in News Ltd and Fairfax newspapers, as well as through Channel Ten and afl.com.au.

Indigenous Round

The department worked with the Indigenous community to increase activities around Indigenous Round with greater involvement from AFL clubs to make



POPULAR PIE:
Collingwood's Dale Thomas has quickly established himself as a genuine young star in three seasons of AFL football.



DREAM ENCOUNTER: Essendon's Nathan Lovett-Murray and Richmond's Richard Tambling were two of the stars of Dreamtime at the 'G', the centrepiece of Indigenous Round.

the round a feature of the AFL fixture. Initiatives included launching the round in Adelaide and involving Port Adelaide's Indigenous players.

International Cup

The Australian Football International Cup attracted substantial public interest with the Peace Team attracting enormous coverage before and during its visit.

NAB AFL Talent Pathway

One of the highlights of the year was the media coverage in the lead-up to the NAB AFL Draft and the coverage of the day itself. More than 100 media members attended the draft function. There were 1651 media references generated between November 1 and December 8, with 1200 press articles and more than 100 television segments. The draft dominated metropolitan Sunday newspapers. Coverage of the NAB AFL Draft Camp at the AIS in Canberra also reached record levels, with 12 media members travelling to Canberra, a formal press call attracting 25 media members and more than 242 media mentions of the camp between the Toyota AFL Grand Final and October 31. Public interest in the NAB AFL Under-18 and Under-16 competitions also grew considerably through greater promotion.

New Audiences

A highlight of the 150 Years celebrations was the ability to use a number of the initiatives to drive Australian Football to new audiences. Events such as Footy Shorts (a short film competition run in conjunction with the Melbourne International Film Festival), Focus on Footy (a photographic exhibition featuring the game's personalities) and *The Game That Made Australia* painting (depicting images of 150 years of Australian Football) enabled football to be promoted to new audiences.

Key Marketing Programs and Initiatives

To mark 150 years of the game, the AFL's marketing activity centred on recognising and celebrating the past, present and future of our game.

In addition, we continued to build on the marketing initiatives of the past 18 months in the growth markets of New South Wales and Queensland as the expansion strategy gathers momentum. This, together with our themed rounds and major events, culminated in another record year for the AFL, with year-on-year growth in the key areas of:

- Game attendance.
- Membership.
- Participation.

2008 NAB Cup and NAB Challenge

The year kicked off with the NAB Cup and NAB Challenge, supported with a national campaign that, partnering with NAB, focused on the access the pre-season competition provides to local and regional Australia, together with the AFL Telstra Community Camps, all of which had solid attendance and participation.

2008 Season Launch

To launch the 2008 Toyota AFL Premiership season and formally launch the 150th anniversary of Australian Football, a brand campaign titled *The Game That Made Australia* was launched. Featuring iconic Australian actor Bill Hunter, the campaign took an introspective and humorous look back through Australian history concluding, rather tongue in cheek, that most major events had some relationship to Australian Football.

The campaign was central to all 150 Years marketing and promotional initiatives and events, including the Hall of Fame Tribute match, Community Football Weekend and Kick Around Australia.

Themed Rounds

Over and above the 150 Years celebrations, themed rounds remained key pillars of the Toyota AFL Premiership season and evolved to not only drive attendance, but to provide a platform to deliver the AFL's values and broader social messages.

Of the top five attended rounds for the season, three were themed rounds: Rivalry Round (350,855), Anzac Round (315,844) and Indigenous Round (331,733).

Indigenous Round and the Dreamtime at the 'G' match further developed major events in most states, with a strong focus on community engagement and government participation.

Community Engagement

A clear focus of this year's Indigenous Round was to increase community engagement, particularly with the Indigenous community. This was emphasised through:

- Community ticketing – 5000 tickets made available to Indigenous community organisations across Victoria.
- Federation Square Live Site – the AFL and Essendon worked closely with community organisations to develop a two-day event at Federation Square to promote Victoria's Indigenous culture. Stakeholders included The Long Walk, City of Melbourne and Reconciliation Victoria.
- The Long Walk – again the event's key community partner, The Long Walk was directly involved with the Dreamtime at the 'G' match, with 1000 walkers participating in the on-field entertainment.

Government Participation

Indigenous programs and affairs are an area of significant government interest, at both state and federal levels. The AFL's Indigenous Round over the past two years has achieved significant government support:

- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations was the Dreamtime at the 'G' match-day sponsor, supported the Dreamtime at the 'G' luncheon and sponsored AFL (NSW/ACT) and AFL Queensland.
- Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs sponsored the Flying Boomerangs and AFL Queensland.
- Department of Health and Ageing sponsored AFL Queensland.
- Numerous federal and state government ministers and representatives attended matches across the round.

2008 Toyota AFL Finals campaign

The 2008 Toyota AFL Finals Series was the culmination of the 150 Years celebrations. The majority of the year was spent recognising and playing tribute to the past, and the eight clubs in the finals were symbolic of the present and future of our game, supported by the 'History is Coming' slogan.

The campaign was launched nationally on August 26 and was integrated into all key AFL consumer marketing activity, culminating with Toyota AFL Grand Final week at Federation Square and the MCG on Grand Final day.

New South Wales and Queensland

As the expansion plans into these states increased, the AFL continued to increase marketing activity and investment in the key regions of Greater Sydney and south-east Queensland.

While attendances and television ratings were down on last year, interest levels and participation continued to grow.

Sydney Initiatives

Building on the successful 'Barry Hall Hall' campaign launched in 2006 – a fun, quirky series of television advertisements and a dedicated website created to engage and educate Sydney residents – we continued to use this as the major marketing platform in 2008 to launch the season, promote participation through our 'Play AFL' pathway, and promote the three-match pass product for ANZ Stadium games.

Working collaboratively with the Sydney Swans, the ANZ Stadium and our media partners, more than 10,000 three-match passes were sold in 2008, easily surpassing the previous record of 8674 in 2007. Despite ANZ Stadium attendances being down on 2007, an average of nearly 47,000 fans attended the four Toyota AFL premiership season games at the stadium.

South-east Queensland initiatives

The new era of Australian Football in south-east Queensland continued in 2008. The AFL launched the season in Brisbane with a market-centric campaign featuring Jonathan Brown and Simon Black focused on driving participation and promoting the Brisbane Lions.

The AFL, Brisbane Lions and AFL media partners worked collaboratively on specific initiatives to drive attendances at games at the Gabba. The result saw attendances on a par with 2007, with strong growth in those where promotions were focused, particularly the celebration of 150 Years of Australian Football during round 16.

The announcement of a bid for a new AFL team on the Gold Coast, and the subsequent formation of the GC17 bid team, provided an exciting opportunity in the region. With the bid team running its campaign to secure more than 20,000 committed supporters and 110 corporate partners, the AFL continued to promote and drive attendance at the NAB Cup and Toyota AFL Premiership games on the Gold Coast.

Local media partnerships were a key platform of the success of the year, providing solid editorial and promotions around each match, and engaging with the community to build the GC17 profile and help it reach more than 42,000 supporters.

The creation of GC17 significantly lifted coverage of the code in Gold Coast media, with the *Gold Coast Bulletin* in particular devoting enormous coverage to the establishment of the club and the bid to develop a name and colours for the new team.



HUMOUR: Iconic Australian actor Bill Hunter featured in *The Game That Made Australia* campaign that was central to the 150 Years celebrations.

CULTURAL EXPERIENCE:
Tyrone Bean from Aspendale Gardens in Victoria was one of 25 young Indigenous players who toured South Africa as part of the Flying Boomerangs Leadership Program.



AFL FOUNDATION

The AFL Foundation has continued to use Australian Football as a means to promote social inclusion and community development.

The AFL Foundation demonstrated its continued commitment to refocusing its charter to move beyond the conventional philanthropic activities of grant-giving, to a more contemporary and holistic concept of social inclusion and community development.

The AFL Foundation leverages the influence of Australian Football to build a more inclusive Australian community that acknowledges and celebrates difference, identity and culture. The AFL Foundation provides a vehicle to form partnerships, engage communities, develop capacity and accelerate leadership.

Increasingly, the AFL Foundation performs a critical role in creating these relationships and using the game of Australian Football to engage the disengaged.

The AFL Foundation's key objectives are to:

- Build on the broader AFL objectives to increase social inclusion with targeted community groups.
- Strategically support this inclusion by developing mutually beneficial partnerships.
- Utilise the strength and power of the AFL brand to heighten awareness, acknowledgement, equality and respect of targeted community groups.
- Facilitate constructive engagement across the AFL industry with targeted community groups.

Underpinning the AFL Foundation framework is a community development model. The AFL Foundation provides the leadership and coordination and instigates responses to changing community needs. Maximising this influence will become the catalyst for outcomes in leadership, education, training and employment.

The AFL Foundation currently has a project focus on:

- Indigenous leadership.
- International communities.
- Disability (Down Syndrome).
- Youth homelessness.

In partnership with targeted communities, the Australian Football industry, governments and corporate partners, the AFL Foundation can make a significant and measurable impact.

AFL Foundation – Strategic Projects

Indigenous Leadership – Flying Boomerangs Leadership Program

At the conclusion of the annual Qantas AFL Kickstart camp, 25 Indigenous players (aged 14-15) are selected to participate in the Flying Boomerangs Leadership Program, a personal development and leadership program incorporating a three-match series against developing international countries.

The third series was conducted in 2008, with the Flying Boomerangs touring South Africa facilitating clinics and playing games in townships in three provinces.

The tour provides an outstanding sporting, leadership and cultural opportunity for young Indigenous players. The focus of the tour is to further develop the leadership qualities and experience of the young Indigenous men. The AFL Foundation also sponsored the 25 young men to undertake a Certificate II course in Indigenous Leadership, the only accredited Indigenous leadership program in Australia.

International Communities

AFL Foundation – Volunteers Abroad Project

The AFL Foundation is leveraging AFL international development activity, particularly in South Africa, by establishing an AFL Foundation Volunteers Abroad project to engage and build the capacity of local international communities.

Three major objectives of the AFL Foundation-Australian Volunteers International partnership are:

- To cultivate sustainable community development outcomes and build resources in countries requiring significant capacity-building and program management.
- To build a viable volunteer management system in these communities to ensure there is sufficient capacity for host-countries to manage incoming task-based volunteers through the AFL Volunteers Abroad program on a regular basis.
- To train and employ local staff in relevant community engagement positions to ensure the program is sustainable into the future.

The Volunteer Abroad project will leverage and use the application of the AFL's footyWILD development model to act as a conduit to the overall goal of 'Sport for Development' – a philosophy the AFL Foundation and the AFL wish to nurture in the international communities we engage.

Disability (Down Syndrome) – Walking with Umpires Program

In partnership with Down Syndrome Victoria, the AFL Umpires' Department and the AFL Umpires' Association, the AFL Foundation is seeking to make a positive contribution to the lives of disabled people and to improve community understanding of and attitudes towards people with disabilities.

The Walking with Umpires program, started in 2006, aims to engage people with Down Syndrome, provide a vehicle for AFL umpires to engage with the community and heighten awareness on the functionality of Down Syndrome people. In 2008, 20 AFL umpires were engaged in the program during Friday night AFL matches. The program involves young people with Down Syndrome working with the umpires' trainers during matches. This program contributes to the broadening acceptance of people with disabilities.

The AFL Foundation has worked closely with Down Syndrome Victoria, leading to the development of a program called Mentoring Connections. The aim of this program is to provide young people with Down Syndrome with mentors who will help them explore appropriate employment opportunities.

Young people with Down Syndrome were also provided the opportunity to attend this year's umpires' community camp.

Gordon Andrew Program

Adelaide coach Neil Craig initiated the Gordon Andrew Program. Gordon Andrew, who had Down Syndrome, was Craig's uncle.

This project supports young adults with Down Syndrome to achieve independence, obtain personal goals and facilitate work placement opportunities.

The Gordon Andrew Program partnered with AFL Foundation21, a non-profit organisation with the aim of enhancing and supporting services and opportunities for children and young adults with Down Syndrome, helping them develop life skills and broker opportunities for workforce placement.

The project is governed by a steering committee that includes Craig, AFL Foundation CEO Jason Mifsud, John Solomon from F21 and government representatives.

The South Australian Government contributed \$100,000 to the Gordon Andrew Program.

Youth Homelessness

In 2006, the AFL Foundation forged a partnership with the AFL Players' Association to create Ladder, an organisation that aims to tackle the issue of youth homelessness. Ladder reached some critical milestones this year.

The most significant was a \$9.5 million partnership with the South Australian Government and the Federal Government that saw the purchase of a building in Port Adelaide.

Once renovated, this building will accommodate 23 young homeless people in self-contained apartments. The residents will have access to specialised support services and receive mentoring from current and past AFL players.

Ladder is in negotiations for a site in Melbourne that could see the program launched in early 2009.

Ladder received tremendous support from the broader AFL industry and community in 2008. AFL players donated \$100,000 of their match fees from the Hall of Fame Tribute Match held in May. The MCG Trust donated a further \$50,000.

Although a broader revenue-raising strategy is being developed, several critical partnerships were developed in 2008, including:

- Devine Homes building and selling a property, with Ladder the major recipient of the proceeds.
- The Signature of M project, a high-profile and successful art competition with all proceeds donated to Ladder. This not only provided a tremendous fundraising opportunity, but another basis to engage non-football people to this community issue and the broader AFL industry.
- Pin and Win, a successful program generating funds from the sale of Grand Final pins.

Ladder also received generous support from the AFL, George Patterson Y & R, Mallesons Stephen Jaques and Drake International.

In 2008, Ladder became its own entity, with former Essendon player Mark Bolton appointed general manager. The AFL Foundation also contributes financially to the Adelaide project officer's position.



COMMUNITY SUPPORT: Adelaide coach Neil Craig and Foundation21 member Tammy Lane at the launch of the Gordon Andrew Program, which supports opportunities for children and young adults with Down Syndrome.

The AFL Foundation believes that by entering into strategic partnerships with government, corporate sponsors and organisations with experience and resources in this area, Ladder will make a significant and sustainable contribution to the important work of combating youth homelessness in Australian cities.

In partnership with Ladder, the AFL Foundation is looking forward to consolidating existing projects in 2009 before exploring national expansion opportunities.

The AFL Foundation would like to acknowledge the work of outgoing CEO Derek Linsell. Derek was instrumental in many of the AFL Foundation's initiatives and worked to engage all sections of the AFL industry in important community issues.

The AFL Foundation would also like to acknowledge the many people involved in projects in 2008 and looks forward to strengthening partnerships and consolidating strategic projects.



AFL SPORTSREADY

Traineeships in the sports industry increased by 10 per cent in 2008.

In its 14th year, AFL SportsReady continued its excellence in delivering meaningful employment for young Australians who want to work within the sports industry. Trainee numbers increased throughout Australia by about 10 per cent, from 512 to more than 600 in November 2008. AFL SportsReady is increasing its participation and expanding the programs it offers the football community.

In 2008, AFL SportsReady appointed six Indigenous mentors to assist the placement of young Indigenous Australians and to assist growth of its Indigenous Employment Program. The Indigenous Employment Program is funded by the Federal Government and is growing in participation, while having a significant impact on young Indigenous Australians and their employment outcomes. The cross-cultural awareness sessions AFL SportsReady delivers are specifically designed to educate and broaden the focus for the community to assist young Indigenous Australians with employment outcomes.

AFL SportsReady placed 26 athletes under a new program, Sporting Trade Skills, which was launched in January, 2008. This program helps athletes to participate in trades with skill shortages including carpentry, plumbing, electrical and horticultural. The range of athletes varied and included AFL players, Australian netballers and Olympic representatives. The program was created to support retiring elite athletes and find them employment in the traditional trades sector.

In conjunction with the AFLPA, the Next Goal Career Transition Program continued to provide meaningful employment outcomes for some 160 AFL players in various industries in 2008. The Next Goal

Career Transition Program gives AFL players an opportunity to gain work experience in an industry they have either studied in or have a desire to work in. About 70 per cent of players gain full-time or part-time employment from their work experience. In 2008, players undertook work experience in areas including real estate, police academies, finance and trades, with the program continuing to benefit players in their transition into industry post-football.

AFL SportsReady continued to assist those in our community who are dispossessed or disadvantaged. It helped young people who are disconnected from the community due to abuse and neglect, drug addiction and poverty. This support was achieved through the help of the Whitleion Juvenile Justice Detention Centre.

AFL SportsReady also supported the Heartwell Fitness Centre, devoted to the physical development of youngsters with physical or intellectual disabilities.

AFL SportsReady would like to acknowledge the contribution of its inaugural CEO Philip Wallbridge, who retired in October, 2008. Philip's vision and, in particular, his introduction of the Indigenous Employment Program and the Career Transition programs, have impacted and inspired many young people's lives. AFL SportsReady welcomes Phillip Campbell who takes over as CEO in 2009.

Phillip has a background in education and his most recent role was as principal of Melton Secondary College. In addition to his 'day' job, Phillip works for the Western Jets Football Club in a player welfare/statistics role.



GOOD SPORTS: AFL SportsReady trainees Matthew Fowler (back left), Nikki Sinclair and Ben Maxfield – all from AFL Queensland – enjoyed their time in the football industry.

FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER – IAN ANDERSON

LEGAL & BUSINESS AFFAIRS

GENERAL MANAGER – ANDREW DILLON

HUMAN RESOURCES

MANAGER – CHRISTINA OGG



THE EYES HAVE IT: Star Brisbane Lions forward Daniel Bradshaw leads Melbourne defender James Frawley to the ball in the round six clash at the Gabba. Bradshaw booted six goals in his team's 52-point win.



FINANCE REPORT

The AFL has continued its financial growth, being debt-free and announcing a record operating profit in 2008.

The key highlights for the 2008 financial year were:

- AFL revenue increased in all areas of the business to reach a total of \$302 million.
- A record operating profit of \$207 million.
- A net surplus of \$19 million.
- Cash on deposit of \$50 million.
- Net assets increased by \$19 million to \$104 million.

Cash Position

The AFL is debt-free and has built up cash reserves totalling \$50 million. These cash reserves include \$34 million allocated to the AFL's Future Fund. It is the AFL's aim to continue to build these funds and invest them wisely over the coming years.

Shared Services Initiatives

The AFL has, over a number of years, worked on initiatives to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the AFL industry. This has proved to be a successful initiative and has been well supported by the AFL clubs and state football bodies. This is a summary of the main processing functions offered:

- Payroll processing – the AFL handles processing for nine clubs, five state football bodies and AFL SportsReady.
- Financial processing – the AFL handles accounting responsibilities for three clubs, five state football bodies and AFL SportsReady.
- Membership processing – the AFL handles membership processing for seven clubs.

National Insurance and Risk Protection Program

The AFL manages the insurance activities for the Australian Football industry, which covers the AFL competition as well as local community football. The costs of these programs decreased in 2008 as a result of the excellent work done on risk management initiatives, which led to a reduction in claims.

The AFL works closely with insurance brokers Jardines (on the national insurance program) and Marsh (on the AFL club program) to look at ways of improving these programs, and further improvements in risk management will be undertaken in 2009. One major initiative undertaken already was to negotiate two-year agreements on major classes of insurance for 2009 and 2010.

The AFL also works closely with insurers and has introduced a number of incentive programs which encourage the football industry to review and implement new risk management initiatives.

Information Technology

The AFL continues to explore ways IT systems can be used to assist the AFL industry. In particular, the AFL has been working with all AFL clubs to review the core business systems required and to identify the best available systems for implementation.



FULL STRETCH: St Kilda ruckman Michael Gardiner soars over Sydney Swans defenders Tadhg Kennelly and Craig Bolton at Telstra Dome in round one.

Over the past three years, a number of the key IT systems were identified and implemented by the AFL clubs. In 2008, two further projects were undertaken:

- Review and evaluation of injury management systems.
- Implementation of an events and corporate sponsorship system.

The AFL also continues to provide increasing IT support to state football bodies. In 2008, this support extended to AFL Queensland and AFL Northern Territory.

Financial Performance of AFL Clubs

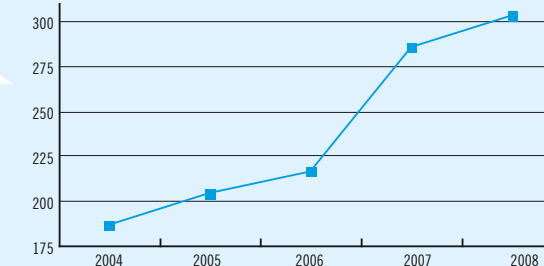
The AFL works closely with all AFL clubs to ensure they are financially well managed. Most clubs continued to improve their financial position and recorded profits in 2008. Four clubs, however, recorded operating losses for the year and the AFL is working closely with these clubs to ensure their financial position improves in 2009.

The AFL also has a number of financial assistance packages available to AFL clubs and is reviewing these financial assistance packages, including the annual special distributions which will be payable in 2010 and 2011 to various AFL clubs.

It was identified that the returns AFL clubs obtain from the stadiums they play in vary significantly. The AFL is working with each stadium manager to analyse these financial returns and look at ways they can be improved. These reviews and negotiations with the stadium managers will continue in 2009.

KEY FINANCIAL INDICATORS

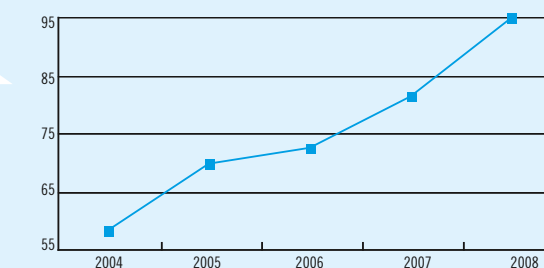
REVENUE
6%
TO \$302
MILLION



Revenue increased by \$17 million with the major areas of change being:

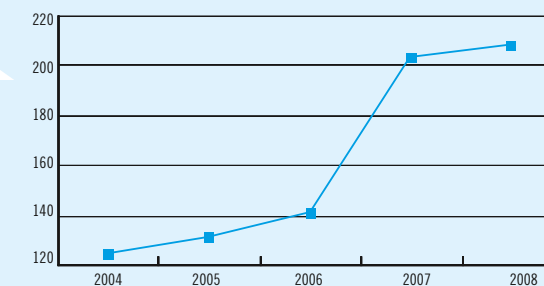
- Sponsorship and broadcasting up \$8.2 million.
- International Rules Series proceeds up \$2 million.
- AFL Membership up \$2 million.

EXPENDITURE
17%
TO \$95
MILLION



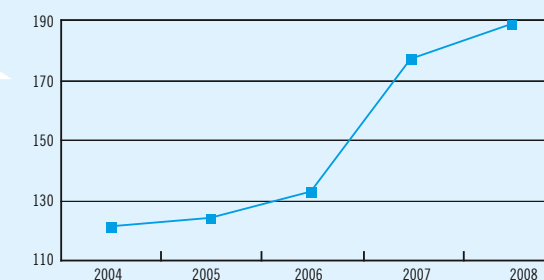
Expenditure grew by \$14 million with \$9 million attributed to the increases in revenue. The other significant expenditure item was the 150 Year celebrations.

OPERATING PROFIT
2%
TO \$207
MILLION



The AFL's operating surplus increased by \$5 million to \$207 million. This increase enabled greater distributions to all stakeholders.

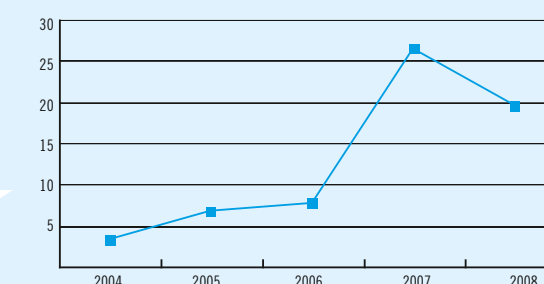
DISTRIBUTIONS
7%
TO \$188
MILLION



Distributions increased by \$12 million and were applied as follows:

- Payments to clubs up \$6 million.
- Facilities development expenditure up \$4 million.

NET SURPLUS
26%
TO \$19
MILLION



The AFL's net surplus decreased by \$7 million in 2008. This was in line with our budget and five-year forecast.



CENTRE OF ATTENTION: Classy Port Adelaide midfielder Shaun Burgoyne fires off a handball in the Power's 24-point win over the West Coast Eagles at Subiaco in round five.

Payments To Clubs

The AFL increased the distributions to and financial support of AFL clubs in 2008. These payments included the following:

- A base distribution to all clubs which totalled \$86.6 million, an increase of \$8 million.
- A bonus distribution of \$1.2 million to all clubs from the broadcast rights proceeds.
- Another payment from the proceeds of the sale of Waverley Park to the clubs totalling \$4 million. The final payment of \$0.25 million per club brings the total paid to \$2 million per club.
- A total of \$7 million was paid from the AFL's annual special distribution fund to the following: Western Bulldogs Football Club (\$1.7 million), North Melbourne Football Club (\$1.4 million), Melbourne Football Club (\$1 million), Sydney Swans Football Club (\$0.7 million), Carlton Football Club (\$0.6 million), Richmond Football Club (\$0.4 million), Port Adelaide Football Club (\$0.25 million), Hawthorn Football Club (\$0.25 million) and Telstra Dome with \$0.7 million to assist clubs playing at this venue.
- Other payments to clubs included amounts paid from the AFL's internet rights agreement, ground buyout agreements, distribution of the AFL's signage rights at Telstra Dome, prize money, travel subsidies and promotional funding to help clubs develop the game around Australia.

2008 PAYMENTS TO CLUBS

Club	Base	Other	Total
Adelaide	5,410,752	1,796,192	7,206,944
Brisbane Lions	5,410,752	1,675,653	7,086,405
Carlton	5,410,752	3,544,949	8,955,701
Collingwood	5,410,752	3,091,636	8,502,388
Essendon	5,410,752	2,546,931	7,957,683
Fremantle	5,410,752	1,820,484	7,231,236
Geelong Cats	5,410,752	2,655,462	8,066,214
Hawthorn	5,410,752	3,451,566	8,862,318
Melbourne	5,410,752	3,206,243	8,616,995
North Melbourne	5,410,752	3,620,981	9,031,733
Port Adelaide	5,410,752	2,015,186	7,425,938
Richmond	5,410,752	2,699,361	8,110,113
St Kilda	5,410,752	3,639,210	9,049,962
Sydney Swans	5,410,752	2,740,782	8,151,534
West Coast Eagles	5,410,752	1,904,173	7,314,925
Western Bulldogs	5,410,752	4,770,682	10,181,434
TOTALS	86,572,032	45,179,491	131,751,523

SPONSORSHIP, EXPANSION HEAD LEGAL AGENDA

The AFL's Legal and Business Affairs Department played a key role in sponsorship arrangements and establishment of the proposed Gold Coast club.

In 2008, the Legal and Business Affairs Department continued its provision of legal services, commercial advice and support to all departments across the AFL, as well as working with AFL clubs, the AFL Players' Association and the AFL's state affiliated bodies on various projects.

The department had significant involvement in the negotiation of a number of sponsorship deals and renewals with the Commercial Operations Department, including renewal of agreements with Toyota, Defence Force Recruiting, Sony Australia and Sony Computer Entertainment, NAB, Intercontinental Hotels Group and Qantas, as well as involvement with many promotional agreements and other activities.

As well as supporting the Major Projects/Strategy Department with commercial and legal advice and documentation in relation to a host of strategic partnership fund activities, the department worked closely with the strategic and commercial departments on all sponsorship and venue agreements for the GC17 bid to establish a new AFL club on the Gold Coast. This involved a large volume of contractual work for the Gold Coast Football Club, as well as for the AFL in related subject matter. We also continued working with them on various venue arrangements for the Gold Coast Stadium at Carrara, in particular agreements to fixture Melbourne-based clubs at the venue in 2009 and 2010.

Legal and Business Affairs co-ordinated and led the AFL working party that formulated the list establishment mechanisms for the scheduled introduction of a 17th licence in 2011. This process included consultation with all 16 clubs, the GC17 bid group and the AFL Players' Association.

The department's involvement with the Consumer Products and Licensing Department continued, particularly in relation to the suite of licensing agreements, AFL Store licences, continued protection and compliance monitoring of the AFL's intellectual property portfolio and involvement with the AFL's commercial arrangements with the Stattery Media Group (AFL Publishing and AFL Photos) and with News Limited as our print media partner.

The audit of the AFL's trademark, design and intellectual property portfolio, which started in 2007, continued. This process is nearly completed and has resulted in a comprehensive update of the portfolio, including a significant amount of new trademark and design applications and acceptances and the renewal of existing trademarks and designs. This has provided the AFL and its clubs with a robust and broad portfolio of valuable and well-protected intellectual property.

The department played a major role, and will continue to do so, in the implementation of the television and radio broadcast agreements for the third year of these arrangements, as well as the new media rights agreement with Telstra.

The department again worked closely with the Game Development Department across the Auskick program, multiple funding grant applications and agreements and advice on the AFL's expansion plans into South Africa, as well as agreements in relation to coaching courses, curriculum and the online applications of these programs. Our staff also presided over the tribunal for the NAB AFL Under-16 and Under-18 Championships, as well as the Australian Football International Cup, and continue to provide advice on the AFL's international plans and the structure of its overseas affiliate bodies.

The department continues to remain actively involved with the Football Operations Department in the implementation and interpretation of the terms of the new Collective Bargaining Agreement with the AFL Players' Association and AFL Umpires' Association, as well as forming part of the working party into player movement. Members of the department played a leading role in the development and implementation of the Anti-Doping Code and Illicit Drugs Policy, negotiating agreements and compliance guidelines and procedures with ASADA and testing agencies.

The AFL's expanding shared services portfolio (payroll, finance and membership services) to a number of AFL clubs continued to involve the department in drafting and finalising appropriate agreements between the AFL and AFL clubs in relation to the provisions of those services.

The department performed its usual support role within the Marketing and Communications Department, providing assistance with protection of the brand and use of AFL intellectual property in marketing initiatives by the AFL, AFL clubs and sponsors, keeping the AFL's commercial operations guidelines current and effective and advising on terms and conditions for the AFL's wide range of competitions, promotions and other brand initiatives.

Involvement with AFL (NSW/ACT) increased in relation to multiple facility arrangements, as well as negotiating and advising on various funding grants and related agreements. Our legal and commercial involvement with AFL NT increased in its new and renewing sponsorship arrangements and its television broadcasting rights deal with the ABC for both the 2009 Indigenous All-Stars match and the AFL NT's new team that will be competing in the AFL Queensland competition in 2009.

Other major issues dealt with by Legal and Business Affairs in 2008 included:

- Successful implementation and compliance with 2008 Grand Final ticketing scheme in conjunction with the Victorian Government.
- Continued assistance to the Corporate Hospitality and Events Department with implementation of the Grand Final week activities such as Centre Square and September Club.
- Litigation – a claim by the AFL against Dimmeys for breach of AFL intellectual property rights.

INDUSTRY LEADERSHIP EXPANDS

The continuing growth of the AFL has seen structural changes implemented to ensure the best utilisation of skills within the organisation.

The Human Resources Department was subject to staff changes during 2008. In April, Jane Hollman left to pursue opportunities in New York and Melanie Heenan left in December to expand her experience in the state and federal government arena, developing policy and programs that will prevent violence against women. Christina Ogg joined the AFL as Human Resources Manager in July and Sue Clark joined the AFL as Respect and Responsibility Team Leader in November.

The human resources function is firmly established at the AFL. For the past few years, the AFL has been in a growth phase and this has prompted a review and changes in the way policies, processes and decisions in relation to staff are managed. As a result, there were structural changes made within the organisation to ensure best utilisation of skills and more manageable spans of control for some managers.

Retention and engagement of staff continued to be a key focus. Providing career paths for our key talent is a challenge within a flat structure.

A framework for defining the company values started towards the end of 2008. This will be refined and introduced in 2009 to form the basis of recruitment, development, promotion and performance management activities in 2009.

Learning and Development

The partnership with Melbourne Business School was expanded in 2008 around the industry leadership program. A number of employees across the industry have attended either a middle or senior leader program and feedback has been positive. This program will be reviewed in 2009 with a view to ensuring it continues to develop our key talent.

Online tools were introduced around performance management training to ensure consistency of management application of key processes such as setting objectives and giving good quality feedback. Further use of online training tools will be investigated in 2009 as a cost-effective, timely and easy way to train our people on fundamental skill requirements.

Work Environment

An employee survey was conducted. Responses provided further feedback that will assist the executive to continue to review and improve the work environment for employees with a view to maintaining or improving employee commitment and engagement.

A framework for comparing salaries and benefits to market was implemented. This ensures compensation practices are consistent and fair and enable the company to monitor external trends and competitiveness.

Industry Support

The department continued to provide regular advice and support to clubs. Further opportunities to leverage arrangements were identified, particularly around online tools to assist with inductions, exit interviews and recruitment. These tools will be evaluated and, where beneficial, offered to all clubs and state bodies in 2009.

Respect and Responsibility

The launch of the Respect and Responsibility Policy formally announced the AFL's intention to address the issue of violence against women, and to work towards creating environments that are safe, supportive and inclusive for women and girls.

The AFL continued to consolidate and develop initiatives that focus on creating sustainable violence against women prevention programs. These programs gain support from the football community and can assist clubs to recognise the unique roles they play promoting equal and respectful relationships with women. To support this, the AFL developed a club-based respect and responsibility program to be piloted at Hawthorn and Richmond in 2009. The program is designed to support players and clubs to establish workable approaches to the Respect and Responsibility Policy as it applies to off-field behaviour and to the club environment as a whole.

Throughout 2008, the AFL piloted the respect and responsibility education program with two Queensland State League clubs (Mt Gravatt and Morningside) and two TAC Cup clubs. The program was designed to support state league clubs and players to understand how they can participate in the prevention of violence perpetrated against women, as well as ensuring that the principles of the policy are essential to the foundation on which club cultures are built.

The AFL continued to show its commitment to community club football with the development of resources that can be used to support the inclusion of respect and responsibility programs at community clubs.

The AFL hosted its annual White Ribbon Footy and Food Breakfast at the Stokehouse Restaurant in Melbourne. The event raised more than \$20,000 for the White Ribbon Foundation. This annual event has become an important date on the social calendar, creating greater corporate and community awareness about the issue of violence against women.



RESPECT: AFL players again supported the White Ribbon campaign aimed at preventing violence against women. They included (from left) Chance Bateman and Tom Murphy (Hawthorn), Harry O'Brien (Collingwood), Trent Cotchin (Richmond), Anthony Rocca (Collingwood), Daniel Cross and Dale Morris (Western Bulldogs), Nick Dal Santo and Sean Dempster (St Kilda) and Daniel Wells and Drew Petrie (North Melbourne).



SUPERB: Young Geelong star Joel Selwood, fifth in the Cats' best and fairest award, confirmed his status as one of the game's elite players.

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

The AFL Commission acknowledges the importance of good corporate governance, which establishes accountability for the Commission and management, and provides the policies and procedures for the equitable treatment of the 16 member clubs, recognition of the rights of other stakeholders and the Commission's role as the custodian of Australian Football.

The AFL corporate governance policies and procedures remain under constant review to ensure they meet the expectations of our member clubs, stakeholders and the community generally.

The Role of the Commission

To enable the ongoing prosperity of Australian Football, the Commission is committed to act in the best interests of the AFL to ensure it is properly governed and managed.

To achieve appropriate direction and control, the principal role of the Commission is to:

- Protect and enhance the interests of member clubs in the context of the AFL Memorandum and Articles of Association.
- Protect and enhance the interests of the game through national and international programs and the provision of grants to affiliated bodies to support Australian Football at all levels of the community.
- Through constructive engagement, review, add value to, approve and monitor the strategic direction and objectives.
- Appoint, delegate to, support, evaluate and reward the performance of the CEO and other executives.
- Review, approve and monitor the corporate plan, linked to the strategic objectives.
- Support, review and monitor member clubs' operational and financial performance.
- Oversee risk management and regulatory compliance.
- Monitor the integrity of financial reporting.
- Ensure ethical standards and appropriate behaviours are adhered to.
- Have transparent reporting and communication with member clubs and other stakeholders.

Board Composition

The names of the AFL Commissioners (Directors) in office at the date of this statement are given in the Directors' Report starting on page 124 of this report. The Commission comprises eight non-executive Commissioners and the CEO.

The minimum number of Commissioners is six and the maximum is nine and no more than one third of Commissioners can be Executive Commissioners (including the CEO). Two Commissioners, other than the CEO, retire by rotation each year, together with any Commissioner who has not retired in the past three years, but all may offer themselves for re-election for another three-year period. The Commissioners appoint one of the non-executive Commissioners as Chairman of the Commission.

Commissioners' Conflict of Interest

Commissioners are required to disclose all matters involving the AFL in which they have a material personal interest. Where a matter that a

Commissioner has a material personal interest in and a matter relating to that interest are being considered at a Commission meeting, that Commissioner must not:

- Receive papers in relation to the subject.
- Be present while the matter is being discussed.
- Vote on the matter.

However, the Commissioners who do not have a material personal interest in the matter can pass a resolution that:

- Identifies the Commissioner and details that Commissioner's interest.
- States that those Commissioners are satisfied that the interest should not disqualify that Commissioner from voting or being present.

Commission Committees

The Commission has established two board committees (Audit and Remuneration) to assist it in the discharge of the Commission's role and responsibilities. However, the Commission has not delegated any of its authority to those committees.

The Commissioners who are members of these committees are outlined in the Financial Report in this document.

A Nominations Committee is also established as a joint initiative with the AFL clubs' chairmen and presidents when new candidates are being considered for appointment to the AFL Commission.

The key roles of the Audit and Remuneration committees are:

Audit Committee

The Audit Committee assists the Commission with its responsibilities by monitoring and advising on the:

- Completeness and fairness of the view given by the financial statements of the AFL.
- Integrity of the AFL's accounting and financial reporting.
- AFL's accounting policies, practices and consistency with accounting standards.

Remuneration Committee

The Remuneration Committee assists the Commission in its responsibilities by monitoring and advising on the:

- Non-executive Commissioner remuneration.
- CEO and Executive remuneration.

Relationship with management

The CEO is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the AFL and the implementation of the Commission's strategies, in accordance with Commission delegations, policies and procedures.

One of the Commission's major objectives is to work with management in a professional, productive and harmonious manner for the ongoing prosperity of the AFL.

Communication with member clubs

The Commission has a policy of active engagement with all member clubs.

Commissioners meet with member clubs at least twice a year to discuss a wide range of matters relating to the AFL's internal and external environment.



ALONG FOR THE RIDE: Inspirational Fremantle skipper Matthew Pavlich launches himself for a spectacular mark over West Coast Eagles defender Adam Hunter at Subiaco in round three.