

28 September 2006

Dear Ben

As all Geelong Football Club members and supporters would know, everyone associated with the Club was disappointed with the 2006 season. We did not meet our expectations on the field and in a season that we entered with such high hopes, we have been seeking answers as to why this occurred.

The Club's Chief Executive, Brian Cook was asked to head a review of our entire football operations and make recommendations that will enable the Club to move forward and have the success that we all crave.

The review took over five weeks and was concluded on Sunday 24 September when the Club's Board met and determined the path we need to take. It would be fair to say that the review that Brian undertook was the most comprehensive process that any AFL Club has completed.

This is not just our view. David Parkin believes that this review will be seen as a blueprint for Clubs in the future. Some people have raised the fact that it would be difficult for Brian to complete this review in an impartial manner given that he has close relationships with the many people working in and associated with our Club.

Brian's background in the game has seen him work as a CEO with both West Coast and Geelong for the past 17 seasons, and there is nobody more equipped or qualified to lead this process than him. He should be commended for the manner in which this review has been completed and the recommendations that have come from it.

The review incorporated interviews with around 50 people. This included all coaches, the Club's player leadership group, players at various stages of their careers with the Club - i.e. first year, third year etc, football and medical staff and some people from outside the Club such as David Parkin, Andrew Bews and player managers.

We have been transparent in this process, in some ways to our detriment and the discomfort of people directly involved in the process. We felt it was important that our supporters knew how we were going about this review.

There was one fundamental question that we asked in this process - what do we need to do to make our football operations better to allow the Club to have greater success? To do this we looked back at how the Club went about all elements of its football operations. We have not looked to provide lip-service or window dressing.

Many people saw this review as being only about whether or not our senior coach Mark Thompson remained in that position. This is an over simplistic view of the reason we undertook this review. We looked at all areas of our football department in determining what we needed to do.

We want to make sure that you, our members and stakeholders, are aware of what will be happening at the Club.

### Coaching

Mark Thompson will continue in his role as senior coach. This is the belief shared by those people that we spoke with. The senior players spoke of a man for whom they had deep respect. Others spoke highly of his tactical acumen and others of his ability to teach and develop players. This reinforced the view that we have of him.

What we did find though was that Mark had become too involved in areas that were not about coaching, e.g. recruiting, information technology, welfare and development, fitness, medical, rehabilitation and administration.

The structure of our football department and indeed those at most league Clubs, has continued to grow, and in many ways we did not foresee the impact that this has had on the coach's role.

Much of Mark's time was spent in dealing with non-coaching issues rather than focusing on managing and coaching the players. The Club wants and needs Mark to primarily coach and manage the player group, not be encumbered with much of the day-to-day administration roles.

We will restructure the way our football department is set up to ensure that this occurs. The Club will appoint a new General Manager of Football Operations who will have broader responsibility than previously was the case.

The General Manager of Football Operations will be responsible for taking on many of the day-to-day management roles.

The person will supervise all areas of the football department including:

- total player list management
- the continued development of the player leadership group
- all budgeting in the football department
- final sign-off on all football appointments and contracts
- integrating all elements of the football department

The General Manager of Football Operations will be a more substantial role than that of most other AFL Clubs, and more in line with the structure of the Sydney Swans.

Until such time as a person is appointed to this position, Brian Cook and Steve Hocking will serve as interim leaders of the department. Brian will also focus more of his energy with the football department in the future.

This role of General Manager of Football Operations will be filled by a yet to be appointed person that has a strong background in both AFL football and management.

The Club will also make changes to its coaching staff, with a new assistant coach to be sought. Andy Lovell, who is one of the most respected people at our Club, will not have his contract renewed. This has been painful for everyone associated with the Club. Andy is the type of person that any Club would want, but we looked at the strengths and weaknesses of the coaching group and believe that we had to make a change.

### Leadership

Unfortunately Steven King has been plagued by injury ever since he was made captain four years ago. Whilst Steven sees the captaincy as a great honour, the time has come for him to concentrate on his role as one of the premier ruckmen in the AFL. Steven communicated this to the Club and we agree with his view on the captaincy.

Tom Harley will be the Club Captain for 2007. Tom has earned enormous respect throughout the Club and indeed in the wider football community. He is a player that has worked as hard as anyone to have a successful

career. Everyone knows that we are a much better team when Tom is on the field and he again showed this in 2006.

We will continue to work with our players to generate greater leadership from our players.

We understand that the player leadership group was a new initiative and would take time to have the impact that we need it to have.

We will encourage the player leadership group greater responsibility in assisting the planning the likes of pre-season, match committee, core Club KPI's and values, and delistings and trade activity.

Other Clubs have gone down this path and we understand that these programs take time to reach the desired outcomes.

#### Fitness/ training

There has been a lot of comment as to our physical preparation ahead of the 2006 season.

When it became clear to us that our players were not physically ready for the 2006 season, the Club sought an independent expert to assess our players' fitness and importantly what we needed to do about it.

That review found that our players' pre-season running workload was down significantly from the same period in 2005.

A conservative plan was in place in the early part of 2006 in an attempt to get our players through the year. We had 22 players on injury awareness programs during the pre-season.

There was a clear agreement among all of those that were involved in the past season that we were not fit enough, strong enough and did not train long enough or with the intensity required to succeed at the highest level.

This was altered mid-season, and even though we were playing catch-up, the team's performances and results improved markedly over the second half of the year. An unfortunate element of these required changes was the dramatic increase in workload meant that on occasions some of our players felt they had not fully recovered from previous games and training and they were lethargic.

We are adding greater support in our fitness this summer, in particular the regime will be harder and more scientific and directly relevant to the changes in the game due to the new rules that were introduced in 2006.

The Club will be enhancing its rehabilitation programs and is seeking to form alliances with organizations to develop greater depth in the area of sports science infrastructure and testing.

It would be simplistic to say that we will work harder in the pre-season. The reality is that our fitness regime will be developed in an integrated and scientific way.

These are the major outcomes of this review.

Some people may feel we have not gone far enough. Others may feel that we have been too drastic with the changes. Some may take a wait and see approach.

We understand each point of view. We know that if you put 10 passionate Geelong members in a room each may have a different point of view. This is a great part of being a true supporter.

But when you are considering what we have determined, just remember this - every decision we have taken has been done to provide the Club with the best chance to have success. We are all passionate supporters of the Club and we want success as much as any Geelong supporter. We would never make a decision that was not in the best interests of the Club.

The Board of Directors and Administration are also very committed to improving their performance in line with our football team. We are all part of a committed group to improve from this point.

You should also be aware that a special meeting has been called for Wednesday, 11 October 2006 at 6pm in the Fred Flanagan Room at Skilled Stadium. The purpose of this meeting is to allow members to ask questions about the 2006 season and what plans we have for 2007 to address issues that have been identified.

We believe that this comprehensive review will see the changes that we need to make. We encourage all members to attend this meeting. It is a wonderful opportunity for you to ask us questions and to have a dialogue with the Club.

Thank you for your on-going support.

Yours sincerely,



Frank Costa (President)



Gareth Andrews (Vice President)



Helene Bender



Nicholas Carr



Alistair Hamblin



Greg Hywood



Doug Wade