

AFL VICTORIA



**SOUTHERN FOOTBALL LEAGUE & MOORABBIN SAINTS
JUNIOR FOOTBALL LEAGUE
GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION
FUTURE DIRECTION REVIEW**

SEPTEMBER, 2010

**Review conducted for AFL Victoria
by David Code**

INDEX	PAGE
1. Southern Football League and Moorabbin Saints Junior Football League, Governance and Administration, Future Direction Review	
a) Background	3
b) Terms of Reference	3
c) Consultation Process	4
2. Report Summary and Recommendations	5
3. Explanation and Implementation of the Recommendations	9
a) Recommendation 1	9
b) Recommendation 2	10
c) Recommendation 3	11
4. Other Governance and Administrative Options considered	13
Appendix 1. Moorabbin Saints Junior FL/Southern FL/Victorian Amateur Football Association Club Alignments	15
Appendix 2. Location of MSJFL & SFL Clubs in the Inner Southern Region	16
Appendix 3. Location of MSJFL & VAFA Clubs in the Inner Southern Region	17

1. SOUTHERN FOOTBALL LEAGUE AND MOORABBIN SAINTS JUNIOR FOOTBALL LEAGUE GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION FUTURE DIRECTION REVIEW

a) Background

The Southern Football League (SFL) has 27 member clubs that in 2010 fielded 71 teams in open age and under 18 competitions. The Moorabbin Saints Junior Football League (MSJFL) in 2010 consisted of 27 clubs that fielded 318 teams in under 9 – 17 age groups.

The SFL has been providing administration support for the MSJFL for the past three years. This support has been jointly funded by AFL Victoria, the SFL and the MSJFL. 2010 is the final year of the AFL Victoria funding and from 2011 it is the responsibility of the SFL and the MSJFL to determine the future arrangements regarding the administration of the MSJFL.

AFL Victoria met with representatives from the SFL and MSJFL at the beginning of 2010 to discuss the future administration support to the MSJFL from 2011 onwards. The purpose of the meeting was to explore the organisational structure options available to both leagues. It was agreed at these meetings that an independent review, facilitated by AFL Victoria, would be the preferred method to review organisational options. This would occur no earlier than the middle of the year and AFL Victoria agreed it would draft the Terms of Reference of the review and circulate them to the SFL and MSJFL.

An outcome of these meetings was that all parties agreed to the conduct of a review of the Governance and Administration of the SFL and the MSJFL. Both leagues pledged their support to work with AFL Victoria in the conduct of the review.

b) Review Terms of Reference

AFL Victoria will commission a review into the future direction of the Governance and Administration of the SFL and the MSJFL in accordance with the following terms of reference;

1. Review the future governance and administration structure options available to the SFL and the MSJFL.
2. Communicate with relevant stakeholders in the area including, but not limited to; SFL Board, MSJFL Executive, SFL and MSJFL Affiliated Clubs.
3. Develop recommendations to address the key issues for the future governance and administration of football in the inner southern region of Melbourne.

c) Consultation Process

In conducting the Review consultations were conducted with the following who are thanked for their cooperation and input:

- MSJFL Executive
- SFL Chief Executive Officer
- SFL Board members
- MSJFL clubs (23 of 27)
- SFL clubs
- AFL Victoria Inner South Community Development Manager
- VAFA Chief Executive Officer

2. REPORT SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The MSJFL was formed in 1988 as an amalgamation of the Chelsea Junior Football League and the St. Kilda Football Club Junior Football League. In 2010 the league consisted of 27 clubs fielding 318 teams in under 9 through to Under 17 age groups.

The current structure of the SFL commenced in 1993 as a result of the merge of the Eastern Suburban Churches Football Association and the South East Suburban Football League, which in 1992 had changed its name to the Southern Football League. The League consists of 27 clubs, fielding 71 teams in Senior, reserves, thirds, and Under 18 competitions.

The MSJFL is governed by an Executive elected by the member clubs and the SFL by a Board elected by the SFL clubs. Prior to 2008, the MSJFL was administered on a semi part time/volunteer basis by the League Secretary. In 2008, AFL Victoria, the SFL and the MSJFL agreed to jointly fund a SFL staff member to administer the MSJFL. This has been very successful in enhancing the operation of the MSJFL.

The SFL is managed by a staff of four including the Chief Executive Officer, Commercial Manager, Football Operations Manager, Administration Manager, with support also provided from Sports Education and Development Australia placement students.

AFL Victoria in recent years has commissioned two other reviews focussing on the SFL. In 2006 the 'Southern Football League' Review was conducted, and in 2007 the 'Supporting the Change Management Process and Governance of the Southern Football League' review was conducted. Many recommendations, including the recommendation for the SFL to provide administrative support for the MSJFL, from these reviews concerning the governance and operation of the SFL have been implemented resulting in the SFL operating more successfully than in the period prior to the reviews.

The key purpose of the current Review was to review the governance and management structures of the two leagues and to recommend future structures that will assist the management and development of the game in the leagues' geographic areas.

Key findings from consultations during the current review process are that:

- The jointly funded MSJFL Administrator position has been very successful in developing the efficiency and professionalism of the league operations and that additional management resources, eg marketing, communications, local government liason, are viewed as desirable to further develop the league's operations.
- The efforts, in most cases over an extended period of time, of the members of the MSJFL Executive were commended, although it was generally

acknowledged that the MSJFL Executive needs renewal with both the MSJFL Executive and member clubs recognising the difficulty of attracting new Executive members.

- The SFL has made significant advances in the governance and management of the League in the past three years. The league Board is respected by member clubs and management well regarded.
- A number of stakeholders in the football community are not aware of progress made by the SFL in the past three years. For example, it is not widely known that the current SFL Board and management have been able to achieve financial stability for the League with surpluses recorded in each of the past three years and current cash reserves of \$250k.
- The Victorian Amateur Football Association (VAFA) has a significant presence in the region shared by the SFL and the MSJFL, and has nine affiliated clubs with partner clubs in the MSJFL. There are ten MSJFL clubs with relationships with SFL clubs and eight MSJFL clubs that don't have a senior club partner. The VAFA is concerned that any change in the governance and management arrangements between the SFL and MSJFL may negatively impact upon its affiliated clubs. (Appendix 1. indicates MSJFL/SFL/VAFA club alignments.)

The Review concludes that an opportunity exists for the creation of an entity of significant size and potential influence to govern and manage senior, junior, and women's football in the inner south area of Melbourne.

Benefits of one entity representing all parts of football currently under the control of the SFL, MSJFL, and women's football are:

- Greater leverage and expertise when dealing with Government and sporting instrumentalities through the organisation encompassing a wide demographic. The opportunity for being able to increase leverage to access government funding for enhanced community football facilities at Moorabbin Oval is improved through representation by a combined community football entity.
- Improved profile of the organisation
- Securing economies of scale eg pooling bulk purchasing of apparel, equipment, merchandise, and supplies, and administration efficiencies, all of which should lead to the containment or reduction of member club costs
- Increased marketing opportunities through more attractive and comprehensive marketing and sponsorship packages
- The opportunity for the development of a cohesive strategic approach for sport and community services
- An enhanced opportunity for greater player retention within the player pathway from junior to senior football due to the potential for an improved junior experience and a more clearly defined pathway within the one organisation.

- Improved service delivery to clubs in areas of club development and policy implementation
- Avoidance of administrative duplication between leagues

All of above potential benefits should provide opportunities for improved delivery of the game at both junior and senior levels which is the key aim of the proposed merge.

It is acknowledged that there is concern by some MSJFL clubs regarding the possibility of junior football being governed and managed in conjunction with a league that historically has only managed senior football and that improved SFL operations have only occurred in very recent years. It should be noted however that every other region in Melbourne has a successful model of one entity conducting both senior and junior football. With the guidance and support of AFL Victoria the appropriate structures should be able to be established within the new entity to ensure junior football is not only well managed, but is a high priority. The most recent examples of junior and senior leagues combining, the former Knox Junior FL with the Eastern FL, and the former Riddell District Junior FL with the Riddell District FL, have both been very successful.

AFL Victoria will be required to perform a key role in the merge process to ensure that the best interests of football in the region are foremost in negotiations and that acceptable outcomes can be achieved on key issues of integrating the two leagues.

SFL Board members and senior management during the Review process indicated a strong commitment to junior football and the current significant financial support over the past three years by the SFL for the MSJFL Administrator position is a demonstration of this commitment.

The following recommendations are presented for the future governance and administration of the SFL and MSJFL:

- 1. That AFL Victoria facilitates merger discussions between the SFL and the MSJFL with the aim of the two leagues merging.**
- 2. That while the merge discussions and negotiations take place, the SFL and MSJFL continue with the shared administration arrangement.**

3. That while the merge discussions and negotiations take place, the MSJFL and SFL negotiate regarding the SFL providing additional services to the MSJFL in a range of areas including commercial and communication operations, and local government liason.

Several other options for the future governance and administration of the SFL and MSJFL were presented and considered during the review process but are **not recommended**. The options are listed below and summarised on page 13.

- i) Independent management and governance of each of the SFL and MSJFL (ie no shared administrator).
- ii) Maintaining the current governance and administration model with independent governance and shared administration.
- iii) MSFJL to have shared management services with an alternate entity eg Dandenong District Football League, VAFA.
- iv) The creation of one Board with representatives from both the SFL and MSJFL overseeing football in the region with the two leagues remaining as separate entities with their own governance structure.

3. EXPLANATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

That AFL Victoria facilitates merger discussions between the SFL and MSJFL with the aim of the two leagues merging.

Explanation

- a) The SFL and MSJFL have developed improved relationships and operational links over the past three years of the shared administrator arrangement.
- b) The leagues share closely parallel geographic areas with ten MSJFL clubs having links to SFL clubs.
- c) The MSJFL is under resourced in management and an efficient way to enhance management resources is in a shared arrangement with the SFL.
- d) The MSJFL Executive needs renewal in composition and operation.
- e) The SFL Board is operating effectively and a merge of the Leagues would be an effective way of improving the governance of junior football.
- f) Some of the anticipated benefits of the Leagues merging are outlined in the earlier 'Report Summary'. An important benefit is that the presence of merged entities creating a community football hub will increase the likelihood of accessing government funding for the improvement of administrative facilities at the Moorabbin Oval (where the SFL is currently based).
- g) The combined governance and management of senior and junior football occurs effectively in most metropolitan 'senior' leagues and various learnings regarding the combined governance and management of senior and junior football can be provided from these structures.
- h) Consultations during the review process revealed varying degrees of lack of trust and knowledge by the MSJFL Executive and clubs regarding the SFL's plans for a combined entity, and knowledge of the recent developments in SFL operations. The SFL needs to be provided with an opportunity to communicate to the MSJFL Executive and clubs the SFL's recent performance achievements, vision for the league and football in the region, and plan for a combined entity.
- i) It is considered essential that the recommended merging of the two leagues be conducted on the basis that the leagues be equal partners in the new entity to enhance trust during the merging process.
- j) It should be noted that whilst it is recommended that the SFL and MSJFL merge, it does not follow that the amalgamation of senior and junior clubs within the leagues will/should occur. This is a matter for individual clubs, if so inclined, to consider.

Process for implementation of the recommendation

- a) AFL Victoria presents to the MSJFL Executive and clubs the reasons, benefits, and key issues regarding a merge with the SFL, and the recommended process for merger discussions.
- b) SFL presents to the MSJFL Executive and clubs regarding the SFL's current governance and management structures, the improvements that the league has made in recent years, and the league's vision for a merged entity.
- c) MSJFL clubs determine whether they support merger discussions between the SFL and MSJFL occurring.
- d) If the MSJFL clubs support merge discussions that a joint Working Party, facilitated and managed by AFL Victoria, with representation from both leagues, be established to prepare a report outlining recommended resolution of key issues regarding a merge eg governance and management structures to ensure appropriate junior focus, policy development regarding utilisation of each league's cash reserves, etc..
- e) MSJFL and SFL clubs to decide if they want the merge process to continue.
- f) If the clubs resolve that the merge process continue a merge is to occur the Working Party prepares a formal merge document.
- g) MSJFL and SFL clubs formally resolve whether the merger of the two leagues is to take place.
- h) The VAFA, as a stakeholder within the inner southern region, be periodically updated on the progress of the merge.

Recommendation 2

That while the merge discussions and negotiations take place, the SFL and MSJFL continue with the shared administration arrangement.

Explanation

- a) The joint MSJFL and SFL administrative agreement between AFL Victoria, the SFL and the MSJFL has enabled the MSJFL to have close to a fulltime administrator for approximately \$16,000 per annum. It should be noted that the SFL has not charged the MSJFL for office expenses incurred in the administration of the MSJFL within the SFL office.
- b) AFL Victoria has provided \$50,000 over 3 years to the arrangement in addition to its annual grant to the MSJFL of approximately \$40,000.

- c) The consultations undertaken in this review have provided universally positive comments regarding the benefits to the MSJFL of having a full time administrator, the performance of the SFL manager in the role, and the need for the MSJFL to continue with a full time administrator.
- d) Whilst the MSJFL remains an independent entity a single administrator for the league is viewed as an absolute minimum to service the needs of the league operations, to develop various aspects of the league operations and to relieve some of the workload on the volunteer Executive. The current role description and workload of the MSJFL Administrator should be reviewed to ensure the role continues to remain manageable for the incumbent.
(By way of comparison, the Dandenong and District Junior Football League [DDJFL] has 20 clubs and 200 teams, compared to the MSJFL's 27 clubs and 330 teams, with the DDJFL having two full time administrators).

Process

The SFL and MSJFL negotiate the role description and financial arrangement regarding the shared MSJFL/SFL Administrator role continuing into 2011.

Recommendation 3

That while the merge discussions and negotiations take place, the MSJFL and SFL negotiate regarding the SFL providing additional services to the MSJFL in a range of areas including commercial and communication operations, and local government liason.

Explanation

- a) The MSJFL operations have improved significantly since the appointment of the AFL Victoria, SFL, and MSJFL jointly funded league Administrator.
- b) Further MSJFL development could be achieved through additional service provision by the SFL in areas such as commercial operations eg sponsorship procurement, a review of merchandising arrangements, and enhanced communication with local government and through league publications (the Finals Record).
- c) The provision of additional services by the SFL will also provide an opportunity for the two leagues to experience some of the benefits of the recommended merge of the two leagues.

Process

- a) MSJFL to determine whether additional support will be of benefit to the operation of the league and in what areas support may be desired.
- b) The SFL determines whether it has the resources to provide additional assistance to the MSJFL.
- c) If both the MSJFL and SFL agree to the provision of additional services the leagues to agree on the financial arrangements for such service delivery.

4. OTHER GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Other governance and administration options considered for the SFL and the MSJFL in the future, but not recommended were:

- i) **Independent management and governance** (ie no shared administrator)
 - a) Both leagues are satisfied with the current arrangement of the shared administrator which has significantly enhanced the operation of the MSJFL. The leagues will however have to negotiate a new arrangement for 2011.
 - b) MSJFL Executive and all clubs agree that the League requires a full time administrator.
 - c) If the MSJFL was to employ its own administrator it would cost the league considerably more (conservatively estimated at an additional \$60k) to employ the administrator and provide appropriate office facilities. The SFL currently does not charge MSJFL for any office operating expenses.
 - d) Considerable efficiencies exist in current arrangement and it is in the interest of both parties to be working towards a closer relationship rather than ceasing the current arrangement. For example, the SFL currently provides additional management support for the MSJFL with the SFL Chief Executive Officer dealing with all Councils at a strategic level for both the SFL and MSJFL.
- ii) **Maintaining the current governance and administration model with independent governance and shared administration**
 - a) The current shared administrator arrangement has been successful but should be seen as the minimum level of connectedness between the Leagues.
 - b) Most clubs believe the current governance of the MSJFL requires change in the form of renewal of the Executive. Maintaining the status quo does not achieve this.
 - c) Benefits as previously outlined in this report potentially exist for both leagues and football in the region with the development of a combined entity.

- iii) **MSJFL to have shared management services with an alternate entity eg DDJFL, VAFA**
 - a) During the review consultations it was suggested that consideration be given to the MSJFL having shared administrative services with another neighbouring league such as the DDJFL or VAFA.
 - b) Although not examined it would be likely that any such arrangement would be more expensive than exists with the SFL given the SFL's demonstrated commitment to assisting the MSJFL and football within the region.
 - c) The matter has not been canvassed with the DDJFL. The DDJFL is outside the geographic region of the MSJFL and it is far preferable that leagues be operated from within their region to add to the authenticity of important local government relations. At this point in time that DDJFL is in a development phase following a major review of its operations and not ready to assume a significant increase in operational responsibilities.
 - d) Until very recently the VAFA has never demonstrated an interest in managing a junior league and whilst having a significance presence in the inner southern region the experience and demonstrated commitment by the SFL makes the SFL a more logical partner of the MSJFL.

- iv) **The creation of one Board with representatives from both the MSJFL and SFL overseeing football in the region with the leagues remaining as separate entities with their own governance structures**
 - a) The delineation of roles and powers between the overarching Board and the individual league Board/Executive would be difficult to establish.
 - b) This option, again does not provide the benefits of a single governance model as within an amalgamation of the two leagues and duplication of processes would continue to exist.
 - c) To adopt this option ultimately means that a ¾ merge has been implemented, and therefore Recommendation 1 would most likely occur in the near future.

APPENDIX 1

ALIGNMENTS BETWEEN MSJFL CLUBS AND CLUBS IN THE SFL AND VAFA.

MSJFL	SFL	VAFA
AJAX		AJAX
BEAUMARIS		BEAUMARIS
BENTLEIGH		BENTLEIGH
BRIGHTON BEACH *		
CAULFIELD	CAULFIELD	
CHELTENHAM	CHELTENHAM	
DINGLEY	DINGLEY	
EAST BRIGHTON	EAST BRIGHTON	
EAST MALVERN *		
EAST SANDRINGHAM*		
GLEN EIRA*		
HAMPTON ROVERS		HAMPTON ROVERS
HIGHETT	HIGHETT	
MORDIALLOC BRAESIDE	MORDICALLOC	
MT. WAVERLEY	MT. WAVERLEY	
MURRUMBEENA	MURRUMBEENA	
NORTHVALE*		
OAKLEIGH DRAGONS*		
ORMOND		ORMOND
PRAHRAN		PRAHRAN
SOUTH MELBOURNE		SOUTH MELBOURNE
ST. BEDES MENTONE		ST. BEDES MENTONE
ST. BERNARDS		ST. BERNARDS
ST. KILDA CITY	ST. KILDA CITY	
ST. PAULS McKINNON	ST. PAULS McKINNON	
ST. PETERS*		
WAVERLEY PARK*		

* - indicates clubs with out a 'formal' alignment with a senior club in the SFL or MSJFL

MSJFL & SFL Clubs

Legend



Image © 2010 TerraMetrics

Image © 2010 DigitalGlobe

Image © 2010 Sinclair Knight Merz & Fugro

© 2010 MapData Sciences Pty Ltd, PSMA

37°54'20.13" S 145°02'45.75" E elev. 41 m

Imagery Date: Feb 13, 2006

