

## THE VFL IN SYDNEY

The NSW League welcome the keen interest shown by the Victorian Football League and the appointment of the esteemed Mr. Graham Huggins to an investigative role to form a 13th VFL club from Sydney for competition in the VFL commencing with the 1982 season.

The current NSW Board have not departed from the policy of last July when the NSWAFL sought "the earliest possible discussions with VFL officials on this matter".

A joint meeting of board members from both the NSWAFL and the SFL took place with Dr. Allen Aylett, VFL President on the morning of August 13, 1980 at which Dr. Aylett provided answers to a list of

16 questions submitted by your Board attempting to pin-point the VFL policy being pursued in respect of Sydney. It is recorded from that meeting -

Question 5: When will the VFL be able to determine if it is feasible for a VFL club participating in the Melbourne competition to be based in Sydney.

Answer: Not possible to move a Melbourne club, no current VFL club would elect to make such a decision.

Question 6: When this determination (question 5) is reached in Melbourne when will a timetable be discussed at joint committee level between the VFL and the NSWAFI/SFL.

Answer: When a general decision has been made at VFL level, there will follow liaison.

Question 9: Can it be forecast if permanent VFL presence is established in Sydney that joint administrative functions embracing the existing Sydney senior and junior competitions would be desirable.

Answer: It would be seen that the VFL club and bodies would be linked with the senior club, with the hierarchy working hand in glove.

As news on VFL action toward Sydney was made public through newspapers the Board sought to be made aware officially, but was ignored. The recent discourtesies to the NSW League shown by our Melbourne confederates can be overlooked as blindspots in the VFL's eagerness to embrace Sydney and the State of New South Wales in their ambit of operations and control.

It will be the sincere hope of the NSW League that great harmony will now flow between the VFL and your Board in establishing a permanent link of accord in all matters to the formation of a Sydney-based club, which will give the Australian game the greatest impact yet experienced in this State.

The sincerity of not only words but actions of the key Executive personnel of the Victorian Football League headed by their much-valued President, Dr. Allen Aylett, together with their energetic General Manager, Mr. Jack Hamilton, is expected to be shown in a most tangible manner in the coming months.

#### THE VFL "SYDNEY EXPERIMENT"

The anticipation of success by the VFL for their "Sydney experiment" is reflected in many pages of their 84th Annual Report delivered in Melbourne on Wednesday, February 11, 1981.

Because of their relevance to our territory and the functions presently under the control of the NSWAFI Board, it is for the interest of our membership that we quote several passages from that report -

p. 1 - VFL Corporate Aims and Philosophy: ..... "These aims reflect an awareness that the V.F.L. is the pacesetter organisation in Australian Football and that our influence extends beyond the VFL competition.".....

p. 9 - General Manager's Report: ..... "The success of the Sydney matches has prompted the VFL Board of Directors to conduct a feasibility study into the possibility of forming a Sydney based Club there in the future. A Committee comprising the President, Dr. A.J. Aylett, the General Manager, Mr. J.C. Hamilton, South Melbourne Director, Mr. Craig Kimberley, and VFL Administration Manager, Mr. Alan Schwab, was appointed to lay down the guidelines for a feasibility study.".....

p. 22 - VFL Administration sub-committee: ..... "Recommendation for formation of a sub-committee to conduct a feasibility study on possibility of a new club in Sydney." .....

p. 28 - VFL Matches in Sydney: ..... "At present a feasibility study is being conducted to see if a club should be based in Sydney in the future." .....

p. 29 - Corporate Planner's Report - The VFL in Sydney: "Four further matches were successfully played in Sydney in 1980, in addition to the initial two in 1979. The local attendance at these six matches has been 115,000 for an average of 19,000 per match.

Unfortunately, the 1980 matches tended to be one-sided but they proved to be invaluable in stimulating interest in Sydney in VFL football and in providing feed-back to the VFL as to the longer-term potential of the game in Sydney.

Detailed surveys were conducted at each of the VFL matches in Sydney in 1980 and the following results can be highlighted -

- (a) 60,000 Sydney people would be prepared to regularly support a Sydney team in the VFL competition.
- (b) approximately 90% of people at the Sydney matches watch VFL matches on TV in Sydney.
- (c) an average of 80% of people attending Sydney VFL matches had not attended any Rugby matches in 1980. This indicates we are attracting a different section of the sports market.
- (d) 92% of spectators felt the game had the potential to become the top Sydney spectator sport.

The VFL Board has received a strategic report which discusses the Sydney situation at some length and a feasibility study at the operational level is expected to be completed by mid-1981.

Any decision to expand the VFL competition by admitting a Sydney based team would have great historical significance and would represent a watermark in the continuing development of Australian football." .....

p. 35 - VFL Marketing Division: ..... "There is no doubt, however, that the development of VFL interests in Sydney would hold significant potential for the development of further income opportunities." .....

The Anschluss is upon us and that the VFL is the strongest and most professional body in our sport there is no question. But, the NSW League will be abdicating its responsibility to the football membership of this State if it yields to every wish and demand of the VFL. Then again, will your Board have any choice?

As 1981 begins the VFL now controls over 95% of football in Victoria through -

- \* Victorian Country Football League
- \* Victorian Junior Football Council
- \* Victorian Metropolitan Football League, a newly-formed controlling body, covering more than 2,000 teams in the Melbourne area with first president - Mr. Ed. Biggs, NFL Executive Member; Secretary of the VMFL is Alan Schwab, also VFL Manager Administration; and Stephen Harrington, also from VFL Administration.

We have no desire than to see the fulfillment of NSW dreams spun for over three-quarters of a century - to see Australian Football as a major component in the sporting life of our State.

In the 1980's can an independent survive?