

Do Better —
Independent review into
Collingwood Football
Club's responses to
Incidents of Racism and
Cultural Safety in the
Workplace

Note about Mr. Heritier Lumumba's Allegations of Racism

Although the allegations made by Mr. Lumumba were an impetus for the Collingwood Football Club to undertake a review of their internal processes and Club culture, it needs to be stressed that this is not an investigation into those allegations. It was clear that Mr. Lumumba, understandably given his history at the Club, did not wish to engage in a review process. It is not appropriate to review those allegations without Mr. Lumumba's involvement. Nothing in this review can be taken as exonerating the Club from any alleged wrongdoing.

Note about COVID-19

This review was undertaken during a period when COVID-19 restrictions prohibited travel to Melbourne. Interviews were undertaken via phone or Zoom.

Acknowledgements

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We would also like to thank all those who gave up their time to be interviewed for this report.

And finally, thank you to our colleagues Alison Whittaker, Professor Daryle Rigney, Professor Nareen Young and Professor John Evans for their time and support.

Acknowledgement of Country

This report was prepared on Gadigal Country. We acknowledge Gadigal Elders and ancestors and their lands and waters.



Foreword

Love of a football Club is tribal and is maintained through thick and thin, through good season and bad. That love can be blind. What became clear as we spoke to people about the Collingwood Football Club for this review is that everyone believed it could do better in relation to responding to incidents of racism. Many saw the need for more structural changes. Even those who had negative experiences with the Club – facing racism as spectators in the stands or as players on the field – still held a strong desire for it to become a better version of itself.

The fact that the Collingwood Football Club, through its Integrity Committee, commissioned an independent review of its processes of dealing with racism reflects the realisation from within the Club that something fundamental needs to change. It needs to be noted and underlined that, in undertaking this review, the Club was unflinching in holding up a mirror to itself. It was a brave first step that few would have the courage to take and shows the seriousness with which the Club takes the issue.

The realisation that the Club needed to do better did not come from out of the blue. In June 2020, Collingwood players took a knee to express their support for the Black Lives Matter movement. It was a simple, significant and sincere gesture. However, for many in the community, including former players and fans, it was perceived as a hypocritical move when seen in the context of a history of racist incidents involving the Collingwood Football Club. The scepticism spoke to the challenge that the Club should not just show symbolic support for the principles of anti-racism and inclusion, but that it also needed to confront that history so it does not repeat.

This review was sparked by the public criticisms and complaints made by ex-Collingwood player, Heritier Lumumba, about his experiences and treatment when playing for the Club. It has been our clear position that those claims deserve their own serious investigation and that must be one that he is involved in. His claims, however, throw a spotlight over the internal processes and structures that this review is tasked to look at.

This is not a review to determine *whether* racism had been perpetrated against individuals at Collingwood. On the extensive evidence on the public record and in our conversations with staff, players, ex-players and supporters, it is clear that players and fans have experienced incidents of racism and that Collingwood's response to these incidents has been at best ineffective, or at worst exacerbated the impact of the racist incidents. The continual failures in this regard speak to a systemic racism within the Collingwood Football Club that must be addressed if things are to change. To this end, this review is focused on the responses of the Collingwood Football Club to incidents of racism and cultural safety in the workplace and the adequacy of the processes for addressing it.

Our **terms of reference** were framed as five questions:

1. How effectively did the Club (including staff, Board and players) respond to allegations of racism?
2. Were there appropriate supports provided by the Club to respond to allegations of racism and ensure the cultural safety of all players, staff and Board members?
3. What changes in relevant policies, processes and systems have taken place and have these changes been effective?
4. Are the current policies, processes and systems currently in place adequate?
5. What changes are required to improve the Club's responses to racism in the future?

The methodology used to assess these claims was a mix of desktop research (including both review of the Collingwood Football Club’s documentation and policies) and a series of structured interviews. We undertook thirty interviews with people across the Club — including the Club’s executive staff, Board members, First Nations members of Collingwood’s Reconciliation Action Group, former players, coaching staff and people who work in AFL external to Collingwood. We undertook these interviews in a confidential manner to ensure that people felt comfortable speaking frankly and sharing their stories. The information that was shared with us allowed us to assess what was on the public record and what was contained or missing in Club policies and processes. This allowed for the honest conversations that have formed the feedback in this report. This in turn allowed us to form the recommendations contained in this review. We are grateful to all of those who shared their insights. This has allowed us to feel confident about the recommendations we are making.

While this review is focused on processes going forward, it is critical to also consider the impact of racism at Collingwood Football Club on those who have experienced it. Individuals have paid a high cost for speaking out against racism at the Club. What is clear is that racism at the Club has resulted in profound and enduring harm to First Nations and African players. The racism affected them, their communities, and set dangerous norms for the public. It does not make for easy reading and it is a credit to the Club that, in commissioning this report, they have not turned away from the hard truths that those experiences point to.

Collingwood is not the only Club in the AFL to be accused of racism, and racism has been publicly called out in many sporting codes across Australia. What happens on the field, in the stands and in the Club often reflects what happens in streets, schools and workplaces. While racism exists throughout Australian society, it is not an excuse for individuals and institutions to avoid taking responsibility for ensuring that within their Club, those attitudes are addressed and countered rather than allowed to fester and amplify.

The Collingwood Football Club knows it must confront racism. Now is the time for transparency, honesty and action. There are people within the Club who say they are ready to meet the moment. There is a growing understanding that Collingwood will be a better Club, on the field and off, if it can confront its racism and begin to work more closely to include the principles of anti-racism and inclusion into its values in a meaningful way. Significant, positive steps have occurred in recent years with the appointment of a First Nations board member, the opportunity for renewed leadership under a new CEO, a range of focused initiatives and the introduction of updated policies in 2020. These measures need to be built upon.

If there was one thing that united almost every person we spoke to in this review, it was their commitment to the Collingwood Football Club and their desire to see it be the best version of itself.

This review seeks to help CFC meet that aim.



Distinguished Professor Larissa Behrendt



Professor Lindon Coombes



Table of contents

Foreword	3
Executive Summary	6
The Collingwood Football Club	10
A Distinctive History	11
Key concepts	14
A Different Approach, a Better Direction	17
Club Values	17
Proactive Responses to Racism	19
Policies, Procedures and Mechanisms for Complaint	20
Employment and Recruitment	23
Key concepts	24
Ensuring a Culturally Safe Workplace	25
Addressing the Past	26
Oversight and implementation	27
Community Leadership	28
A Final Thought	29
Appendix 1 — Legal Obligations	30
Appendix 2 — Implementation Responsibilities	32
Appendix 3 — Implementation Timeframe	34



Executive Summary

The Collingwood Football Club has been linked to a series of high-profile racist incidents. While claims of racism have been made across the AFL, there is something distinct and egregious about Collingwood's history.

In the thirty interviews undertaken for this review, there was no clear consensus about what the values of the Collingwood Football Club were. Collingwood claims to be guided by four formal values — *belonging, commitment, realising potential* and *caring*.

There is a gap between what Collingwood Football Club says it stands for and what it does. A selected short list of high-profile incidents is compelling and speaks to systemic racism of the kind that means the concerted efforts of individuals are not able to be translated into Club-wide change.

Important and positive steps have been taken by the Club in the past few years. This has included the appointment of a First Nations person to the board, the introduction of new policies that more directly target racism and the appointment of a new CEO who has a commitment to making changes.

Universally, the people we spoke to believed that the Collingwood Football Club could do better. Many also expressed the view that the Club's origins should translate more strongly into its current values and that what the Club says it stands for needs to be more than rhetoric.

It is clear that there is a greater understanding today of what racism might be and of its negative impacts than there were in the past. However, while there is now a greater ability to identify and respond to acts of interpersonal racism from the fan base, there is a lesser ability to respond to racist conduct within the Club, particularly to racism in its structural forms.

There are a range of initiatives that the Collingwood Football Club has undertaken that show an increased awareness in relation to the importance of recognising diversity within the Club. There have been many great, proactive initiatives, particularly in relation to homelessness, that speak to a spirit of community-mindedness. But it is equally clear is that these steps forward have not gone far enough in addressing racism in the Club – and certainly not in its systemic form – and do not equate with a strong set of values and effective policies and procedures.

A consistent pattern with the Collingwood Football Club is what has been seen as its failure to adequately address incidents when they have arisen. If racism is endemic throughout the broader community, it is not surprising to find it within institutions such as sporting Clubs. The bigger test for an organisation like the Collingwood Football Club is how it deals with that racism and what steps it takes to address it.

Key criticisms made from those interviewed about the Club's failure to address incidents of racism and its structural racism were focused on the absence of clear and trusted avenues through which complaints could be made. The Club was more likely to react to media coverage about a racist incident than complaints made within the Club. Too often the reaction was defensive rather than proactive and this aggravated, rather than mitigated, the impact of that racism on the people who experienced it.

All of this comes back to the leadership of the Collingwood Football Club — particularly its Board — and the need for it to set the vision and values of the Club and to drive structural change within the organisation. Change needs to be driven from the top if it is to address racism and set the tone for the culture within the Club.

The values of the Club can send a clear signal externally about what the Club stands for. Values also set a standard, framework and benchmark within the Club that can guide the staff, playing group and everyone else associated with the Club about how they should behave and how they should expect to be treated. These standards need to be set by the Club's Board so they are permeating from the top. The Club's leadership also needs to live up to those values.

A key observation from within the Collingwood Football Club community is that when complaints about racism are made within the Club, they have not been responded to in an effective manner; more attention is given in response to media reports as opposed to matters raised internally.

The result of this is that Collingwood is perceived as being defensive, doubling down and denying allegations instead of taking an active and proactive approach internally. This has also meant that Collingwood's response has often been perceived as one where claims of racism are dealt with in terms of damage control and protecting the brand, rather than seeking to address issues and make change. This has meant people who felt aggrieved within the Club felt they were not being heard — and that only by taking matters to the media could they bring attention to an issue.

A further consequence of this defensive stance is that there is no room for reflection. Nothing is learned from the experience and those who have stood up to raise issues feel they pay a high price for speaking out.

It also diminishes the ability of the Club to resolve the dispute internally and outside of legal processes. Instead, it heightens the risk of public grievance and negative publicity that impacts the Club, its staff, its players and its supporters.

'It's hard to be a Collingwood supporter' was the reflection of several Indigenous fans of the Club who struggled with the Club's lack of leadership on issues of racism. It is important for the Collingwood Football Club to embrace the perspective that 'acknowledging, addressing and learning' is an approach that leads to better outcomes for the Club than 'denying and dismissing' complaints of racism. The approach should be framed in a way that emphasises the Club's values, incorporating the concepts of anti-racism and inclusion.

The current Club policies dealing with conduct within the Club and complaints are relatively new, coming into effect in 2020. There has been little opportunity to socialise them with the Club. These new policies are significant in that they directly mention racism. The previous policies did not. The Club needs to ensure it is meeting its obligations as an employer to ensure it is addressing issues of discrimination and racism within the Club.

There needs to be clearer processes of complaint handling and policies around behaviour to give people who wish to make a complaint an avenue of redress. Without *transparency*, *accountability* and *consequence*, these policies and procedures will not lead to the shifts needed.

It is sometimes easier to say that things will be different going forward than to look back at the mistakes of the past. But real change cannot occur without addressing the issues that have been

raised in the past and remain unresolved. Individuals within the Club have grown from reflecting on and learning from the incidents of racism raised within the Club but this is an approach that needs to be adopted by the whole Club. And the people who have experienced racism and raised those incidents have paid a high personal price for speaking out. This deeper reflection on the past to learn and improve going forward must be accompanied by actions that seek to make amends and atone for past failures.

In the discussion had as part of this review, there was a genuine acknowledgement of past failures and a strong desire to do better. People external to the Club noted that it was made up of great people. However, good intentions on and off the field don't have any significant meaning unless they are embraced and implemented. It is here that the majority of this report is aimed.

Recommendations

Club Values

1. That Collingwood Football Club undertake a process to integrate concepts of anti-racism and inclusion as qualities inherent in the Club's values, including the concept of excellence and the goal of winning;
2. That the Collingwood Football Club Board develop and implement a strategy for integrating and normalising those values throughout the Club;
3. That the Collingwood Football Club Board undertake a Board audit to ensure its membership, through their behaviour and beliefs, reflects its goals of diversity and individually embrace the values of the Club, including the principles of anti-racism and inclusion.

Proactive responses to racism

4. That the Collingwood Football Club Board ensure the development of a framework for responding to incidents of racism that reflects its values in a way that is pro-active, not reactive.

Policies, procedures and mechanisms for complaint

5. That the Collingwood Football Club implement a program of education and induction that ensures all Board members and staff understand Club's policies and its obligations under employment and anti-discrimination policies to ensure compliance with legal obligations in relation to a safe workplace;
6. That the Collingwood Football Club review its processes for addressing complaints of racism to improve them and to include an avenue of external, independent review and protection for whistle-blowers;
7. That the Collingwood Football Club implement a framework to ensure that there is accountability and consequences for acts of racism committed by members of the Club community;
8. That the Collingwood Football Club undertake a regular audit of its employment and anti-discrimination policies to ensure compliance with legal obligations in relation to a safe workplace.

Employment and recruitment

9. That the Collingwood Football Club Board ensure the development and implementation of an employment strategy that values diversity and reports against KPIs. This includes the player group and the coaching staff;

10. That the Collingwood Football Club develop a clear pipeline for the development of talent from diverse communities into the Club and which proactively supports First Nations and people of colour into post-playing positions within the Club and AFL, particularly coaching;
11. That, in its processes for the recruitment of Board members and the recruitment of staff (including the playing group and coaches), the Collingwood Football Club ensures that it assesses candidates against key criteria including genuine support of the Club's values and anti-racism.

Ensuring a culturally safe workplace

12. That the Collingwood Football Club Board oversee a cross-Club process of developing a culturally safe environment.

Addressing the past

13. That as part of its internal education and orientation programs, the Collingwood Football Club develop a process of 'truth-telling' as a constructive step to more deeply understand the experiences of First Nations people and People of Colour, their history and culture and the impacts of racism;
14. That the Collingwood Football Club develop a strategy to address and reconcile past acts of racism in a way that is proactive and seeks to reward, not punish, people who speak out against racism.

Oversight and implementation

15. That a framework for implementation be established with clear responsibility allocated for implementation of these recommendations;
16. That an Expert Group on Anti-Racism be established and resourced to assist the Collingwood Football Club Board in the implementation of the recommendations and to oversee the evaluation of that implementation;
17. That a yearly report against implementation of the recommendations be prepared and presented to the Collingwood Football Club Board and the Expert Group on Anti-Racism.

Community Leadership

18. That the Collingwood Football Club develop a strategy, led by its Expert Group on Anti-Racism, to share its processes and reflections with the AFL community and works to proactively support the concepts of anti-racism and inclusion throughout the Code.



The Collingwood Football Club

The Collingwood Football Club was established in 1892 on the land of the Kulin Nation. It was a time when Melbourne was heavily racially segregated and the suburb of Collingwood was working-class. The Club drew its players and supporters from that working-class base.

The Collingwood staff and leadership speak about its roots as a Club that has been based in a historically disadvantaged and culturally diverse place, and point to a tradition of promoting the underdog. This is a history that resonates with many who support the Club and there is clear pride in this narrative.

This is a history that should speak to inclusion and anti-racism, but that is not always the case. Despite its location at the heart of a significant Indigenous community, Collingwood was the last VFL/AFL Club to recruit an Indigenous player when they signed Wally Lovett in 1982 and retained him for that season. Collingwood did not recruit another Indigenous player until 1995.¹

For a long time, Collingwood embraced the idea that it was ‘the biggest and the best’. Many now feel uncomfortable with this characterisation — seeing it not just as the kind of hyperbole that got people offside, but that it didn’t reflect the true values of the Club.

Today, Collingwood claims to be guided by four formal values — *belonging* (‘I am never alone. We are all a part of a bigger cause. When I belong I can count on your support.’), *commitment* (‘My loyalty and decisive action for you is absolute. We stick together side by side through good times and bad.’), *realising potential* (‘My Club uses the collective effort of many to turn good into best. We inspire and fulfil hopes, dreams and aspirations.’), and *caring* (‘My Club listens, consults, values and respects. We embrace diversity and welcome all as equals.’).

However, there is a gap — a very big one — between what Collingwood Football Club says it stands for and what it does.

¹ [abc.net.au/news/2020-08-20/numbers-indigenous-players-impact-on-australian-rules-football/12574182;collingwoodfc.com.au/news/97481/a-history-of-our-indigenous-magpies](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-08-20/numbers-indigenous-players-impact-on-australian-rules-football/12574182;collingwoodfc.com.au/news/97481/a-history-of-our-indigenous-magpies)

A Distinctive History

This disconnect is most stark when comparing the values the Collingwood Football Club claims it embraces with its track record of involvement in high profile racist incidents.

Figure 1: Racism at Collingwood — an abridged timeline

<p style="text-align: center;">SYD JACKSON BOOED</p>	
<p>In the 1970 VFL Grand Final, which still holds the record for the highest ever attended VFL/AFL crowd, the great Syd Jackson of Carlton was booed by Collingwood fans as he prepared to take a kick. The incident prompted the GTV9 commentator to say the following ‘I don’t like this crowd booing. Bad sportsmanship from Australians to boo on an occasion like this because this fellow (Syd Jackson) is a coloured man, we know, but he’s entitled to every bit of respect that anybody’s allowed.’</p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;">NICKY WINMAR PROUD</p> <p>On 17 April 1993, in one of the best-known moments in AFL history, Nicky Winmar lifted his shirt and pointed to the skin on his torso. He said ‘I’m black and I’m proud to be black.’ He did this in response to racist slurs from the Collingwood cheer squad.</p> <p>A week after the Nicky Winmar incident, then President of Collingwood, Allan McAllister stated ‘as long as they conduct themselves like white people, well, off the field, everyone will admire and respect ... As long as they conduct themselves like human beings, they will be all right. That’s the key.’</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">MICHAEL LONG VILIFIED</p> <p>In 1995, Essendon player Michael Long was vilified on the field in a match with Collingwood, leading to the AFL investigating and introducing Rule 30 to combat racial and religious vilification.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">HERITIER LUMUMBA NICKNAMED ‘CHIMP’</p> <p>From 2005, Heritier Lumumba was nicknamed ‘chimp’. He reports ‘a numbness’ at hearing this</p>	

slur as a young debut player.² He said 'I allowed it because it **was part of their [Collingwood] culture.**'³ Lumumba said he also observed the same thing happening to Indigenous players. By 2012, after a formative experience changed the way he thought of himself as a Black man, every time he heard this racist nickname it felt 'like a dagger into my back'.

JOEL WILKINSON VILIFIED

Joel Wilkinson claims to have been racially vilified **by a Collingwood member** while playing against them in 2012. Mr Wilkinson maintains that, while his claim was supported by a Collingwood player, the incident has never been appropriately dealt with by Collingwood Football Club.

EDDIE MCGUIRE SLUR

In May 2013, Adam Goodes was called an 'ape' by a **young Collingwood supporter**. After he privately apologised to Goodes, **Collingwood President Eddie McGuire** suggested Adam Goodes should be used to promote a King Kong Musical. He issued a public apology after the incident.

HERITIER LUMUMBA SPEAKS OUT

After Eddie McGuire called Adam Goodes 'King Kong', Lumumba spoke out about this and other experiences of **racism at Collingwood**. He also held an internal meeting **addressing CFC culture**, workplace rights and human rights. When some of the jokes continued, including from team leadership, Lumumba confronted coach Nathan Buckley. Media commentary was swift, and often implied that Lumumba was overly sensitive or mentally unstable. **Lumumba was moved from the leadership group of Collingwood.**

A COLLINGWOOD APOLOGY

On the 24th of August, **Collingwood Football Club issued a formal apology** for its part in racially abusing Robert Muir -

"Collingwood joins the AFL industry in apologising unreservedly to Robert Muir

² [sbs.com.au/news/the-feed/heritier-lumumba-did-my-black-life-matter-to-collingwood](https://www.sbs.com.au/news/the-feed/heritier-lumumba-did-my-black-life-matter-to-collingwood)

³ Lumumba, in Jeff Daniels (dir.), 2017. *Fair Game*

for the racist abuse he endured across a fine career with St Kilda. His is a story that is sad, shameful and a powerful reminder of why, as a Club and code, we have important roles to play in seeking to eliminate racism from our game and our communities”.

This selected short list of high-profile incidents is compelling and speaks to systemic racism of the kind that means the concerted efforts of individuals do not translate into change. It gives the impression that the racism is entrenched, as though, as one interviewee commented, reflecting on the frustrations about the structural elements of racism in the Club, that ‘racism appears to be a part of Collingwood Football Club’s DNA’.

Not surprisingly, there is a strong view external to the Club that, whenever there is a racist incident in the AFL, Collingwood is somehow involved with it. This perception has led some to conclude that Collingwood has become synonymous with off-field and on-field racism in Australian sport and others to observe that there is something distinctive about racism at the Collingwood Football Club. As one person we spoke to said – ‘if you look at every high-profile incident of racism in the game, Collingwood is there somewhere.’

Through the course of our work on this report, we observed people, through honest conversations with us and reflections on the Club’s history, come to better understand the way those outside the Club must perceive it. It was perhaps easier to assess that history from outside. This is in no small part due to the love and loyalty that people feel towards the Collingwood Football Club when their own participation with the Club has given them many positive experiences and benefits. When their own experience with the Club is positive, it makes it perhaps harder to reconcile claims by others that their experience has been a negative one.

It then becomes significant that the Collingwood Football Club has taken the important step of commissioning an independent review to get a clearer understanding of what has happened in the past to make fundamental changes going forward. This is not a box-ticking exercise but a ground-breaking and courageous attempt to try to understand the past, to look at why the efforts of individuals at the top to drive change have not created that change, and to get some frank advice on what needs to be done going forward. It involved the tough process of seriously looking at perspectives and experiences of those impacted by acts of racism.

There are a range of initiatives that the Collingwood Football Club has undertaken that show an increased awareness in relation to the importance of recognising diversity within the Club. This has included the appointment of an Indigenous person to the Board in 2018, the establishment of an Indigenous position on staff (the Manager for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs) that focuses on education programs and cultural activities throughout the Club, the establishment of a Reconciliation Action Plan and a group to oversee its progress that includes the senior leadership of the Club and highly respected members of the Indigenous community. This dynamic group are a valuable resource that currently sit on the periphery of the Club’s hierarchy and, if appropriately utilised, have the ability to lead and drive real change.

Other initiatives that people spoke to that showed a shift and growing momentum included the Club’s leadership in the Free the Flag Campaign. The Club, across its football and netball teams, was the first in the AFL to support it with support from the Reconciliation Action Group, the Club Executive and with unanimously support by the Board. Education initiatives have included a Cultural Awareness training program, the Club’s Cheer Squad being given training, and a revised Code of Conduct. The

Club used the release of the Adam Goodes documentary, *The Final Quarter*, as an educational opportunity and a program around the film was delivered to the Club.

Two recent events point to the Club being better able to respond to racism: the suspension of two members of the Cheer Squad following a breach of the Code of Conduct in 2019 and, in 2020, the Club pursuing a person who vilified Travis Varcoe via social media by lodging a formal complaint with the Australian Human Rights Commission.

Universally, the people we spoke to – within and outside the Club – believed that the Collingwood Football Club could do better. Unanimously, people believed that things had not been done as well as they could have in the past and that the Club needed to do better in the future. Many also expressed the view that the Club's origins should translate more strongly into its current values and that what the Club says it stands for needs to be more than rhetoric.

Racism takes many forms. It became clear in our discussions across the Club that there are certain forms of racism that are more easily identifiable. Interpersonal racism includes things such as the use of racial slurs, violence, or deliberate exclusion from opportunities.

But racism is also structural and cultural, producing different outcomes for people who are not white and resulting, even if not intended, in a hostile environment for Indigenous people and people of colour. It is these more entrenched and tenacious forms of racism that people find harder to identify, call out and address.

Key concepts

Popular understandings of racism often simplify something that is complex, nuanced, and counter-intuitive for those who don't experience it. For this report, we've defined these terms as:

Interpersonal racism (direct discrimination) — actions or remarks that occurs between people or groups of people that intentionally or inadvertently expresses prejudice or bias against racial groups. An example of interpersonal racism is calling someone a racial slur, either with intention to express a racist sentiment or otherwise. Interpersonal racism is sometimes easier to see than structural racism, but is not always obvious to people who don't experience racism.

Structural racism (indirect discrimination) — occurs not through individual action but through policy, institutional culture, representations in media, laws, conversational norms and normalised behaviours. An example of structural racism is an informal expectation that players from non-white backgrounds be treated as natural athletes, rather than players with expertise and agency in the game.

It is clear that there is a greater understanding today of what racism might be and of its negative impacts than there were in the past. However, while there is now a greater ability to identify and respond to acts of interpersonal racism from the fan base, there is a lesser ability to respond to racist conduct within the Club, particularly to racism in its structural forms. Structural racism doesn't mean that everyone in the Club is racist but it does mean that the efforts of individuals to make changes within the Club will be thwarted unless that structural racism is addressed.

Importantly, the overwhelming view is that the increased focus on Indigenous issues and the presence of Indigenous people in the Club, particularly on the Board and on staff, was seen as a positive. Not only did people observe that this diversity was good for the Club, Indigenous staff and Board members are seen an important and useful resource and were relied on for advice in relation to how to address or progress issues related to Indigenous people and to issues of racism.

What is equally clear is that these steps forward have not gone far enough in addressing racism in the Club – and certainly not in its systemic form – and do not equate with a strong set of values and effective policies and procedures.

Concern was expressed about the lack of recruitment of Indigenous players and other players of diverse backgrounds into the Club and about the lack of Indigenous people on the coaching team or within senior administrative positions. There were also concerns that the presence of an Indigenous Board member and a staff member would be seen as enough to deal with the issues without the Club, its senior administration and the Board taking more responsibility for changes.

An important observation was also made that, in taking steps to address racism and encourage inclusion, there needed to be a greater appreciation of the complexities around diversity. Almost all the steps taken to improve the Club focused on Indigenous people. While that was appropriate for a range of reasons, it meant that the different experiences, history and perspectives of other people of colour, particularly those of African players, were not appreciated. Addressing racism towards and the marginalisation of Indigenous people is not the only anti-racist task for the Club. Establishing a space for people of colour in Collingwood, including people of African, Middle Eastern, Asian, Pacific and South American backgrounds and cultures will be crucial going forward if an inclusive culture is to be created.

In large part, the failure of positive initiatives to have a greater impact on changing the culture of the Club was because many of those steps taken were not of themselves enough to shift structural racism within the Club. The increased awareness of individuals within the Club about racism and its harms has not translated into an institutional response. Structural racism can be an impediment to the attempts of individuals to achieve change within an organisation. When incidents of racism have been raised, it is not clear that the Club, as an organisation, has reflected and changed as a result of them — even if some individuals have taken the time to contemplate, reflect and think differently.

A consistent pattern with the Collingwood Football Club is what has been seen as its failure to adequately address incidents when they have arisen. If racism is endemic throughout the broader community, it is not surprising to find it within institutions such as sporting Clubs. The bigger test for an organisation like the Collingwood Football Club is how it deals with that racism and what steps it takes to address it.

Key criticisms about the Club's failure to address incidents of racism and its structural racism were focused on the absence of clear and trusted avenues through which complaints could be made. It was also observed by many that the Club was more likely to react to media coverage about a racist incident than complaints made within the Club and that such a reaction was defensive rather than proactive. The Club takes a 'guns pointing out' or 'double down' approach rather than taking the lead in investigating and addressing complaints or issues raised. This failure to respond adequately to complaints of racism internally has also meant that the Club's response has been seen as aggravating, rather than mitigating, the impact of that racism on the people who have experienced it.

Reconciliation Action Plans, cultural awareness, multicultural ambassadorships and striving to recruit more First Nations and African employees are not on their own capable of countering systemic racism. 'Inclusion' is not a substitute for thinking about race and racism and needs to be reinforced by anti-racism being a clear core value. That requires a rethink of how Collingwood operates, not only internally, but in the broader landscape of AFL, media, and the Australian public.

All of this comes back to the leadership of the Collingwood Football Club — particularly its Board — and the need for them to set the vision and values of the Club and to drive structural change within the organisation. The changes need to be driven from the top if they are to address racism and set the tone for the culture within the Club.



A Different Approach, a Better Direction

If we don't learn from history, we repeat the mistakes of the past. It's an often-used saying but it reminds us that without reflection on what has gone before, there is no ability to do better going forward. It also promises that we can be better than the mistakes we have made before. It is in this spirit that there is a genuine hope that, as the Collingwood Football Club moves forward, there is an opportunity to do things differently.

In every interview that was conducted in the course of this review it was acknowledged that mistakes had been made in the past, that there had been a failure to understand the complexities of racism and the harm it inflicts on those who are subjected to it. Even when motivated by good intentions, the results were not always what the Club wanted.

Reflecting on what has happened in the past and on the current situation of the Club, a pathway forward becomes clearer.

Club Values

The Collingwood Football Club has moved away from the idea that it is 'the biggest and the best.' From the top down, this was seen as an archaic way of viewing the strengths of the Club. It was a view that didn't reflect what the Club really was, and was unhelpful and antagonistic.

While a set of values have been articulated – belonging, commitment, realising potential and caring – there was no clear and consistent sense of what the values of the Club are or what they mean in practice. They are broad and amorphous and can cover the concepts of 'inclusion' and 'racism' if an individual holds those ideals as important, but those concepts are not specifically stated anywhere.

Everyone we spoke to within the Club or who had some connection with it had their own strong sense of the Club's positive values. They spoke of the Club's working-class roots, its values of supporting the disadvantaged, and the outreach work done in community, particularly in supporting the homeless. These were traditions that evoked pride.

Football Clubs are focused on winning. Collingwood is no different. Winning and excellence are repeated as the central goals of the Club, the only things that matter. This creates a view that, once the business of winning is out of the way, then other matters, such as dealing with racism, can be addressed. But this is a view that is antiquated and being increasingly challenged.

Encouragingly, deeper thought is being given to the ways in which inclusion and anti-racism are intricately entwined with the goals of winning and excellence. A Club that makes players feel included will get a better outcome from the playing group. Internal instances of racism are destructive and

divisive, undermining the cohesiveness needed to make a team strong and effective. Put simply, a Club that strives for excellence and wants to win should embrace the principles of inclusion and anti-racism as key aspects of its strategy. Collingwood's on field and off field performance will only be enhanced by a Club culture and structure that value inclusion and clearly reject racist behaviour — by decisively addressing it when it occurs, and by supporting those who highlight it and work for change.

Societal attitudes are shifting more broadly. There are increasing instances where brands have been subject to consumer boycotts because of a failure to keep up with changing community standards. A Club that does not seriously confront racism and is seen as being inactive or indifferent around it not only risks being seen as out of step but runs the risk of alienating corporate sponsors, who are themselves increasingly aware of scrutiny around their values and corporate behaviour.

This is not just a 'brand' issue but also goes to the heart of the Club's identity. The Club's values can send a clear signal externally about what the Club stands for. They also set a standard, framework and benchmark within the Club that can guide the staff, playing group and everyone else associated with the Club about how they should behave and how they should expect to be treated.

These standards need to be set by the Club's Board so they are permeating from the top down. The Board needs to lead a process of developing a clearer set of values that integrate the concepts of inclusion and anti-racism into the identity of the Club. It is crucial that this process be guided through the engagement of an external consultant with experience in cultural safety and anti-racism.

Once those values are articulated, there needs to be a strategic approach to ensuring that those values are adopted throughout the Club and guide the policies, procedures and responses of the Club. This requires a strategy for communication of those values but also reflection on whether current practices and approaches embody them.

Given the key leadership role the Club's Board plays in relation to the formation, dissemination and adoption of Club values, it must be clear – through word and behaviour – that the Board embodies those values. When understanding how critical the values work of the Board is, it is also apparent that thought needs to be given to its membership. Do the members of the Board embrace the Club's values? Do they show a commitment to those values in how they behave? Are they willing to be held accountable to those standards?

In conducting this review, it became apparent that when incidents of racism arose, the work fell to individuals to both raise it and resolve it. It appeared that there was no systemic process that could support individuals that were involved. Similarly, there is a culture of individuals, if not quite being bigger than the Club, then at least having an unhealthy degree of influence over Club culture. A more inclusive and collegiate leadership approach can better realise the potential of all and help live and implement values.

It is a mistake to dismiss such work around establishing the values of an organisation as insignificant and merely symbolic. The process involves reflection, conversation, debate and further reflection. The result assists in shaping the culture, identify and priorities for the Club. Those values can, when properly articulated, guide everyone within the Club in relation to their behaviour and the standards expected.

Similarly, the values need to be active. As a set of statements that sit within governing documents will have little influence. Strategies need to be proactively discussed, integrated and normalised throughout the Club. This active strategy of dissemination is also a process that builds collegiality and cohesion within the Club, bringing everyone on to the same page.

Importantly, as this must be a Board-led project, the Club's leadership must live up to those values. That has been a problem in the past. To this end, there should be an audit of the Board's current membership to ensure that personal views are consistent with the values of the Club. Recruitment of

new members to the Board should be done by assessing eligibility and suitability against the Club's values.

Recommendations

1. That Collingwood Football Club undertake a process to integrate concepts of anti-racism and inclusion as qualities inherent in the Club's values, including the concept of excellence and the goal of winning;
2. That the Collingwood Football Club Board develop and implement a strategy for integrating and normalising those values throughout the Club;
3. That the Collingwood Football Club Board undertake a Board audit to ensure its membership, through their behaviour and beliefs, reflects its goals of diversity and individually embrace the values of the Club, including the principles of anti-racism and inclusion.

Proactive Responses to Racism

A key observation from within the Collingwood Football Club community is that when complaints about racism are made within the Club, they have not been responded to in an effective manner. More attention is given in response to media reports than matters raised internally.

The result of this is that Collingwood is perceived as being defensive, doubling down and denying allegations instead of taking an active and proactive approach internally. This has also meant that Collingwood's response has often been described as one where claims of racism are dealt with in terms of damage control and protecting the brand rather than seeking to address issues and make change. This has meant people who felt aggrieved within the Club felt they were not being heard and that only by taking matters to the media could they bring attention to an issue.

A further consequence of this defensive stance is that there is no room for reflection. Nothing is learned from the experience and those who have stood up to raise issues feel they pay a high price for speaking out.

It also diminishes the ability of the Club to resolve the dispute internally and outside of legal processes. Instead, it heightens the risk of public grievance and negative publicity that impacts the Club, its staff, its players and its supporters.

'It's hard to be a Collingwood supporter' was the reflection of several Indigenous fans of the Club who struggled with the Club's lack of leadership on issues of racism.

However, the issue of the Club's responses to racist incidents are more than just procedural. They go back to the culture and values of the Club. Policies can be great on paper, but if there is no understanding of what they are aiming to achieve and what their implementation should look like, they risk being ineffective and unable to assist in meaningful institutional change.

The development of a clear set of Collingwood Football Club values that embrace the concepts of anti-racism and inclusion will set behavioural standards within the Club. It will also assist in the development of a framework for how the Club responds publicly to incidents of racism by fans, players and Club staff.

This framework will set out proactive principles that would see strategies of listening and acknowledging as a first step rather than one of denial and damage control. It is important for the

Collingwood Football Club to embrace the perspective that ‘acknowledging, addressing and learning’ is an approach that leads to better outcomes for the Club than ‘denying and dismissing’.

The approach should be framed in a way that emphasises the Club’s values, incorporating the concepts of anti-racism and inclusion. The process of developing that framework should focus on analysing the responses to past incidents of racism and reflecting on what could have been done better. This process of reflection and learning is one that will further strengthen the Club’s understanding of racism, its many forms and its impact.

What is clear is that past incidents of racism that have not been properly addressed continue to be a cloud over the Club and can be a source of negative distraction and unresolved emotion to the detriment of the Club as a whole.

Such a framework will not only give guidance to staff within the Club about how to personally react when confronted with allegations or complaints of racism but reinforce the values of the Club. The framework will make them a more powerful influence on changing the culture of the Club.

Recommendations

4. That the Collingwood Football Club Board ensure the development of a framework for responding to incidents of racism that reflects its values in a way that is pro-active, not reactive.

Policies, Procedures and Mechanisms for Complaint

It is not enough to have great policies dealing with racism on paper. They must be implemented, resourced and applied. Everyone at the Collingwood Football Club must understand what processes they contain and the values behind them. This is an important strategy in changing the Club’s culture, embracing its values and addressing racism.

The values of the Club set the standards that the Club aspires to. The policies ensure there are guidelines for the Club to follow in relation to how to deal with issues that are raised internally.

This is not just a requirement in terms of changing the culture of the Club; it is also an incorporation of various legislative protections that the Club, as an employer, is required to comply with. Everyone at the Club needs to understand their obligations under the policy. It was a matter of concern that, during the review, large sections of the Club did not know about the policies or their legal obligations under them.

The Collingwood Football Club has implemented several policies that seek to address racism within the Club. They are:

- The *Grievance and Complaints Policy (2020)* — so that players, staff, decision-makers and members are protected when making complaints about race discrimination and racism;
- The *Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Policy (2020)* (formerly the Workplace Bullying Policy and Procedure) — so that players, staff, decision-makers and members know the standards to which they can be held and to which they can hold others;
- *Occupational Health and Safety Policy (2020)* — so that players, staff, decision-makers and members can be adequately across their rights and responsibilities in the occupational hazards of workplace racism; and so the Club can continually review racism as an occupational risk and matter of workplace culture.

The policies outlined above refer to statutory regimes that govern workplace conduct regarding responses to racism. At the time of writing, these regimes include:

- *The Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Commonwealth)
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Victoria)

The current policies are new, coming into effect in 2020. This has meant that not only are the policies new but that there has, given the challenging climate of COVID-19, been limited opportunities to implement them and socialise them throughout the Club.

This goes some way towards explaining why so few people outside of the Board and the executive leadership knew the policies existed or what they contained. However, there seemed to be just as little knowledge of previous policies.

These new policies are significant in that they directly mention racism. The previous policies did not.

In 2011, when the Club released a *Bullying Policy* and a *Social Media and Networking Policy*, only the social media policy mentioned race or racism. Under those policies, some racist conduct may have been covered, but the difference in the language is important to note:

- Bullying, in the *Bullying Policy* (2011):
 - 'behaviour that intimidates, offends, degrades, insults or humiliates a worker at their place of work [...] Obvious examples of bullying may include: Aggressive, abusive or offensive language [...]; Public humiliation and demeaning remarks.'⁴
- Discrimination, in the *Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Policy* (2020):
 - 'Direct discrimination is any action which specifically excludes or treats a person less favourably than others on the basis of a characteristic listed as a ground of discrimination, e.g., age, sex, race, disability or marital status.
 - 'Indirect discrimination may occur if the outcome of rules, practices and decisions, which appear to treat people equally and to be neutral, actually have an adverse effect on a group of people or an individual thus reducing a benefit or opportunity.'⁵

The 2011 policy on bullying makes no reference to racism. The 2020 policy notes both direct (interpersonal) and indirect (structural) racism. This points to a critical flaw in previous policies that also goes some way to explaining why, internally, there was little ability to address issues of racism in the past when it arose and when complaints were made. This may also account for the claims of racism made by people within the Club that complaints were not taken seriously, and no action was taken in response to them. It also shows that, when incidents have occurred, there was little internal guidance on how to raise an issue or on how the Club ought to respond. This also reinforces the perception that the Club sees racism as a reputational and public relations problem.

The 2020 policies contained new concepts of race and racism compared to previous policies and it is acknowledged that the introduction of these policies was an important and positive step forward. However, there was little evidence of support, resources, or broader educational program that would back up this new way of thinking in Collingwood and give power to the policies. There has not been adequate time to implement them and COVID-19 restrictions and disruptions account for the lag between adoption and implementation, but a more strategic approach needs to be undertaken to ensure that the standards within the policies become socialised throughout the Club.

Implementation

Under legal obligations for employers, it is not enough that policies sit on the books. There must be evidence of implementation.

⁴ *Bullying Policy 2011* (p 1). See also *Workplace Bullying Policy and Procedure* (2015) (p 1):

"Workplace bullying is repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed toward an employee or group of employees that creates a risk to health and safety. Unreasonable behaviour means behaviour that a reasonable person, having regard to all the circumstances, would expect to victimise, humiliate, undermine or threaten. Behaviour can include an individual's or group's actions or practices that victimise, humiliate, undermine or threaten."

⁵ *Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying Policy* (2020) (p 1).

Appendix 1 of the policy (p 6) names race as a grounds of discrimination and harassment.

While appreciating that 2020 created considerable challenges in relation implementing the new policies, important feedback was given in discussions with people in the Collingwood Football Club community who reported that previous training in policies was perfunctory, delivered mostly in one-sided lectures and often not in a way where it was considered the main business of the meeting. This added to the perception that the policies, and the issues they are addressing, are not core to the Club's business.

Information about policies and the education programs that underpinned them needs to be delivered to people across the Club in a more an engaging way, with resources and materials that provide quick reference. This training must emphasise that these are not just policy obligations but legal and ethical obligations. Linking the policies to the Club's values and to broader education programs around race and racism will assist in engaging staff more directly with the policies and processes that seek to address racism in a more practical way.

This was another area where emphasis was made about the need to consider diverse groups in relation to the training programs that might underpin implementation of the policies. A primary focus on First Nations issues was critical in this space but there also needed to be inclusion of other groups, particularly people of African descent, to ensure the broadest implementation and greatest effectiveness of the policies.

Clear Processes for Complaint

In addition to members of the Collingwood Football Club community being unaware of the policies relating to racism, there was also a lack of awareness about the processes for making complaints. There needs to be clearer processes of complaint and policies around behaviour to give people who wish to make a complaint an avenue of redress.

There was also a view that people who complained in the past were not taken seriously and this discouraged people from raising concerns. It is significant that internal mechanisms were distrusted by those who have experienced racism within the Club firsthand.

It was observed that the Club reacted more to public complaints than it did to those made internally, consistent with the perception that the Club was more responsive to reputational pressure than its own professed values.

To address this, the Club needs to have a clear complaints process. That such a process exists needs to be communicated across the Club. The process must include an external avenue for review, so the Club is not simply policing itself. It also needs to implement protection for whistle-blowers to give further protection to people who raise concerns or make complaints within the Club.

The Need for Transparency, Accountability and Consequence

A consistent complaint raised in relation to how the Club deals with racism within its policies and processes was a lack of accountability and consequence for their breach. It was often pointed out that sexual misconduct and behaviour such as drink-driving, drug taking and poor behaviour in public all attracted penalties which reinforced the unacceptability of their behaviour. Racist conduct within the Club was not held to the same standard.

There was a firm view that without *transparency*, *accountability* and *consequence*, these policies and procedures will not lead to the shifts needed. Not surprisingly, this observation came most often from people who had experienced racism within the Club and believed behaviours would not change without a stronger commitment to confronting it and penalising it.

Regular review

The policies relating to bullying and harassment were updated in 2011 and again in 2020. In order to retain relevance of the policies and procedures, it is recommended that policies be reviewed on a more regular basis to ensure compliance with legislative obligations.

The implementation and training programs that underpin those policies and seek to integrate them across the Club should also be reviewed periodically.

Aiming for the Highest Standard

While policies within the Club now refer to legislative frameworks that govern employers, there was also a view that these are minimum standards. To work towards best practice benchmarks, consideration should be given to other human rights documents that contain guidance on evolving norms and standards. These include:

- the United Nation's *Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People*
- the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Victoria)
- the Report of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent: *COVID-19, systemic racism and global protests*, 21 August 2020

These influential human rights documents can provide useful guides that are more specific about the protection of groups that are often missing from general anti-discrimination legislation.

Recommendations

5. That the Collingwood Football Club implement a program of education and induction that ensures all Board members and staff understand Club's policies and its obligations under employment and anti-discrimination policies to ensure compliance with legal obligations in relation to a safe workplace
6. That the Collingwood Football Club review its processes for addressing complaints of racism to improve them and to include an avenue of external, independent review and protection for whistle-blowers
7. That the Collingwood Football Club implement a framework to ensure that there is accountability and consequences for acts of racism committed by members of the Club community.
8. That the Collingwood Football Club undertake a regular audit of its employment and anti-discrimination policies to ensure compliance with legal obligations in relation to a safe workplace

Employment and Recruitment

Diverse workforces improve the culture of workplaces. There was clear and positive feedback given about the roles of Collingwood's first Indigenous Board Member and the Manager for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Programs with both widely appreciated by the Collingwood Football Club community. The Indigenous Board Member's skills were obviously highly regarded and relied upon – a number of respondents noted that 'if I'm not sure, I can ask [her].' There was clear respect for her judgement and leadership.

Similarly, the Manager for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Programs is seen as an essential resource with a critical role within the Club as she develops educational programs, outreach activities and is relied upon as a source of cultural support. There was appreciation shown for the continued commitment to her role within the Club despite the economic challenges posed by COVID-19, but also concern that her role did not carry more authority and influence within the Club structure.

While a heavy emphasis is placed on the respective areas of expertise of Indigenous people within the Club, care needs to be taken to ensure that not all the responsibility for cultural change within the organisation falls to them. The heavy-lifting needs to be shared.

The respect shown to both the Indigenous Board Member and the Manager for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Programs highlights both the importance of staff from diverse backgrounds and the benefits they provide to an organisation.

An employment strategy is currently being developed but it needs to be given high priority by the Board. The strategy must emphasise the importance of diversity within the Club and set goals or KPIs so progress is measured. In addition to diversity in Board membership and administrative staff, consideration needs to be given to diversity amongst the players group and on the coaching staff.

The Collingwood Football Club has a range of community activities and development programs but these need to be integrated into an employment strategy that shows clear pathways in to the Club for talent from diverse backgrounds. Further, the employment strategy also needs to give more thought to the opportunities created for, and support given to, ex-players, particularly those from diverse backgrounds.

It is here that the Club values that embrace the concepts of inclusion and anti-racism are particularly important. They need to guide the development of the employment strategy; they also need to guide criteria for recruitment into the Club. Members of the Board and staff, including the playing group and coaches, need to be assessed against criteria that includes their embrace of the Club's values. This will send a clear message about the level of importance the Club places on those values, and will ensure recruits into the Club will contribute positively to the Club culture.

Recommendations

9. That the Collingwood Football Club Board ensure the development and implementation of an employment strategy that values diversity and reports against KPIs. This includes the player group and the coaching staff.
10. That the Collingwood Football Club develop a clear pipeline for the development of talent from diverse communities into the Club and which proactively supports First Nations and people of colour into post-playing positions within the Club and AFL, particularly coaching.
11. That, in its processes for the recruitment of Board members and the recruitment of staff (including the playing group and coaches), the Collingwood Football Club ensures that it assesses candidates against key criteria including genuine support of the Club's values and anti-racism.

Key concepts

Cultural Awareness — training programs that educate about different cultures, cultural perspectives and histories to create a deeper understanding of them.

Cultural Competence — the skills to deal with people from backgrounds other than one's own

Cultural Safety — an environment in which a person from a diverse background feels valued and accepted.

Ensuring a Culturally Safe Workplace

The values established by the Collingwood Football Club sets the standard for everyone in the Club. Policies help to implement those values by guiding behaviour and providing consequences for breaches. In addition to that, the Club needs to create a culturally safe workplace. This means that the Club, as a workplace and a shared space, must ensure that people from any background feel accepted and included. It must be welcoming and celebrate the strengths diversity brings. Failure to do so creates a toxic environment for those who do not feel respected by the Club and for those who seek to challenge racism within it.

The Barrowarn Program, launched by the Club in 2011, engages in a range of activities that include cultural awareness training for staff. Cultural awareness programs are designed to give people more information and deeper understanding about a different culture and the history and experiences of people in that culture. These programs can be an important step in developing an individual's cultural competence and their ability to behave in a way that respects the cultural background of another person that's different to their own.

However, the Collingwood Football Club should go further and aspire to the creation of a culturally safe workplace as a strategy for countering structural racism. This means the development of an environment in which all staff feel accepted, understood and valued.

In working to create a culturally safe workplace it is important to emphasise diversity. Often steps in relation to better understand First Nations programs overlook other experiences and cultures. A focus on the cultural safety of people from diverse backgrounds, such as African or African descent, further improves the inclusiveness and culture of the Club. This is especially important for those groups who have smaller levels of representation in the Club and across the AFL as they have a smaller cultural peer group on which to rely upon for support.

The Collingwood Football Club needs to ensure that its values, policies and procedures and recruitment practices all work together to create an environment within the Club that is inclusive and culturally safe. In doing so, the Board should seek the assistance of an independent consultant who specialises in cultural safety processes.

This is again something that should be done not just because it is the right thing to do and for which there is a legal responsibility. Inclusiveness and cultural safety will create a better environment within the Club which will be beneficial for players, staff and the Club itself.

Recommendations

12. That the Collingwood Football Club Board oversee a cross-Club process of developing a culturally safe environment.

Addressing the Past

This review is premised on the idea that in order to do better going forward, you need to acknowledge and learn from the past. It is not enough to say that things will be different going forward without addressing the issues that have been raised in the past and remain unresolved.

One thing that was striking in the course of this review was the extent to which people had expressed a view that their own understanding of issues around racism and its impacts have improved over time. In addition to reflections on the situations of individuals within the Club, two recent documentaries about Adam Goodes (*The Final Quarter* and *The Australian Dream*) had served to increase awareness. Comments such as, 'I wish I knew then what I know now', 'even though we thought we were doing the right thing, it turns out we weren't', and 'I didn't understand those things then like I do now', were common and points to positive reflection and learnings.

However, those individual learnings have not translated into changes to the Club's culture and practice. Instead, the Club response was still more likely to be defensive and one of denial.

The other important thing that needs to be acknowledged in this process is that, while individuals have grown from learning about the incidents of racism raised within the Club, the people who raised them often remained ostracised. For those who experienced racism within the Club, they described it as a toxic environment. They bravely challenged the culture of the Club and highlighted the flaws in Club processes. Then they paid a high price for speaking out about their experiences. It has to be noted that observations in this report are consistent with many claims made by those who were aggrieved by the Club's culture, attitude and policies.

The Collingwood Football Club will be a better organisation if it can come to terms with its past rather than put it to one side and pretend it can move forward without looking back. Otherwise, the past will continue to throw a shadow over the Club.

The attitude of certain individuals that acknowledgement and learning from the past is a positive thing needs to be adopted by the Club as a whole. Such a process of engaged 'truth-telling' and should be designed and led within the Club by experienced First Nations people and, where appropriate, other people of colour, particularly Africans and those of African descent.

As the Club learns, grows and improves by learning from the past, it also needs to take a proactive approach in making amends to those who have been hurt by the Club and its actions. It must seek to acknowledge what people have experienced within the Club and to atone for that behaviour. This proactive approach is more sincere and, although it may be difficult for the Club, is a better way to address those past wrongs. To date, there is no evidence that unresolved issues from the past go away; they continue to haunt the Club and to cause harm to those who have been aggrieved by its treatment of them.

In relation to this, the Club should consider a reparative justice model, where the goal is not bringing an end to public declarations of racism or exonerating the Club of it, but airing it, acknowledging it and making material gestures to righting and healing the harm that occurred. This includes proactively making amends that could include, but aren't limited to: reparations, compensation, public apology, and commitments to reform. Such actions that seek to make amends and atone for past failures are not acts of weakness by the Club but rather are acts of strength and should be embraced as such.

Recommendations

13. That as part of its internal education and orientation programs, the Collingwood Football Club develop a process of 'truth-telling' as a constructive step to more deeply understand the experiences of First Nations people and People of Colour, their history and culture and the impacts of racism.
14. That the Collingwood Football Club develop a strategy to address and reconcile past acts of racism in a way that is proactive and seeks to reward, not punish, people who speak out against racism

Oversight and implementation

In order to ensure real and meaningful change, a strategy for implementation of the recommendations in this report needs to be developed with clear allocation of responsibility (see Appendix 2). This needs to be accompanied with a clear timeline for implementation (see Appendix 3).

While responsibility for implementation is ultimately held by the Board of the Collingwood Football Club, it is highly recommended that an advisory body be resourced to oversee evaluation and assessment of the Board's implementation to ensure a level of scrutiny and independence. This will ensure that the Board is not simply self-assessing, but rather that there is 'independent policing.'

Throughout the course of this review, it became apparent that the Indigenous people who were engaged with the Reconciliation Action Plan Group were an untapped asset for the Club. They loved Collingwood – even though all could speak to incidents of experiencing racism – but also understood its flaws. They were committed to seeing the Club do better. They were all people who had enormous integrity within the Victorian Aboriginal community and understood the manifestations and impacts of racism. They particularly understood that Collingwood needed to learn from its mistakes of the past. They were referred to by various names within Club documents and their role needs to be clearly identified to ensure their skills are most effectively utilised.

Activation of this group would greatly assist the Club's Board with its responsibility for the implementation of the recommendations of this report. To this end, they could form a Cultural Advisory Group with a Terms of Reference that includes the evaluation and assessment of the implementation of this review. The group needs to be resourced to be able to undertake this role. They can maintain their active presence in the Reconciliation Action Plan Group but also be a distinct body within the Club with a direct line to the Board. To this end, it is recommended that an Expert Group on Anti-Racism, drawing on those members of the Reconciliation Action Plan Group and others with relevant expertise, who can be a valuable resource.

It is also recommended that, while the current members of this leadership group are First Nations, membership should be extended to represent other groups over time, with a priority on the African community. This Expert Group on Anti-Racism should lead the development of the Terms of Reference and the decisions about membership of the group.

Such an Expert Group will provide a level of scrutiny and assessment from a group who have the best interests of the Collingwood Football Club at heart but have independence and a sense of broader community responsibility. They will be an invaluable source of advice and support for the Club's Board and senior staff.

To ensure continual focus on the values of anti-racism and inclusion, an evaluation report should be prepared within the Collingwood Football Club each year that reports progress against each of the recommendations of this report. This should also include a bi-annual independent assessment of the recommendations themselves to ensure that they remain relevant, dynamic and ambitious, not static and outdated.

Recommendations

15. That a framework for implementation be established with clear responsibility allocated for implementation of these recommendations;
16. That the Expert Group on Anti-Racism be resourced to assist the Collingwood Football Club Board in the implementation of the recommendations and to oversee the evaluation of that implementation.
17. That a yearly report against implementation of the recommendations be prepared and presented to the Collingwood Football Club Board and the Expert Group on Anti-Racism.

Community Leadership

One question that was often posed was why this review was only looking at the Collingwood Football Club. The issues being looked at were relevant to the whole of the AFL. While accepting that an AFL Club is part of a larger ecosystem, that does not mean that individual Clubs cannot be proactive about leading change. Often, coordinated top-down, bottom-up approaches can produce the best results.

However, what was mentioned through the discussions we had with people internal to the Club and external to it, was the need for exchange of information within the sector about what works and best practice. While it was observed that sometimes Clubs are reluctant to share information, progress in addressing issues around racism that have permeated the sport requires open discussion to ensure reflection and learning.

To this end, it is encouraged that the Collingwood Football Club, through the leadership and advice of its Expert Group on Anti-Racism, engage in cross-code discussions to exchange information and lessons learned. It is important that this work be led by First Nations voices and perspectives and should seek to include voices from other backgrounds, particularly perspectives from those of African descent.

Recommendations

18. That the Collingwood Football Club develop a First Nations led strategy to share its processes and reflections with the AFL community and works to proactively support the concepts of anti-racism and inclusion throughout the Code.



A Final Thought

Every person we spoke to during the process of the review believed that the Collingwood Football Club had to do better into the future than it had done in the past. Whatever cynicism people may have about Collingwood Football Club's motivations, what cannot be denied that they have, without flinching, subjected themselves to an independent review that has been a challenging exercise in holding up a mirror to the Club's past in order to do better going forward. That in itself is a step forward in the right direction.

The agenda for change proposed in this report had strong support within the Club when tested. However, there was also a sense that, to date, dealing with racism was something that could be done when other things had been taken care of. There is now an appetite to do better and a growing understanding that addressing racism and changing the culture of the Club will make Collingwood the best version of itself. Now is the time to make anti-racism and inclusion core Collingwood business.

As it takes those steps forward, it is also time to actively and positively address the Club's past. This is not a moment to simply move on but a time to think differently about how confronting and addressing the previous incidents is an important step in deep learning, structural change and the crafting of a very different future. In doing so, Collingwood Football Club needs to support the people within the Club who want to be agents for that change. And it needs to make amends to people who have called out the internal problems within the Club but have paid a high personal and public price for doing so.

Collingwood needs to do better because racism is wrong and it is harmful. It needs to do better because, as an employer, there is a legal duty to ensure it does not occur in the workplace. And more than that, it will make Collingwood a better Club.

While the Collingwood Football Club has a unique history in relation to racism and racist incidents within the AFL, the comment was also made from several quarters, internal to the Club and external to it, that Collingwood was well placed to adapt, change and lead in this space.

2020 was a year that has seen many disruptions and given rise to great challenges. It has also been a time, through the increased spotlight on the Black Lives Matter movement, where it has become more apparent than ever that the racism of the past will not be tolerated into the future.

Now is the time for the Collingwood Football Club to meet the moment.

Appendix 1 — Legal Obligations

Act	Relevant sections
<p><i>Racial Discrimination Act 1975</i> (Commonwealth)</p>	<p>9 Racial discrimination to be unlawful</p> <p>(1) It is unlawful for a person to do any act involving a distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of any human right or fundamental freedom in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.</p> <p>(1A) Where:</p> <p>(a) a person requires another person to comply with a term, condition or requirement which is not reasonable having regard to the circumstances of the case; and</p> <p>(b) the other person does not or cannot comply with the term, condition or requirement; and</p> <p>(c) the requirement to comply has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, by persons of the same race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin as the other person, of any human right or fundamental freedom in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life;</p> <p>the act of requiring such compliance is to be treated, for the purposes of this Part, as an act involving a distinction based on, or an act done by reason of, the other person's race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin.</p>
<p><i>Equal Opportunity Act 2010</i> (Victoria)</p>	<p>8 Direct discrimination</p> <p>(1) Direct discrimination occurs if a person treats, or proposes to treat, a person with an attribute unfavourably because of that attribute.</p>
	<p>9 Indirect discrimination</p> <p>(1) Indirect discrimination occurs if a person imposes, or proposes to impose, a requirement, condition or practice—</p> <p>(a) that has, or is likely to have, the effect of disadvantaging persons with an attribute; and</p> <p>(b) that is not reasonable.</p> <p>(2) The person who imposes, or proposes to impose, the requirement, condition or practice has the burden of proving that the requirement, condition or practice is reasonable.</p> <p>(3) Whether a requirement, condition or practice is reasonable depends on all the relevant circumstances of the case, including the following—</p> <p>(a) the nature and extent of the disadvantage resulting from the imposition, or proposed imposition, of the requirement, condition or practice;</p> <p>(b) whether the disadvantage is proportionate to the result sought by the person who imposes, or proposes to impose, the requirement, condition or practice;</p> <p>(c) the cost of any alternative requirement, condition or practice;</p> <p>(d) the financial circumstances of the person imposing, or proposing to impose, the requirement, condition or practice;</p> <p>(e) whether reasonable adjustments or reasonable accommodation could be made to the requirement, condition or practice to reduce the disadvantage caused, including the availability of an alternative requirement, condition or practice that would achieve the result</p>

	<p>sought by the person imposing, or proposing to impose, the requirement, condition or practice but would result in less disadvantage.</p> <p>(4) In determining whether a person indirectly discriminates it is irrelevant whether or not that person is aware of the discrimination.</p>
	<p>10 Motive is irrelevant to discrimination In determining whether or not a person discriminates, the person's motive is irrelevant.</p>
	<p>18 Discrimination against employees An employer must not discriminate against an employee—</p> <p>(a) by denying or limiting access by the employee to opportunities for promotion, transfer or training or to any other benefits connected with the employment; or</p> <p>(b) by dismissing the employee or otherwise terminating his or her employment; or</p> <p>(c) by denying the employee access to a guidance program, an apprenticeship training program or other occupational training or retraining program; or</p> <p>(d) by subjecting the employee to any other detriment.</p>
	<p>21 Discrimination against contract workers</p> <p>(1) A principal must not discriminate against a contract worker—</p> <p>(a) in the terms on which the principal allows the contract worker to work; or</p> <p>(b) by not allowing the contract worker to work or continue to work; or</p> <p>(c) by denying or limiting access by the contract worker to any benefit connected with the work; or</p> <p>(d) by subjecting the contract worker to any other detriment.</p> <p>(2) Subsection (1) does not apply to anything done or omitted to be done by a principal in relation to a contract worker that would not contravene this Act if done or omitted to be done by the employer of that contract worker.</p>
	<p>109 Vicarious liability of employers and principals If a person in the course of employment or while acting as an agent—</p> <p>(a) contravenes a provision of Part 4 or 6 or this Part; or</p> <p>(b) engages in any conduct that would, if engaged in by the person's employer or principal, contravene a provision of Part 4 or 6 or this Part—</p> <p>both the person and the employer or principal must be taken to have contravened the provision and a person may bring a dispute to the Commission for dispute resolution or make an application to the Tribunal against either or both of them.</p>
	<p>110 Exception to vicarious liability An employer or principal is not vicariously liable for a contravention of a provision of Part 4 or 6 or this Part by an employee or agent if the employer or principal proves, on the balance of probabilities, that the employer or principal took reasonable precautions to prevent the employee or agent contravening this Act.</p>

Appendix 2 — Implementation Responsibilities

Club Values		
1	That Collingwood Football Club undertake a process to integrate concepts of anti-racism and inclusion as qualities inherent in the Club's values, including the concept of excellence and the goal of winning.	Board
2	That the Collingwood Football Club Board develop and implement a strategy for integrating and normalising those values throughout the Club.	Board
3	That the Collingwood Football Club Board undertake a Board audit to ensure its membership, through their behaviour and beliefs, reflects its goals of diversity and individually embrace the values of the Club, including the principles of anti-racism and inclusion.	Board
Proactive Responses to Racism		
4	That the Collingwood Football Club Board ensure the development of a framework for responding to incidents of racism that reflects its values in a way that is proactive, not reactive.	Board CEO
Policies, Procedures and Mechanisms for Complaint		
5	That the Collingwood Football Club implement a program of education and induction that ensures all Board members and staff understand Club's policies and its obligations under employment and anti-discrimination policies to ensure compliance with legal obligations in relation to a safe workplace.	Board CEO
6	That the Collingwood Football Club review its processes for addressing complaints of racism to improve them and to include an avenue of external, independent review and protection for whistle-blowers.	Board CEO
7	That the Collingwood Football Club implement a framework to ensure that there is accountability and consequences for acts of racism committed by members of the Club community.	Board CEO
8	That the Collingwood Football Club undertake a regular audit of its employment and anti-discrimination policies to ensure compliance with legal obligations in relation to a safe workplace.	Board CEO
Employment and Recruitment		
9	That the Collingwood Football Club Board ensure the development and implementation of an employment strategy that values diversity and reports against KPIs. This includes the player group and the coaching staff.	Board CEO
10	That the Collingwood Football Club develop a clear pipeline for the development of talent from diverse communities into the Club and which proactively supports First Nations and people of colour into post-playing positions within the Club and AFL, particularly coaching.	Board CEO

11	That, in its processes for the recruitment of Board members and the recruitment of staff (including the playing group and coaches), the Collingwood Football Club ensures that it assesses candidates against key criteria including genuine support of the Club's values and anti-racism.	Board CEO
Ensuring a Culturally Safe Workplace		
12	That the Collingwood Football Club Board oversee a cross-Club process of developing a culturally safe environment.	Board CEO
Addressing the Past		
13	That as part of its internal education and orientation programs, the Collingwood Football Club develop a process of 'truth-telling' as a constructive step to more deeply understand the experiences of First Nations people and People of Colour, their history and culture and the impacts of racism.	Board CEO Expert Group on Anti-Racism
14	That the Collingwood Football Club develop a strategy to address and reconcile past acts of racism in a way that is proactive and seeks to reward, not punish, people who speak out against racism.	Board CEO Expert Group on Anti-Racism
Oversight and Implementation		
15	That a framework for implementation be established with clear responsibility allocated for implementation of these recommendations.	Board CEO Expert Group on Anti-Racism
16	That an Expert Group on Anti-Racism be established and resourced to assist the Collingwood Football Club Board in the implementation of the recommendations and to oversee the evaluation of that implementation;	Board CEO Expert Group on Anti-Racism
17	That a yearly report against implementation of the recommendations be prepared and presented to the Collingwood Football Club Board and the Expert Group on Anti-Racism.	Board CEO Expert Group on Anti-Racism
Community Leadership		
18	That the Collingwood Football Club develop a strategy, led by its Expert Group on Anti-Racism, to share its processes and reflections with the AFL community and works to proactively support the concepts of anti-racism and inclusion throughout the Code.	Board CEO Expert Group on Anti-Racism

Appendix 3 — Implementation Timeframe

Timeframe	Recommendations		
First 3 Months	Club Values		
	1	That Collingwood Football Club undertake a process to integrate concepts of anti-racism and inclusion as qualities inherent in the Club's values, including the concept of excellence and the goal of winning.	Board
	2	That the Collingwood Football Club Board develop and implement a strategy for integrating and normalising those values throughout the Club.	Board
	Proactive Responses to Racism		
	4	That the Collingwood Football Club Board ensure the development of a framework for responding to incidents of racism that reflects its values in a way that is pro-active, not reactive.	Board CEO
	Policies, Procedures and Mechanisms for Complaint		
	6	That the Collingwood Football Club review its processes for addressing complaints of racism to improve them and to include an avenue of external, independent review and protection for whistle-blowers.	Board CEO
	7	That the Collingwood Football Club implement a framework to ensure that there is accountability and consequences for acts of racism committed by members of the Club community.	Board CEO
	Oversight and Implementation		
	15	That a framework for implementation be established with clear responsibility allocated for implementation of these recommendations.	Board CEO Expert Group on Anti-Racism
16	That an Expert Group on Anti-Racism be established and resourced to assist the Collingwood Football Club Board in the implementation of the recommendations and to oversee the evaluation of that implementation.	Board CEO Expert Group on Anti-Racism	
First 6 Months	Club Values		
	3	That the Collingwood Football Club Board undertake a Board audit to ensure its membership, through their behaviour and beliefs, reflects its goals of diversity and individually embrace the values of the Club, including the principles of anti-racism and inclusion.	Board
	Employment and Recruitment		
9	That the Collingwood Football Club Board ensure the development and implementation of an employment strategy that values diversity and reports against KPIs. This includes the player group and the coaching staff.	Board CEO	
First 9 Months	Policies, Procedures and Mechanisms for Complaint		
	5	That the Collingwood Football Club implement a program of education and induction that ensures all Board members and staff understand Club's policies and its obligations under employment and anti-discrimination policies to ensure compliance with legal obligations in relation to a safe workplace.	Board CEO
Employment and Recruitment			

	11	That, in its processes for the recruitment of Board members and the recruitment of staff (including the playing group and coaches), the Collingwood Football Club ensures that it assesses candidates against key criteria including genuine support of the Club's values and anti-racism.	Board CEO
	Ensuring a Culturally Safe Workplace		
	12	That the Collingwood Football Club Board oversee a cross-Club process of developing a culturally safe environment.	Board CEO
First 12 Months	Employment and Recruitment		
	10	That the Collingwood Football Club develop a clear pipeline for the development of talent from diverse communities into the Club and which proactively supports First Nations and people of colour into post-playing positions within the Club and AFL, particularly coaching.	Board CEO
	Addressing the Past		
	13	That as part of its internal education and orientation programs, the Collingwood Football Club develop a process of 'truth-telling' as a constructive step to more deeply understand the experiences of First Nations people and People of Colour, their history and culture and the impacts of racism.	Board CEO Expert Group on Anti-Racism
	14	That the Collingwood Football Club develop a strategy to address and reconcile past acts of racism in a way that is proactive and seeks to reward, not punish, people who speak out against racism.	Board CEO Expert Group on Anti-Racism
	Community Leadership		
	18	That the Collingwood Football Club develop a strategy, led by its Expert Group on Anti-Racism, to share its processes and reflections with the AFL community and works to proactively support the concepts of anti-racism and inclusion throughout the Code.	Board CEO Expert Group on Anti-Racism
Every 12 Months	Policies, Procedures and Mechanisms for Complaint		
	8	That the Collingwood Football Club undertake a regular audit of its employment and anti-discrimination policies to ensure compliance with legal obligations in relation to a safe workplace.	Board CEO
	Oversight and Implementation		
	17	That a yearly report against implementation of the recommendations be prepared and presented to the Collingwood Football Club Board and the Expert Group on Anti-Racism.	Board CEO Expert Group on Anti-Racism