



# Eyre Peninsula Zone Football Task Force

## Review of the Future of Football on Eyre Peninsula

### Draft Discussion Paper

Prepared by



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## 1 Introduction

The Zone Council recognises the significant social, economic and health benefits that football provides to the local communities and is committed to ensuring the sustainability and success of football on Eyre Peninsula (EP). However, there is also a high level of recognition across the Eyre Peninsula community that football on EP cannot continue to be sustainable in its current format. There is no doubt that the regional environment is changing quickly. There are a number of internal and external factors that are impacting the viability of football on Eyre Peninsula. These include changes to regional economic drivers and demographics; alterations to the traditional 'working week'; the emergence of unstructured, adventure-based and electronic-based recreational activities; and an ever increasing range of sport options and opportunities.

At the 2005 EP Zone AGM, it was agreed to form an EP Task Force to investigate the future of football on Eyre Peninsula. It was envisaged that a report would be provided to the EP Zone by April 2006 but this has not eventuated. During the 2006 season, anecdotal evidence emerged that places EP football at a critical stage with the possible demise of at least four individual football teams from four different leagues on Eyre Peninsula. No doubt if this were to occur the future of football on Eyre Peninsula would be seriously threatened unless significant reform was implemented.

However, it was the view of the Zone Council that this situation provided an opportunity for an objective review of the structure of Eyre Peninsula football to ensure a sustainable future. A process was then implemented where the Task Force would be supported by an independent consultant in providing an objective and independent report. Collins Anderson Management (CAM) was commissioned in May 2007 to assess the future direction and structure of football leagues within the EP Zone and provided recommendations to the EP Zone Council for consideration.

CAM welcomed the opportunity to be involvement in the development of a comprehensive review on the future of football on Eyre Peninsula. CAM has a long and successful relationship with the communities of Eyre Peninsula and many of the diverse organisations that operate within the region. CAM has facilitated many strategic projects of this nature within EP, including:

- Regional Organisational Review for the Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association (EPLGA)
- Membership (Governance) Structure Review for EPLGA
- Sport, Recreation and Open Space Strategy for the District Council of Ceduna
- Development of Triple Bottom Line strategic plans for a large number of Eyre Peninsula Councils
- Facilitation and development of the current EPLGA strategic plan
- Development of a Strategic Plan for the Eyre Peninsula Community Alliance
- A range of successful projects for the Eyre Regional Development Board
- Implementation of a range of successful industry restructuring initiatives with Eyre Peninsula Regional Strategy

In undertaking this project a ten stage methodology was initially development, however due to changes in the project budget a revised methodology was adopted. The methodology utilised involved an extensive consultation process, supported by appropriate research and analysis of relevant documents and demographics. The consultation process incorporated the following activities:

- Initial briefing with the Eyre Peninsula Zone Council
- Preparation and collection of Players Survey (targeted at players representing their leagues during Mortlock Carnival)
- Initial individual interviews with league delegates
- Key stakeholder interviews
- Preparation and distribution of survey to all registered football clubs on EP
- Follow-up interviews with league delegates, clubs and key stakeholders.

This discussion paper is a very important document in ensuring a clear direction for the long term future of football on Eyre Peninsula. The issues identified in this paper can only be resolved if the governance of Eyre Peninsula football is changed in the short term, with the longer term requirements carefully considered, debated and implemented as required. To implement change requires courage, commitment and strong leadership. No doubt the strategic directions and concepts offered in this discussion paper will raise many questions, however it is important that we do not lose site of the bigger picture and long term future through the need to define and argue over processes that can be and will be developed over time.

## 2 History of Football on the Eyre Peninsula

### 2.1. In the beginning

There is some debate over the exact year of origin of football on Eyre Peninsula. Football began in Melbourne, Australia in 1858 and quickly spread throughout Victoria and into parts of South Australia (Gascoyne 2006). 1906 is the approximate year that regular football teams appeared on Eyre Peninsula. Teams invariably began in towns and areas where there was adequate team numbers and a spare paddock to conduct the game in.

Most teams on Eyre Peninsula were a product of the increase in farming activity, building and employment to occur in the region. An example of this is the Yaninee Football Club which was established between 1918 and 1924 due to the influx of employees working on the roads and pipelines in that particular area (Gascoyne 1983).

### 2.2. A Social Gathering

In the humble beginnings, facilities were at an absolute minimum, with players getting changed in bushes, and the oval more or less being an empty paddock or some flat piece of land deemed suitable. Horse and buggy was the usual means of travel to games, sometimes requiring participants to travel the night before the game to make it there in time. The local railways were known for helping out with transport to and from the games. Not only that, they also assisted administratively with the Station Master supplying the bell and the Paymaster providing the half time oranges. The Tea and Dance after the game made attending the football a day long social engagement. The social contact with members from other communities was something special and something looked forward to by most town members (Gascoyne 1983).

In 2007, weekend football and netball is still a regularly attended social event than involves the whole family.

### 2.3. The Mortlock Shield

The Mortlock Shield was an idea of new resident and talented football player Peter Bampton in the mid 1930's. Bampton had been posted to the Eyre Peninsula by his employer and his job required travel up and down the peninsula, which allowed him to become familiar with the towns, their football teams and the talent they possessed. Bampton was impressed with talent on Eyre Peninsula and put forward a concept of a competition between select teams from Eyre Peninsula Leagues (Gascoyne, 1983). This would allow the best in each league to compete against the best from other leagues and refine their skills. The Mortlock Shield takes its name from prominent local grazier, Mr. J. L. Mortlock, who donated the shield. Originally a biennial competition, the Mortlock Shield has been an annual event since 1955 (Gascoyne 1983).

The Mortlock Shield is considered the pinnacle event of the Eyre Peninsula football season and is complemented by an inter-league competition in May.

## 2.4. A History of Change

The original five leagues to compete in the inaugural Mortlock Shield were, Central Eyre, Great Flinders, Cleve Districts, Eastern Eyre Peninsula and Port Lincoln, with Great Flinders being the first league to have their name etched on the shield as winners of the competition. Since those first five leagues in 1936 and until 2007 there have been a total of 22 leagues (Gascoyne 2006) competing in the Mortlock Shield. Of these 22 leagues, a considerable proportion represents the original leagues that were amalgamated or re-zoned. .

The 22 leagues that competed in the Mortlock Shield included 'outside' associations. Whyalla competed in 1939 and again in 2007. Kangaroo Island also partook in the competition from 1988 to 1996 and Woomera and Districts were involved from 1986 to 1996.

Not only have leagues competing in the Mortlock Shield changed over the history of football on Eyre Peninsula, but the teams constituting those leagues has varied considerably over the 100 year history of football on Eyre Peninsula. In its 'hey day' the Eyre Peninsula towns supported in excess of 50 teams; now that number is 27.

As is evidenced from the beginnings of football on Eyre Peninsula, the success of the competition has been determined by the population and economy of the various Eyre Peninsula towns. New jobs in an area or prosperity in a region has also seen the prosperity of the local football team as they receive an injection of new and possibly highly skilled players. Similarly a loss of employment in a town / district has resulted in football teams loosing players. The success of an Eyre Peninsular team has invariably been linked to the prosperity of the location that was its home.

## 2.5. AFL and SANFL Links

The Eyre Peninsula, or Western Zone, was zoned to Port Adelaide in 1972. This paved the way for greater interest and support from the South Australian National Football League (SANFL) and in subsequent years the Australian Football League. Eyre Peninsula football has helped nurture a number of talented athletes that have gone on to play at SANFL and/or AFL level.

### 3 Background

Football on Eyre Peninsula past, present and future has gone under the microscope on a number of occasions, more so in the past 20 years. The future of football on Eyre Peninsula was reviewed formally in the discussion paper of the same name prepared by the Eyre Peninsula Zone Council Sub-Committee in 1985. Below is a summary of the key issues and recommendations to come from this report:

#### 3.1. 1985 Eyre Peninsula Zone Council – The Future of Football on Eyre Peninsula

Key issues taken into consideration when conducting the review included:

- The demise of Clubs and Leagues in country areas is not a new thing and has been happening on Eyre Peninsula for the past 50 years
- Modern farming technology and automation has accounted for a decline in population
- A return to a buoyant rural economy will not necessarily result in a significant increase in number

Other key issues that were noted in subsequent newspaper articles around that time include;

- Lop-sided competitions, teams getting consistently beaten by 100+ points
- Shortage of players and inability to retain 15-30 year olds in regional areas
- Technology in farming
- Downturn of rural population
- Amalgamation of teams and leagues
- Spectator decline due to AFL TV coverage
- Travelling distance to games
- Reluctance to change/amalgamate by locals
- The high importance of Football and Netball in country towns
- Shift away from football to other sports

The recommendation of the 1985 review was that the existing seven leagues be re-zoned to four. The suggested structure was;

- Western Areas: Thevenard, Koonibba, Ceduna, Western United, Streaky Bay, Smoky Bay and Wirrulla (with a possible amalgamation with Wirrulla and Smoky Bay)
- Upper Eyre Peninsula: Rovers, Minnipa/ Central (Minnipa and Central were recommended to amalgamate), Wudinna, Central Eyre, Elliston, United, Kimba No1 and Kimba No 2
- Eastern Districts: Cleve, Cowell, Darke Peak, Rudall, Port Neill and Arno Bay
- Southern Eyre Peninsula: Marble Range, Tasmans, Lincoln South, Waybacks, Mallee Park, Boston, Cummins Red, Ramblers, United Yeelanna, Eyre United, Tumby Bay, Lock and Kapinnie

The leagues were structured with the aim of ensuring there was a maximum travelling time of two hours for clubs to any away games.

The 1985 review was unsuccessful in its recommendations for amalgamations; the report was shelved as being "inappropriate". The majority of recommendations were not implemented. However, by 1998, 13 of the 34 clubs that took part in a meeting that discussed the recommendations of the 1985 review had amalgamated, discussed amalgamation or had disappeared completely (Eyre Peninsula Tribune, 1998). Most amalgamations happened within 2 years of the release of the review findings.

Since the 1985 review, the future of football on Eyre Peninsula has the subject of a number of newspaper articles, reports and focus of club surveys. Ironically these articles, reports etc have consistently raised the same or similar issues indented in the 1985 review including:

- Lop-sided competitions, teams getting consistently beaten by 100+ points
- Shortage of players and inability to retain 15-30 year olds in regional areas
- Technology in farming
- Downturn of rural population
- Amalgamation of teams and leagues
- Spectator decline due to AFL TV coverage
- Travelling distance to games
- Reluctance to change/amalgamate by locals
- The high importance of Football and Netball in country towns
- Shift away from football to other sports

### 3.2. Structure of Sport Discussion Paper – Eyre Peninsula Recreation, Sport and Open Space Strategy 2002

A discussion Paper on the Structure of Sport on Eyre Peninsula was prepared by Phil Gray and Associates in August 2002. The purpose of this Discussion Paper was to review the boundaries of sports competitions, particularly football and netball, and consider alternative structures to traditional home and away competitions.

The discussion paper promoted a revised league structure of four or three league competitions across Eyre Peninsula. As an alternative to revised league structure the concept of a Divisional competition structure was also promoted. This option was based on the USA system, in which each team within a division plays each other on a home and away basis as well as playing teams from other divisions on a rotation basis each year. The two top teams from each league would then play each other for the right to play in an EP major round, five team final format.

Under this concept the existing five leagues on EP could be retained.

### 3.3. Future Direction for the Structure of Australian Rules Football in Ceduna and Surrounding Districts, Discussion Paper - Ceduna Sport, Recreation and Open Space Strategy, 2005

As part of the Ceduna Sport, Recreation and Open Space Strategy, prepared by Collins Anderson Management in association with Tredwell Management, the above mentioned discussion paper was prepared to assist Council in its future deliberations on its role in the management of the league and assist the then recently formed Eyre Peninsula Taskforce in its investigations, in reviewing the future direction of Football on the Eyre Peninsula.

The discussion paper promoted a number of options, including an amalgamation of the Far West and Mid West Football Leagues and the establishment of a central administration structure for EP football.

The discussion paper provided a number of recommendations including:

- That in the short term every effort should be made to keep all four clubs viable and the administration remain with Council and the Independent Commission.
- That Council request that the Eyre Peninsula Football Task Force investigate in detail the possibility of centralising league administration for all five leagues on the Eyre Peninsula.
- That a promotional campaign be developed in conjunction with the SANFL to attract additional people to participate in football in the Far West Football League in particular targeting populations such as the indigenous people in nearby communities.

The discussion paper also promoted the concept of conducting mid season inter-league club competition as a way of vitalising player and spectator interest as well as developing relationships with clubs and officials from neighbouring leagues.

### 3.4. Current League Structure

The Eyre Peninsula Football Zone (or Western Zone), in its current format has 5 leagues and 27 clubs.

#### 3.4.1. Eastern Eyre Football League

The Kimba Districts Football League and the County Jervois Football League merged in 1989 to form the Eastern Eyre Football League. The clubs competing at the time included Cleve, Cowell, Darke Peake-Wadikee, Kimba Districts, Ports and Rudall. Current clubs are;

- Cleve Football Club
- Cowell Football Club
- Kimba Districts Football Club
- Ports Football Club
- Rudall Football Club

### 3.4.2 Great Flinders Football League

Current clubs of the Great Flinders Football League are;

- Cummins Kappine Football Club
- Lock Football Club
- Ramblers Football Club
- Tumby Bay Football Club
- United Yeelanna Football Club
- Eyre United Football Club

### 3.4.3 Mid West Football League

In 1988 the Le Hunte Football League and the Streaky Bay Football League merged to form the Mid-West Football League. Founding clubs were Central Eyre, Elliston, Rovers, Streaky Bay, Western Districts, Wirrulla and Wudinna United. Current clubs of the Mid West Football League are;

- Central Eyre Football Club
- Elliston Football Club
- West Coast Hawks Football Club
- Western Districts Football Club
- Wirrulla Football Club
- Wudinna Football Club

### 3.4.4 Port Lincoln Football League

Current clubs of the Port Lincoln Football League are;

- Boston Football Club
- Lincoln South Football Club
- Mallee Park Football Club
- Marble Range Football Club
- Tasman Football Club
- Wayback Football Club

### 3.4.5 Far West Football League

Current clubs of the Far West Football League are;

- Blues (Smoky Bay and Ceduna) Football Club
- Koonibba Football Club
- Thevernard Football Club
- Western United Football Club

## 4 Consultation and Research Findings

From our discussions with the various league and club officials and key regional stakeholders, it is clear that changes to the structure of football on EP is not something that will be immediately embraced. However, there is a strong recognition that to retain the status quo is not a sustainable option in the medium to longer term.

It was clear from the consultation process and document analysis that many of the issues identified in previous reviews, reports and newspaper articles haven't changed; if anything they have further escalated over the past 20 years. Whilst there were a number of positive aspects identified, there were equally a number of issues identified that could have a negative impact on the future of football on Eyre Peninsula.

Accordingly there are a number of internal and external factors that are having an impact on football within EP. These include sport and recreation trends, demographics and other issues as mentioned above. Each of these trends and issues are discussed below in further depth.

### 4.1 Trends

A wide range of trends have been identified in various sport and recreation strategies developed across South Australia, the majority of these having some impact on local football competitions.

Listed below are the key trends that have a direct influence:

- Changed working arrangements have altered the notion of the traditional working week with people working in the evenings and over the weekend including younger people, thus making it difficult for some people to commit to sports such as football.
- Increasing use of fly in - fly out employment arrangements within the mining sector, coupled with an increase access to a skilled migrant work force.
- There is an increasing range of sport and recreation opportunities available to the community and people are choosing these activities over football.
- Unstructured, adventure-based, electronic based activities (i.e. computer games, mobile phones and the internet) and privately organised activities where volunteering is not required are becoming increasingly popular and affecting participation in more traditional structure sports.

### 4.2 Demographical Analysis

A key factor impacting of the viability of a football club is population. The success of a club will largely depend on the 'pool' of people, namely the total population it can draw on for players, members, volunteers, umpire, runners, trainers etc.

An analysis of the population demographics (refer to Appendix A) indicates that:

- Population on Eyre Peninsula has been static for the last 10 years

- At least half of the Statistical Local Areas (SLA) making up the Eyre Statistical Division (SD) have experienced negative population growth between 1996 and 2006, the other half have experienced positive population growth
- Whyalla has experienced negative population growth
- EP male population peaks at the 5-9 and 35-39 age ranges
- The overall male population in the Eyre region is ageing
- Predicted annual growth for the Eyre Peninsula region is not of a significant magnitude ranging from 0.17% to 0.57%, lower than the current South Australian state annual growth average of 0.6%

#### 4.3 Economic Indicators

There are a number of good indicators from an economic view point, including a potential mining boom and continued increased activity in the seafood and tourism sectors that may have a positive impact for football on EP. However, at the same time, growth in these sectors have also had a major impact on the traditional working week and therefore impacted on the availability of existing and potential football players. The increasing development of fish farming operations have required the establishment of a flexible, 7 day a week workforce and this has limited the availability of individuals who have previously been, are currently or wish to be involved in football, in particular in Port Lincoln and to a lesser degree at Arno Bay.

Whilst Eyre Peninsula is well positioned to take advantage of a likely increasing in mining activities, anecdotal evidence would suggest that significant benefits would be largely gained in the regional towns, mainly Whyalla, Ceduna and to a lesser degree Port Lincoln where service industries can be easily established and serviced. Furthermore it is suggested that to meet on site mining operational requirements an extensive workforce would need to be established and this is likely to include an increased use of a skilled migrant workforce.

Mining and the various associated industries are a 7 day 24 hour operation, involving shift working conditions. While there maybe some influx of potential player numbers, the very nature of these operations will limit their availability to play on a regular basis.

Agriculture has and always will be a significant contributor to the economic wealth of community on Eyre Peninsula, in particular those communities that have limited other economic drivers. During the consultation process concerns were raised that the farming sector may in some areas be facing drought conditions or at best average returns, for the second consecutive year.

#### 4.4 Other Key Issues Impacting on EP Football

The following key issues were identified through the consultation process.

##### 4.4.1 Club Viability

Whilst all clubs want to strive to retain their identity, many are finding it difficult to maintain a strong base from which to achieve a sustainable long term future. It would appear that most clubs believe that they are financially strong many are struggling to maintain a membership, volunteer and/or player base that will enable them to operate successfully over the longer term. Survey results indicate that both player and

membership numbers have remained static across EP over the past five years and it was mostly likely, depending on seasonal and other economic outcomes to remain largely static over the next year years.

#### 4.4.2 League and Club Management

Survey results show that most leagues and clubs believe that they are well managed, a view shared by the players surveyed. However all leagues and most clubs indicated that the administrative requirements of running a football league/club are becoming more complex and time consuming, and as such having a negative impact of attracting appropriately skilled office bearers.

Traditionally football clubs have relied on the number of players, supporters, and volunteers to operate successfully and as the population has dwindled in some areas of EP, extra pressure has been placed on the key drivers within these clubs to do that little bit extra which can eventually lead to burn-out by those people. It is normally from this pool of club administrators that league delegates and office bearers are obtained. This pool of ready made administrators is becoming less and less, with most leagues relying on the good will of existing office bearers to continue in their roles. Likewise the move from club to league administration can also impact on the ability of individual clubs to cover the loss of those personnel who have taken up a league position.

The impact at the club level has been further escalated by an increasing number of males playing on longer so as to sustain adequate player numbers for two senior teams. It has been suggested by some clubs that recently retired players are in some instances choosing to stay away from football, in the likely event that they will be hassled to play 'B' Grade. This is obviously limiting the capacity of those clubs to recruit those persons as potential club administrators and/or volunteers.

Netballers also play a significant role in the ongoing of administration of individual clubs and the need to continually involve and support netball as part of the football package is paramount to the ongoing success of individual clubs.

#### 4.4.3 Facility Standards and Management

Results from the club and player surveys, indicated that the majority of survey respondents are satisfied with current club and playing facilities. However nearly a third of the clubs to respond to the survey also indicated that current facilities would not meet their future needs. Whilst this result is pleasing from a club perspective, it is paramount that clubs are diligent in their management of facilities and ensure that Occupational Health & Safety Standards are met and elements of potential risk well managed.

The consultation process also highlighted a number of clubs are maintaining more than one facility and in some instances this is having a major impact on the financial and personnel well-being of those clubs. It became apparent that these clubs are seeking support in dealing with this often emotional issue.

#### 4.4.4 'B' Grade Competition

There has been an increasing number of forfeits within the 'B' Grade competition, in particular within the Mid West League, where in a recent situation a team would not have played for three weeks due to other team forfeits and finals programming. There is also anecdotal evidence (omissions from individual clubs) that children as young as 12 and 13 are playing 'B' Grade so that clubs can field teams.

Most leagues on Eyre Peninsula have developed processes to assist clubs in fielding two senior teams, in particular 'B' Grade, including limiting the number of players on the field at anyone time (generally 16). However there appears to be little consistency across the EP in the application of this and is mainly left to individual teams to sort out on the day. The use of work permits is also utilised by clubs to increase player numbers from time to time, but again there would appear to be no consistency in how these permits are determined.

#### 4.4.5 Junior development

Generally it would appear that most junior leagues are maintaining reasonably well across EP. Although some clubs appear to have an abundance of junior numbers, a majority of clubs indicate that they have adequate numbers in most grades. However there would appear to be a uneven distribution of both numbers and ability within each league and whilst some leagues have implemented processes to even out competitions, there appears to be an ad-hoc application of these rules/competition understandings. Encouraging ongoing junior participation is paramount and ensuring that there are clear rules for their engagement is critical.

Interestingly the player survey highlighted a number of concern for the ongoing development of junior football, identifying the need for more coaching clinics, visits from high profile players and increased promotion of football to younger members of the community.

As mentioned previously in more recent times children as young as 12 and 13 are playing 'B' Grade. Although it has been quite common for older juniors 15 plus to fill in for 'B' Grade on a regular basis, the development of these juniors must be the foremost consideration when considering playing them in senior competitions.

#### 4.4.6 Participation

Whilst most clubs are able to field a competitive 'A' Grade team, all clubs are struggling to maintain adequate player numbers to field 'B' grade teams. Although the club survey indicated that most clubs had adequate numbers, it is clear from discussions held that these figures in some instances are highly inflated as they include people who have played a single game or play on a very ad-hoc basis.

Football attracts the majority of its participants (primarily male) from the 5-40 years age group. State and national research indicates that approximately 11% of South Australian males play football however anecdotal evidence suggests that this percentage is much higher in country areas, including Eyre Peninsula. As part of the demographical analysis (refer Appendix 1) a number of participation scenarios were developed, based on 22% and 33% participation rates. Interestingly a participation rate of 33% indicated that there are approximately 106 players per club, which is inline with club survey data received. Therefore, if a participation rate of 33% was achieved and maintained this would indicate that there were sufficient senior players (in the 20-39 age group) for two senior teams per club. Interestingly there would appear to be adequate numbers in the 5-14 year age range but much less in the 15-19 year age range which would greatly affect junior competitions in that age group.

This participation rate at best would likely remain static, but due to the trends discussed above could probably decrease. Population projections also suggest the number of people in the 5-40 year age group is likely to decline over the next ten years.

To sustain the existing 27 clubs each with four teams (2 senior and 2 junior) a participation rate of approximately 33% is required, however if the participation rate falls substantially then it will be very difficult to sustain the current number of teams.

The retention of player numbers is even more critical in the smaller leagues, such as Eastern Eyre and Ceduna, where the reduced competition (number of games as well as smaller club numbers) can greatly impact on individuals and their ongoing interest in local football. It should also be pointed out that the participation rate is likely to be less in the larger regional centres, where there is greater diversity of working arrangements, such as shift work etc.

#### 4.4.7 League Structures

From the consultation process anecdotal evidence indicated that at least one club in each league could face possible demise within the next 1 to 3 years. This is further emphasised - should the Eastern Eyre and Far West Leagues lose any one of their current 5 and 4 clubs respectfully - that their ability to sustain a functional and interesting competition will be greatly reduced. The fact that the far West League has been able to continue as a four team competition for as long as they have, is a credit to those involved; however these two leagues are not alone in that most leagues in their current structure would appear to be unsustainable in the longer term.

It is interesting to note that other than the five leagues within EP and the Whyalla Football League, (which leaves sixteen other country football leagues within South Australia), an average of eight teams make up each competition, with only 5 of the sixteen leagues consisting of 6 or less teams.

Given the relatively smaller league sizes across EP any change to club structure within any league would have a dramatic effect to football on EP unless significant league changes were implemented.

Maintaining player vitality is critical in maintaining participation rates across EP and although travel and the cost thereof has been and will continue to be cited as a reason to resist change; carefully planned league structure and competitions could in some instances reduce travel requirements. Increasing the number of team competition in any one league would have the effect of increasing player interest, whilst potentially reducing the amount of times a club would need to travel to the furthest area to play.

As mentioned previously, Netball plays a significant role and is a major component of the whole football scene on EP. Other than the Port Lincoln Football League, Whyalla Football League and to a lesser extent the Far West Football League; netball and football are a package. For appropriate league changes to be implemented, netball competitions must be part of any new league structure and their engagement in any change process is paramount.

#### 4.4.8 Regional Leadership

It became apparent during the consultation process that a significant number of people involved with football on EP recognised the need for a new direction. However it was mentioned on numerous occasions that there does not appear to be a body on EP capable of making the necessary change and that the SANFL is unlikely to step in and provide direction.

Country football throughout South Australia is governed by the Affiliated League Council, with the objectives of:

- Promoting the game generally and in particular fostering harmonious relations between all Affiliated Leagues and Associations.
- Development a State Plan in conjunction with the League for the expansion of football in schools and Clubs.
- Investigate, report and make recommendations to the League upon matters relating to or affecting country and metropolitan football.
- Implement any proposals and plans which the League may determine.
- Conduct Intra-state Championships and other Intra-state country matches for senior players.
- Arrange the participation of a team or teams in National Country Championships and Inter-state Country matches, State Football and Carnival Championship matches.
- Implement a levy which may be decided upon annually to cover development and promotion of the game.

Whilst the Affiliated Leagues Charter may have the ability to recommend and implement a proposal determined by the SANFL, it has been made very clear that neither the Affiliated Leagues Council nor the SANFL will determine the future and structure of any league or club; instead it will assist such league(s) or club(s) achieve their desired outcome, once they have collectively determined a clear direction.

The Affiliated League Council is represented by eight zones of which the EP is known as the Western Zone. The Western Zone Council is a representative body of the five leagues together with the Zone Director. Currently the Zone Council meets a maximum of thrice yearly with the main objective of administering the Mortlock Shield Competition and senior EP representative teams. The Zone Council has (to the author's knowledge) no charter of its own and therefore given the limited role that the Zone Council currently performs, it is likely to continue to be difficult for that body to effectively consider and implement any new direction for football in the future for EP. These comments are not a criticism of the Zone Council or the representative that make up its membership, but rather an observation of the authors, which would appear to be shared by others involved in EP football.

Likewise, junior football on EP is governed by the Western Zone Junior Football Committee - a committee representative of all leagues on EP including Whyalla. Our research would indicate that this committee appears to be functioning very well, however there is no formal link between the Zone Council and the Junior Committee. Given the importance junior football plays in the overall scheme of football on EP, more formal input from that Committee to the Zone Council would be paramount in developing and implementing any new direction for football on EP.

## 5 Key Directions

Given today's changing environment and the various issues facing football on Eyre Peninsula, it is clearly apparent that significant changes are required in the governance, administration and the composition of league structures if we are to achieve a strong position for football on EP in the long term.

As identified in the previous section of this report there are numerous issues that are not unique to any individual league and therefore require a whole of EP solution.

### 5.1. League Structures

The recommendations of the 1985 review, which recommended that the then existing 7 league structure be reduced to a 4 league structure, still has merit today. Although the consultation process indicated that clubs are generally happy with existing league structures, there was also sound support for the existing league structure to be revised and reduced to either four or three leagues across Eyre Peninsula. The consultation process also indicated that Whyalla should join with the EP Zone, initially as their own league.

Given the changes that have occurred since the 1995 review, including club amalgamations and society and demographic changes; any revised league structure must be considered with the longer term picture in mind.

Football on Eyre Peninsula will require a league structure that has enough flexibility to withstand future changes, whilst provide adequate competition and interest to maintain player participation at current levels. Also the need to maintain club identity was consistently raised during the consultation process, with the thought of further club amalgamations not supported.

To achieve the above, whilst considering the bigger picture, there will need to be a minimum of eight initial clubs per league. However there are a number of clubs, given their geographical location, that could align themselves to a couple of potential league structures. However as a starting point the following league structure is proposed for Eyre Peninsula:

#### Proposed EP League Structure

##### League 1:

Boston Football Club	Lock Football Club	Tasman Football Club
Cummins Kappine Football Club	Mallee Park Football Club	Tumby Bay Football Club
Eyre United Football Club	Marble Range Football Club	United Yeelanna Football Club
Lincoln South Football Club	Ramblers Football Club	Wayback Football Club

This provides an initial base of 12 football clubs, although the Lock and United Yeelanna football Clubs could easily fit into the second proposed league below. Obviously the future consideration of netball is important, thus requiring an alignment of netball with the existing port Lincoln based football clubs.

Anecdotal evidence would suggest that this matter is being worked through by the Port Lincoln based clubs and with appropriate negotiations can be resolved to the satisfaction of all parties.

League 2:

Central Eyre Football Club	Kimba Districts Football Club	(possible inclusions could also be Lock and United Yeelanna Football Clubs)
Cleve Football Club	Ports Football Club	
Cowell Football Club	Rudall Football Club	
Elliston Football Club		

League 2 has a minimum 7 potentially 9 initial clubs, depending on where the Lock and United Yeelanna Football Clubs consider what is best for their long term future. Likewise Elliston Football Club may wish consider that alignment with League 1 is more appropriate for their longer term future.

League 3:

Blues (Smoky Bay and Ceduna) Football Club	Thevernard Football Club	Western United Football Club
Koonibba Football Club	West Coast Hawks Football Club	Wirrulla Football Club

League 3 will consist of 8 initial member clubs, although this could be reduced depending on where the Wudinna Football Club would see their future. It is worth noting that recently the Blues Netball Club and Ceduna Netball Club have agreed to amalgamate as from the 2008 season, thus aligning netball with football in the Far West League.

League 4:

Central Whyalla Football Club	Roopena Football Club	Weeroona Bay Football Club
North Whyalla Football Club	South Whyalla Football Club	West Whyalla Football Club

Whilst there has been some talk about the possibility of either or both the Cowell and Kimba Football Clubs joining the Whyalla League, this would appear to be premature at this stage as the Whyalla League would not be able to cater for the needs to the Cowell and Kimba Clubs, particularly regarding to netball competitions.

No doubt that the above proposed league structure will create its fair share of debate and discussion, however it is important that all leagues and their affiliated clubs consider the above options with open minds.

The concept of inter-league, inter-club competition matches was largely supported during the consultation process and is considered an appropriate mechanism to pursue leading into possible league boundary changes or indeed as an alternative to changes to the current league structure.

## 5.2. Governance Structure

Research undertaken strongly indicates a trend towards a more corporate Board structure, in place of the existing representative based structures. The Australian Sports Commission advocates that governance structures need to reflect both the constituency it represents and the complex and changing environment in which organisations now operate.

- Within sports organisations throughout Australia there are currently numerous governance models and structures operating. These include the traditional federal sports system, which comprise boards with membership representation from local club level, to state association level to the national body. However this is being challenged as a result of a number of major reforms, the most high profile being the Soccer Australia reform and more recently, the Affiliated League Council, where there is a move towards more independent governance models with the aim of streamlining governance structures and improving organisational performance. The Western Zone Council will need to review and adopt changes to their governance structures and processes if it is to adapt to the changing environment around them.

Football on Eyre Peninsula will require a governance structure that has clear definition(s) of responsibilities and a real understanding of relationships between the membership (affiliated Leagues) and key stakeholders and those entrusted to manage the organisation and deliver the desired outcomes.

The consultation process highlighted a need for changes to the existing governance structure of the Western Zone Council and the development of a meaningful charter.

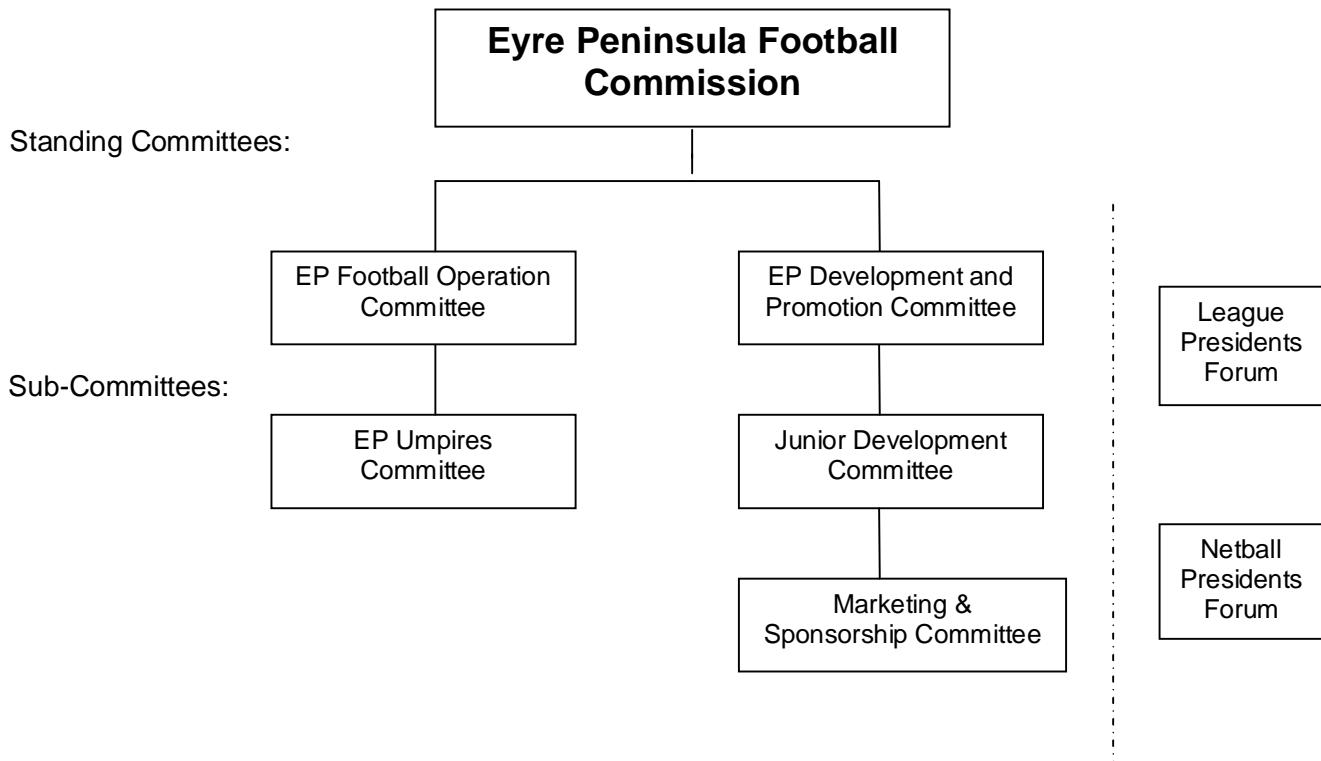
The Aims of the new Governing body would entail the following:

- The arrangement and promotion of Australian Rules Football across the Eyre Peninsula, including the development and implementation of by-laws, the consideration and decisions of all disputes in which any of the leagues shall be concerned, the selection and management of EP representative sides and the provision of administrative support for affiliated leagues and their clubs.

The following governance structure better reflects the needs of the leagues and the sport it supports as identified during our consultation. The new structure will:

- Increase skills and knowledge across a broader range of governance functions
- Increase focus on policy and strategic development
- Improve communication within and external to EP Football
- Provide an appropriate level for debate on operational issues through revised committee structure
- Increase capacity to achieve strategic and operational objectives, through the provision of league Administrators (or similar) position.
- Improve accountabilities with a focus on outcomes

Figure 1 Proposed Revised Governance Structure



### 5.2.1 Revised Governance Structure

#### Eyre Peninsula Football Commission

- Membership
  - 1 Independent Commissioner appointed by each individual league (minimum 4, maximum 6)
  - 2 Independent Commissioners selected by Commission
  - Zone Director ex-officio
- Standing Committees
  - Minimum 2, maximum 4 Commissioners
  - Chair of each Sub-Committee
- Sub-Committees
  - As appointed through nominations from Affiliated Leagues or appointed by the Commission (It is proposed that the current Western Zone Junior Committee would form the Junior Development Committee)

- Skills and Knowledge Required
  - Governance management
  - Football experience
  - Sports administration
  - Strategic/ business planning
  - Financial management
  - Marketing
  - Communication and public relations
  - Legal knowledge
  - Leadership Skills
  - Communication skills

### Roles and Responsibilities

- Eyre Peninsula Football Commission
  - Governance
    - Policy and Procedures
    - Internal audit
    - Compliance
  - Corporate Management
    - Management guidance
    - Risk Management Strategy
  - Strategic/Business Planning
    - Development and Review
  - Competition Management
    - Evaluation and Review
    - Promotions
  - Financial Management
    - Financial control and monitoring
    - Sponsorships, Levies and Grants
    - Compliance
  - External and Internal Communications
    - Communication Strategy
    - Public relations and marketing
  - Stakeholder Relationships
    - President Forums
    - Other Stakeholder (SANFL/AFL etc) interaction

- EP Football Operation Committee
  - Competition evaluation & review
    - § By-Law development
    - § Umpires
    - § Training & development of officials
    - § Participation
  - Mortlock Shield Carnival
  - Inter-League matches (senior)
  - EP Representative sides (Senior)
- EP Development and Promotions Committee
  - Player Development (senior/junior)
  - Training & development programs for officials and volunteers
  - Liaison with Port Adelaide Magpies & AFL clubs regarding promotions
  - Junior inter-league competitions & EP representative sides
  - Development & review of Marketing and Sponsorship Strategy

#### Length of Tenure

- Eyre Peninsula Football Commission
  - Affiliated Leagues appointed Commissioners 2 years on rotational basis; 50% in, 50% out
  - Independent Commissioners fixed 2 year term
- Standing Committees & Sub-Committee
  - As determined by Commission, in accordance with rotational policy.

#### Meeting Frequency

- Eyre Peninsula Football Commission
  - By-monthly with additional meetings as required
  - Four monthly League Presidents forum
  - Annual Netball Presidents Forum
- Standing Committees & Sub-Committee
  - Monthly during season, bi-monthly thereafter or as required

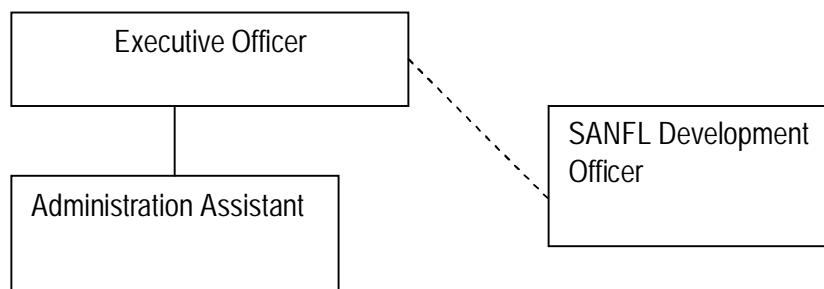
#### Quorum

- Eyre Peninsula Football Commission
  - 50% + one
- Standing Committees & Sub-Committee
  - As determined by Commission

### 5.2.2 Management Structure

To support the governance structure; implement the necessary organisational management changes; effectively implement the decisions of the Commission; provide administrative support to the Commission, Standing Committees and Sub-committees, as well as the affiliated leagues and associated clubs; adequate resources need to be put in place. The following management structure is therefore proposed.

Figure 2 Proposed Management Structure



The main feature of the proposed management structure is the employment of an Executive Officer and Administration Officer as well as an alignment of the SANFL Development Officer with the Commission. Conditions of employment, skill requirements and key responsibilities of the Executive Officer and Administration Officer roles are:

#### Executive Officer

- Appointment
  - Part Time 0.75 FTE
  - Performance based contract
- Skills and Knowledge
  - Sport Administration
  - Strategic and Business Planning
  - Strategic Management and Leadership
  - Commercial acumen
  - Marketing and promotions
- Roles and Responsibilities
  - Governance Support
    - High level policy and program advice
    - Compliance
  - Administration Management
    - Procedures and Processes
    - Player transfers / permits / registrations / insurances etc
    - Records
    - IT systems

- Strategic and Business Planning
  - Planning framework
  - Implementation
- Financial Management
  - Budget preparation and monitoring
  - Financial Reporting
  - Obtaining of sponsorships, grants and other revenue streams
- Internal and External Communications
  - Communication strategy
  - Public relations, marketing and promotions
  - Financial Reporting
  - Implementation
- Reporting relationship
  - Commission Chairman

#### Administration Officer

- Appointment
  - Part Time 0.50 FTE
- Skills and Knowledge
  - Administration processes and procedures
  - High level competency with Microsoft products
  - Bookkeeping knowledge and experience
  - Sound communication skills
- Roles and Responsibilities
  - Office Administration
    - Word processing
    - Records management
    - Administrative assistance
  - Bookkeeping
    - Accounts payable
    - Accounts receivable
    - Payroll
    - Data entry
- Reporting relationship
  - Executive Officer

Whilst the Commission would need to source funds to engage the Executive Officer and Administration Assistant, adequate funds could be sourced through the re-direction of some funds used to pay existing league secretariat positions, application of an affiliation fee or player levy, transaction (transfer/permit) fees

as well as AFL/SANFL assistance. It is envisaged that the existing role of the League Secretary and to a lesser degree the Club Secretary would be greatly reduced.

Furthermore, it would be expected that this position would over time be predominately self funding through activities that would increase commission revenue such as sponsorship, commissions and transaction revenue, grants and other revenue raising activities.

## 6 Strategic Outcomes

The following section identifies the strategic outcomes and supporting strategies required to ensure a quantum change for the football on Eyre Peninsula and the achievement of a sustainable future. Supporting strategies have been classified as either:

- Critical (C)
- Essential (E)
- Desirable (D)

*Outcome 1: Viable clubs operation in a strong football competition across Eyre Peninsula*

This will be achieved by:

- 1.1 Providing clubs with the management tools to maintain and enhance management performance of their clubs (E)
- 1.3 Promoting best practice in volunteer recruitment, management and retention throughout the sport. (E)
- 1.3 Ensuring that planning for succession is in place at all levels (D)
- 1.3 Developing systems and processes that streamline the administrative processes at league and club level (D)
- 1.3 Ensuring a regional focus to sponsorship and grant revenue streams (E)
- 1.3 Encouraging clubs in collaboration with local government to rationalise dual facilities where appropriate (D)
- 1.3 Implementing standard player registration, clearance and permit rules and processes (C)
- 1.3 Developing coaches, trainers and umpires at all levels through well structured accreditation programs and ongoing learning opportunities (C)
- 1.3 Broadening the appeal of football through well developed promotional programs (C)

*Outcome 2: Sustainable and equitable league structures*

This will be achieved by:

- 2.1 Reducing the number of leagues on Eyre Peninsula from 5 to 3 over the next 3 years (C)
- 3.1 Introducing a inter-league, inter-club competition as part of the 2008 season (D)

- 4.1 Inviting the Whyalla League into the Western Zone (D)
- 5.1 Investigating mechanism, including recruitment zones to achieve a more equitable spread of player numbers across clubs (D)
- 6.1 Ensuring junior competitions have clear focus on player participation, development and enjoyment (E)
- 7.1 Introducing standard conditions for 'B' Grade competition including limiting the number of on-field players to 16 (E)

*Outcome 3: A strong regional body guiding the development of football on Eyre Peninsula*

This will be achieved by:

- 3.1 Establishment of an Eyre Peninsula Football Commission. (C)
- 4.1 Development of a charter including (C)
  - a. Powers
  - b. Sources of revenue
  - c. Membership conditions
  - d. Executive Committee
  - e. Voting
- 5.1 Establishment of a management structure to support commission, league and club operations. (E)
- 6.1 Development of a business plan for Commission operations (E)
- 7.1 Actively seeking funding from the SANFL for commission operations (C)
- 8.1 Pursing grant, sponsorship and other revenue raising activities as appropriate (E)
- 9.1 Ensuring structured and regular communications with affiliated leagues, clubs, regional sporting associations and other key stakeholders (C)

## 7 Conclusions

The key directions, strategic outcomes and strategies highlighted in this discussion paper reflect accurately the requirements for a sustainable future for football on Eyre Peninsula. The strategies address a range of issues identified in the comprehensive consultation process undertaken.

Football on Eyre Peninsula has a long and successful history, however the events of the past twenty years has seen a number of changes in club and league structures. Consultation has reinforced the importance of football to the diverse communities of Eyre Peninsula. This discussion paper however, suggests that for football to retain its position as the premium sporting and social pastime, then it must become more focused, dynamic and innovative.

Whilst it is important that the suggested strategies in this paper are implemented; to achieve the desired long term future for football on the Eyre Peninsula, it is of paramount importance that the governance of football across the Eyre Peninsula is addressed, otherwise the capability to implement change will be limited.