



134th Annual General Meeting: President's Report 2018

Thank you to everyone for your ongoing support of the Fitzroy Football Club.

I have great pleasure in presenting this report highlighting many positives on and off field.

Football results

What a great year we've had and continue to have. Last year in the 2017 President's report I expressed our confidence that, under the leadership of our new Senior Coach Luke Mahoney with Michael Pickering as Senior Assistant Coach, ably assisted by our full band of talented coaches, our teams would reach their full potential and we'd rise again to Premier B in 2019!

That was a bold prediction but as it turned out we were right to have full faith in Luke, the coaching team and the players, who have had the ultimate success this year with the two Premier C premierships.

The Board shares the delight of our fans that we have bounced straight back to Premier B for 2019 – the highest men's division this club has played in the VAFA – and have delivered the first senior premiership since the merger of the Fitzroy Football Club and the Fitzroy Reds. After 10 years I see it as a mark of growth and maturity, and the start of a modern era of success for the great Fitzroy Football Club. The greatest delight was perhaps reserved for the original Fitzroy fans who tasted success in a senior premiership for the first time since 1944.

I am immensely proud of the way all of our people have conducted themselves over the last 12 months, to revitalize the club. A strong culture and commitment to support one another is what helps achieve success.

Three grand final teams – and four finalists - from six is a pretty fair achievement, but perhaps what makes me even more proud is the way all of our teams have supported one another with total commitment this year.

What a sight to see that hill behind the goals at Elsternwick Park packed with red, yellow and blue as our Premier Reserves Women played in their first grand final (in their first year in the Premier Reserves competition). The Roy Girls may not have achieved the ultimate prize, but it was beautiful nevertheless and they will be better for the experience. Behind the scenes, there was total support from the Senior women and their coaching team, who filled all the on and off field volunteer roles in the finals and made signs and costumes the likes of which our opposition have never seen! Their desire to get the Senior Fitzroy-ACU side back into finals is burning all the stronger from having watched their fellow Roy Girls from the sidelines throughout the finals.

The way the Under 19s have kept the faith and continued giving their all each week, striving to do the best for the club – they are such an important part of our future and we are delighted to have appointed four-time Colts premiership coach with the Fitzroy Juniors, Monty Stuart, to take this ambition forward.

With over 78 players pulling on the jumper for the Thirds, they went one further than last year and made a preliminary final, ultimately missing the grand final by just seven points. They have plenty to look forward to next year.

What can I say about the Seniors and Reserves that hasn't already been said? Two wonderful and contrasting performances to take the ultimate prize of a premiership, led beautifully by strong coaches and leadership groups. Word has it we pulled in the two biggest gate takings across the VAFA finals series.

The commitment of the teams to get in behind their new coaches and give 100 per cent to the cause and the club has been so good to see. Congratulations to Luke Mahoney, Bernie Carter and Simon Jackson – three head coaches in their first seasons taking teams to grand finals (and beyond). That is an incredible effort.

At the end of any season there are also some sad moments. We are saying farewell and thank you to outgoing coaches Michael Pickering (who has been with us in various coaching roles for seven seasons), Mick Symons, Sam Bishop and Greg Coleman, who have significant commitments outside of the club at this time.

I am pleased to report we have been able to fill the coaching roles with some high quality people who have a diverse array of talents to help us better understand the modern game.

I am also delighted with the appointment of the father/daughter team of Gray and Maeve Barton to be Fitzroy-ACU Senior Women's Coach and Senior Women's Assistant Coach in 2019. It is another success

story in the relationship and growing connections between the junior and senior clubs and it is wonderful to have a young female stepping into our coaching ranks.

Coupled with off-field wins

Off field we have had some very significant wins too, which are crucial to the long-term viability of our club.

There has been some magnificent work going on with the Edinburgh Gardens Sporting Community – ourselves, the Fitzroy Junior Football Club, the Fitzroy Tennis Club and Edinburgh Cricket Club – which is starting to have an enormous impact.

The State Government, the City of Yarra and the Clifton Hill/North Fitzroy Community Bank Branch announced a commitment of \$50,000 each – \$150,000 in total – towards the planning, scoping work and design of proposed community facilities at Brunswick Street Oval to benefit the sporting clubs of the Edinburgh Gardens Sporting Community and the wider Fitzroy community.

This now looks to be an incredible precursor to something even bigger, with State Planning Minister, and member for Richmond, Richard Wynne, promising that a re-elected Andrews Labor Government would fund the redevelopment of the community facilities to the tune of \$6.5 million.

We will now seek to work closely with our Edinburgh Gardens Sporting Community partners, the State Government, the City of Yarra and the local community to deliver a wonderful new community facility for the people of Fitzroy, for the sporting community and most particularly for our players and members. This has the prospect of revolutionising the way we run our club and enable all of our Edinburgh Gardens Sporting Community partners to fully realise a permanent home and keep pace with the growth in demand and changing demographics of North Fitzroy and surrounds.

State Government Pick my Project funding of \$150,000, will see us working with the City of Yarra to install upgraded lighting at Ramsden St to deliver significantly improved training facilities for our women players, plus improved lighting and an electronic scoreboard at BSO.

Today you will also hear that we have posted a healthy profit, which is wonderful but we will need to build it further and add to our sponsorships to realise our aspirations to be a Premier club.

Sponsors

Thank you to all our sponsors; we can't do this without you.

It was our particular delight to share our premiership wins with the Royal Derby Hotel, Jellis Craig and FitzroyIT, who all continue to back us as major long-term sponsors.

The partnership with ACU has also been crucial to the success of our women's football program and this year they have expanded their interest to the Under 19s team.

We have already outlined a significant commitment from the Clifton Hill/North Fitzroy Community Bank Branch and they also support us as a long-term sponsor of the football club, as do the teams at the Fitzroy Victoria Bowling Sports Club and the APS Benefits Group.

The support we enjoy also comes from the Reds Foundation, who continue to support the funding of the D-Squad and the Redlow trophies. The sponsorship with das Pilates is important to the physical strength and rehab of our players.

And this year you've all enjoyed the new Risk Care Roundup weekly highlights videos, brought to you by Risk Care Financial Services.

Social and community

We continued our strong calendar of social and community events, to bring the Fitzroy Football Club community together and further acknowledge our major sponsors.

The game-day lunches this year featured sell-outs with Dr Susan Alberti AC, and Barrie Cassidy and Ged Kearney headed the Reds Foundation political lunch.

We kicked off the season with the traditional lunch featuring the senior men's coach, Luke Mahoney, and the Reds Foundation followed with an all-star panel talking about the shenanigans in Australian men's cricket, featuring journalists and writers Megan Husthwaite, Gideon Haigh and Richard Hinds.

Fitzroy superstar, Mick Conlon, comedian Dave O'Neill (Rotary lunch) and the team from Veterans in Construction gave us entertainment as well as something to think about.

And our traditional Women in Footy Lunch was hosted by Megan Husthwaite, who brought the best out of the player panel: former Brisbane Lions and now North Melbourne AFLW star, Kaitlyn Ashmore, and former Roy Girls Hilary Grubb (Collingwood VFLW) and Ash Riddell (Mugars and now North Melbourne AFLW).

On top of this, we ran a number of player and member events including the season launch, the Reds Ball Boat Cruise, the Bowling Lions bowls day at the Fitzroy Victoria Bowling Sports Club, the Fitzroy FC Golf Day, a trivia night and Mystery Ball games night.

The Fitzroy Thirds ran another successful fan day at Ramsden Street and the Redlow attracted a record crowd of 220 people – the largest attendance yet.

Highlights

Some of the 2018 Club highlights included:

- Premierships in Premier C Men's and Premier C Men's Reserves
- A grand final appearance for the Fitzroy-ACU Reserves
- A preliminary final appearance for Fitzroy's Thirds
- 163 males and 71 females pulled on the Fitzroy Football Club jumper during season 2018
- Five Fitzroy-ACU players making it onto VFLW lists: Alexa Madden at Essendon; Hilary Grubb, Sarah King and Paige Nash at Collingwood; and Tori Tonin at Richmond
- Gaining enough votes to be awarded \$150,000 for the State Government Pick My Project submission entitled, 'Giving women equal opportunity to play footy in Yarra'
- The continuing loyalty of long-term major sponsors the Royal Derby Hotel, Jellis Craig and FitzroyIT
- The addition of new and expanded sponsorship and partnership arrangements with ACU, Risk Care Financial Services, Bontempo Pizzeria
- The overall value of our sponsorships was in excess of \$53,000 (plus the partnership with ACU and in-kind contributions from other sponsors).
- The running of a successful Brunswick Street Bash with the Brisbane Lions in the pre-season, netting the club additional revenue and cementing our cooperative relationship into the future
- The seamless senior men's captaincy handover from Rory Angiolella to Julian Turner
- Max Ellis and Tom O'Donnell playing in the Big V rep team
- Rory Angiolella finishing second in the Premier C best and fairest and Erin Gogerly finishing top 10 in the Premier Women's best and fairest
- Thirds captain Tim de Natris topping the VAFA Thirds Section 2 goal kicking
- A crop of original Roy Girls hit the 50-game milestone with Fitzroy-ACU
- In April, 15 of our players, coaches, members and volunteers also participated in the St Vincent's Hospital Fun Run raising over \$2000
- Our media coverage stepped up a notch in a successful season, and in many highlights Luke Mahoney featured as the most listened to episode of the VAFA's new podcast, *For the Love of the Game*
- An appearance on Channel 9 news after the grand final victory wasn't bad either
- The addition of the weekly video round up of the Senior games with the Risk Care Round up
- Our own coverage was acknowledged too with club photographer Phyllis Quealy and Director Gabrielle Murphy taking out two of the VAFA's four inaugural media awards; best photograph (character of the game) and best feature story
- The website continued to provide a valuable platform, thanks to FitzroyIT, with over 213,000 page views for the year and transacting over \$100,000 in subs, player gear, memberships, event bookings and shop sales (from November 2017 to November 2018)
- Maintaining our position as the most-followed club in the VAFA on social media platforms Facebook and Twitter and adding our Instagram and LinkedIn accounts – altogether over 7,800 followers (growth of 20 per cent on last year).

Thanks yous and next steps

On behalf of the Board, I'd like to say thank you to our 2018 coaching staff and trainers across all our six teams.

Our greatest thanks to our loyal band of volunteers, without whom we could not survive, let alone thrive as the most envied club in the VAFA. You've all played your part and we couldn't have done it without you. When the VAFA talked about a campaign to promote volunteering earlier this year, which club did they turn to? And we are not surprised.

Thank you also to my wonderful Board, who deliver so much for this Club, and to Kevin Sharp who steps down from his role as Sponsorship Director as of this meeting. He has been instrumental in extending the partnership with the ACU and in helping ensure a profitable result this year.

As a Board we will be furthering our strategic planning process. Today we will be adding four new Board members which is wonderful. We will still be working to fill the full Board complement of 10. We are also always on the lookout for new volunteers and the right mix of people to ensure this club keeps getting better, stronger and more sustainable and that we can deliver on our plans.

If you know anyone interested, please refer them to any one of the Directors.

We will continue working to recruit a Coaching Director to help put a solid support structure around our coaches to help guide the Fitzroy football style.

What we should never lose sight of is everything that makes our Club great. At our core we are a proud and loyal football family playing an important role in our community.

It would be hard to top 2018 but we will keep pushing to be a bigger, stronger and better community football club in 2019.

Joan Eddy
President,
Fitzroy Football Club (Incorporating the Fitzroy Reds)