Player development is a strong competitive differentiator. It also has a significant impact on club reputation. With the Workplace Culture Survey, we wanted to create a ‘race to the top’, where clubs are striving for this competitive and reputational advantage. Clubs that are taking effective action deserve recognition.

Brett Johnson
General Manager – Player Development

At the AFL Players’ Association we believe in helping players to truly maximise their time in football and ensuring the terms and conditions of their employment are in line with the contribution players make to the game. That means matching each and every player with the opportunities that reflect their personal strengths, interests and capabilities.

An AFL career has the potential to set players up for life. But post-football opportunities don’t just materialise overnight – the foundations are set early in playing careers and rely on industry support along the way.

To this end, the Association aims to deliver a truly ‘First Class Sporting Workplace’ for players – ensuring that players work in a professional environment that promotes sporting excellence and long term personal growth and wellbeing.

The development of supportive structures, resources and cultures are key to delivering on this aim. During the year we have worked diligently to deliver a range of initiatives that are crucial to maximising the effectiveness of these three drivers.

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2014 INCLUDE:

- Achieving a number of significant improvements to industry arrangements and benefits for players, including:
  - increased player payments and funding for the Player Retirement Scheme;
  - the revival of an industry Occupational Health and Safety Committee;
  - the establishment of a Committee and funding to explore a Lifetime Health Care Program for past players;
  - a commitment from clubs to ensure all players have player development action plans and to report to their Boards on player development outcomes.
- The development and launch of the MAX360 resource.
- Winning a $3 million grant together with the Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre as part of the Movember Foundation’s Australian Mental Health Initiative.
- The review, restructure and launch of the revised financial literacy program offering.
- The development and launch of the Executive Certificate in Player Development.
- A significant improvement in the results of the second Annual Workplace Culture survey.

The focus for the year ahead will continue to centre on our three key drivers:

01. STRUCTURE
Working in partnership with the AFL and clubs to provide best practice work / life balance for AFL players.

02. RESOURCES
Enhancing and building our program and services to support clubs and players.

03. CULTURE
Influencing best practice culture through the implementation of best practice research.

Whether it’s about empowering players, on-boarding new players faster and more effectively, raising current on-field performance or developing capabilities to succeed in the future, player development is key.

We look forward to continuing to develop our players as people – not just as athletes – and expanding our focus on fostering a truly first-class sporting workplace for all.

Brett Johnson
General Manager – Player Development

Ian Prendergast
General Manager – Player Relations
STRUCTURE

01.

A structure that supports and prioritises long-term personal growth and wellbeing is pivotal to ensuring players maximise their opportunities whilst in the game.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT

A Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) was delivered for players in 2012 following extensive negotiation by the Association. The Association works to actively monitor and review the package of player benefits to ensure improvements in personal growth and wellbeing continue.

MID-TERM COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT REVIEW


The current CBA, which will continue until the end of the 2016, achieved substantial gains towards the delivery of a first class sporting workplace. Amongst other things, the CBA saw the introduction of full time Player Development Managers at all clubs, the availability of a four-hour professional/personal development block for all players and the introduction of the first ever Player Retirement Annuity Scheme in Australian sport.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT

A Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) was delivered for players in 2012 following extensive negotiation by the Association. The Association works to actively monitor and review the package of player benefits to ensure improvements in personal growth and wellbeing continue.

With the help of players – including many at the bargaining table with the AFL and club representatives – the Association achieved these objectives through negotiating significant improvements to industry arrangements and benefits for players. Improvements included:

- Increases in total player payments (TPP) of $150,000 in 2015 and 2016, above the 3% rises already negotiated (an extra $5.4 million for players over two years).
- Increases in TPP minimum payments and allowances.
- Payment of $7 million (already committed) to the Player Retirement (annuity) Scheme.
- The ability for clubs to average 95% of TPP across three years (meaning more delivered to players).
- AFL acknowledgement of the link between TPP and competitive balance.
- The revival of an industry Occupational Health and Safety Committee.
- The establishment of a Committee and $1 million funding to explore a Lifetime Health Care Program for past players.
- A commitment from clubs to ensure all players have player development action plans and to report to their Boards on player development outcomes.
- Proposing the introduction of minimum medical standards.
- Improvements to other benefits, including tools of trade, travel, tickets and compensation for delisted players who can’t work due to a football injury.

Notwithstanding these gains, both the AFL and the Association recognised the need for a mid-term review, given the length of the CBA and the rapidly evolving nature of our industry. The AFL and the Players’ Association completed the review guided by the following objectives:

- To deliver first class sporting workplaces that reflect the professionalism of our game and elite status of our players.
- To remain the top sporting code on and off the field regarding the support and protection players receive.
- To provide equal opportunity for players through delivery of minimum standards.
- To improve and build on existing industry arrangements for the benefit of players and the game.
A key outcome of the mid-term CBA review was the revival of a Player Occupational Health and Safety Committee. A joint initiative between the AFL and the Association, the purpose of the Committee is to consider, report upon and, where appropriate, provide recommendations in relation to health and safety issues relevant to the AFL and second tier competitions in which AFL players compete.

The primary objectives of the Committee are to:
- Discuss and assist in the ongoing review of measures taken to protect the health, safety and welfare of AFL players.
- Recommend to the AFL measures to promote occupational health and safety in relation to AFL players.
- Investigate any matter that may present a risk to the occupational health or safety of AFL players so that the risk may be eliminated/reduced to extent reasonably practicable.

Issues that may be considered by the Committee include:
- Standard and safety of playing surfaces and venues
- Stadium facilities
- Security issues
- Travel issues
- Injury management
- Concussion protocols
- Heat and other weather guidelines for playing and training
- Medical facilities, standards and services.

The Committee will meet quarterly and will consist of three AFL nominees, two AFL club nominees, six Association nominees, an AFL Doctors’ Association nominee and an independent Chairperson.

The Association has identified a need for a greater strategic focus and direction in the player development space. In line with all other areas of football business, it is the Association’s firm belief that club Boards should set strategic imperatives in the player development area and require the club to report back on progress and performance.

To identify trends and needs across a playing group and monitor individual progress, the Association developed the new MAX360 resource during the year.

MAX360 is the first of its kind, developed to help simplify how a player’s journey is tracked and maximise their personal growth throughout all areas of life. The resource is also an excellent starting point for club Boards to more strategically direct endeavours in this area.

In football’s highly competitive marketplace, it is hoped that MAX360 will lead to self-regulation by clubs looking for a performance edge.
ANNUAL PLAYER SURVEY INSIGHTS

To assist in monitoring industry provision of CBA entitlements, the Association conducts an annual survey of the playing group at every club.

Survey results for 2014 indicated a significant decrease in the percentage of players expected to report back to the club during their annual leave period via, for example, GPS, tracking with apps, results of time trials.

The number of players who did not feel supported by their club to utilise the four-hour block of time given each week for off-field development had also improved.

Over a quarter of players were still reporting that they were expected to come into the club more often than not on their weekly day off – a focus for the Association in 2015.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRUCTURAL DRIVER</th>
<th>2014 total club average (%)</th>
<th>2013 total club average (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Players expected to report back to the club during their annual leave period</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(via GPS, tracking with apps, results of time trials etc.)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Players who DO NOT feel supported by their club to utilise the 4-hour block of</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time each week for off-field development.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Players who reported that ‘YES’ they’re expected to come into the club more</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>often than not on their weekly day off.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PLAYER DEVELOPMENT MANAGERS

Player Development Managers play a crucial role in the modern football workplace - ensuring player personal development and wellbeing remains a priority in an environment of high performance demands and increased pressure.

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT MANAGER POSITIONS 2014

In accordance with the CBA, all players are entitled to access a full-time, fully qualified Player Development Manager with no competing football responsibilities. As at the end of 2014, all clubs continued to meet this minimum requirement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLUB</th>
<th>REPRESENTATIVE</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adelaide Crows</td>
<td>Emma Bahr</td>
<td>Player Development Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane Lions</td>
<td>Aliesha Whitelock, Manny Lynch</td>
<td>Player Welfare &amp; Education Coordinator, Head of Welfare, Leadership &amp; Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlton</td>
<td>James Golds</td>
<td>Player Development &amp; Wellbeing Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collingwood</td>
<td>Christian Stagliano, David Stiff</td>
<td>Player Development Manager, Player Wellbeing Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essendon</td>
<td>Ash Brown</td>
<td>Player Development Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fremantle</td>
<td>Liam Casson</td>
<td>Player Development Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geelong</td>
<td>David Johnson</td>
<td>Player Development Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold Coast SUNS</td>
<td>Simon Fletcher, Sam Coen</td>
<td>Player Development Manager, Player Welfare Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GWS GIANTS</td>
<td>Craig Lambert</td>
<td>Player Welfare Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawthorn</td>
<td>Jason Burt, Ross Monaghan, Nicky Couston</td>
<td>Football Administration &amp; Player Welfare Services, Player Development Manager, Player Welfare &amp; Development Mentor - part time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne Demons</td>
<td>Andrew Nichol</td>
<td>Player Development Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Melbourne</td>
<td>Neil Connell</td>
<td>Player Welfare Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Port Adelaide</td>
<td>Marcus Drum</td>
<td>Player Welfare &amp; Development Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>Bronwyn Doo</td>
<td>Player Development Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Kilda</td>
<td>Tony Brown, Billyroo Rust</td>
<td>Player Welfare Manager, Player Welfare Assistant - part time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney Swans</td>
<td>Dennis Carroll</td>
<td>Player Welfare &amp; Development Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Coast Eagles</td>
<td>Ian Miller</td>
<td>Player Services Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Bulldogs</td>
<td>Brent Premaul</td>
<td>Player Wellbeing Coordinator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IN THE MODERN FOOTBALL WORKPLACE, PLAYER DEVELOPMENT HAS BECOME RELEVANT TO:

- **ON-BOARDING**: inducting new recruits and reducing time to competency.
- **PERFORMANCE**: both on and off the field.
- **SKILLS DEVELOPMENT**: developing existing and future skill sets.
- **CAREER ADVANCEMENT**: during and post-football.
- **CLUB CAPABILITY**: where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.
- **WELLBEING**: optimising player thriving and life performance and managing individual player development action plans.
- **DIVERSITY**: building inclusive environments that promote diversity and respect differences.
- **ETHICAL LEADERSHIP**: ensuring players are capable and compliant in their ability to make good decisions on and off the field, and champion the interests of the game.
- **RETENTION**: providing environments that players want to be a part of.

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT MANAGER FORUMS

Two Player Development Manager Forums were held during the year, with representation from all clubs at the January Forum and 17 clubs at the July Forum.

The agenda for the January Forum included:
- Utilising iTunesU and iBooks to communicate player development resources.
- Details on the revamped financial education and literacy program.
- An update on the Collective Model of Player Development concept (MAX360).
- Key findings from the University of Melbourne’s research into culture, environments and risk behaviours in AFL footballers.
- An update on AFL SportsReady’s Next Goal programs.
- Information on the AFL Players’ Alumni and the Players’ Trust.

The focus for the July Forum was on player empowerment, with the Association welcoming Sir Graham Henry – ex All Blacks coach and one of the most successful rugby coaches of all time. Graham gave a presentation on the importance of individualisation and empowering players in regards to their own development.

The agenda also included:
- Introducing the concept of the new MAX360 resource and experience of pilot clubs (refer to resource details on page 17).
- Encouraging Player Development Manager involvement in the development of MAX360.
- Player Development Manager tips on relocation strategies, timetabling, utilising the four-hour professional development block and inducting new recruits.

Player Development Managers were encouraged to change the ‘preparing for life after football’ narrative, to ‘assisting players to maximise the opportunities that an AFL career provides’. This philosophy incorporates both a player’s on-field performance and also their holistic growth and development as people.

A further education session on this philosophy and the MAX360 resources was delivered to Player Development Managers at the official MAX360 launch in November.
Moving forward it will be crucial for Player Development Managers to not only support and drive development outcomes of players, but to champion the interests of development and wellbeing as a respected part of a football program.

In order to do this, Player Development Managers will need to be knowledgeable about the industry and have developed their skills to a level where they can drive and lead change in the development of the off-field development culture at their clubs.

Marissa Fillipou
Player Development and Engagement Manager

EXECUTIVE CERTIFICATE IN PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

Following extensive research and stakeholder discussions, the AFL Players’ Association proudly launched their Executive Certificate in Player Development in September.

Delivered by AFL SportsReady, the Executive Certificate in Player Development course aims to educate and inform participants on current best practice models for developing athletes holistically in an elite sporting environment.

In addition to a focus on the AFL environment, a core benefit of the Player Development course is the ability for the developed skill sets to be transferrable to other sports.

The course requires attendance at a three-day intensive program, completion of online case studies and written assessments.

Upon successful completion, students are eligible for one subject credit in La Trobe University’s Master of Management (Sport Management).

High performing Player Development Managers bring a range of skills, life and sporting experiences to the role. The course will help hone and further develop these skills, and set in place the knowledge required to understand the AFL industry as a whole.

Presenters of the course included: industry leaders in the areas of Player Development and Wellbeing; player agents; current players; Player Development Managers; a selection of AFL industry personnel; and AFL General Manager of Football Operations, Mark Evans.

EXECUTIVE CERTIFICATE IN PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

Player Development Manager at the Adelaide Crows, Emma Bahr, was one of 23 who completed the AFL Players’ Association Executive Certificate in Player Development.

While already being in her second year in the Player Development Manager role with the Crows, Bahr was impressed with what the three-day intensive course, presented by AFL SportsReady, had to offer.

“The training days were fantastic. They reinforced the on-the-ground knowledge we already have as PDMs and exposed us to the full range of developmental services available to every club through the AFL Players’ Association,” Bahr said.

“It was also great to have every Player Development Manager in the one location to share their tips and hints of the trade as we worked through the topics that help develop the player holistically, not just as an athlete.”

With a background in vocational rehabilitation with the Defence Force, Bahr has brought a unique yet relevant skill set to the Crows and is enjoying the variety of challenges she is presented with on a daily basis.

“The course really concreted our existing knowledge and demonstrated what other resources are available to us as PDMs - I found the culture awareness program to be a real standout,” Bahr said.

With the Executive Certificate in Player Development course now developed and implemented, and having received such outstanding feedback, AFL SportsReady will be running the course on an annual basis.

“The course is definitely a great starting point for any new PDMs joining the AFL. It will cement their knowledge of the role and what is available to them right from the beginning and is an ideal way to be inducted into the position,” said Bahr.

While the Player Development aspect of the game is relatively new, it is becoming an increasingly important focus of the Players’ Association, ensuring that each and every player is able to maximise the opportunities available to them.

“Key to my role is understanding that the needs of each player are different, so it’s important we have the necessary skills to identify opportunities for growth and development, as well as the tools to make the players’ goals a reality,” Bahr said.

“There is nothing more satisfying than seeing the boys put in the hard yards off-field, only to see their on-field performance improve.”

Emma Bahr
Player Development Manager, Adelaide Crows
FREE AGENCY

Following strong advocacy from the Association and robust discussion with industry stakeholders, the AFL agreed to introduce Free Agency at the end of the 2012 season. Prior to this, the AFL was the only elite professional sport in the world without Free Agency rights for players.

The Association fought for Free Agency for a range of reasons, including:
- To ensure players had a genuine choice where they play after providing a reasonable period of service to their club and the industry.
- To address the imbalance created through significant player restraints that help to balance the competition.

Benefits of Free Agency

LIST MANAGEMENT
- Clubs have taken a more aggressive approach to list management and have the ability to rebuild more quickly than through drafting and trading players

TRUE LOYALTY
- Introduce the concept of “true loyalty” based on Free Agents having a genuine choice to stay or go

FIRST CLASS WORKPLACE
- Increased focus on clubs delivering a first class sporting workplace that promotes sporting excellence and long term personal growth and wellbeing

EMPowered PLAYERS
- Empowered more players to understand the control they have over their careers as professional athletes and the expectations they may have of their employers

INCREASED INTEREST
- Generate increased interest throughout player movement periods

RIVALRY
- Increased interest of media and fans in rivalries across the competition due to players taking on former clubs

Following the third player movement period that it has been in operation, the AFL and Association agreed to review Free Agency to discuss the impact it has had on the industry and what, if any, changes should be explored to improve the current model.

In preparation for the ongoing review with the AFL, the Association has undertaken extensive consultation with industry stakeholders and research and analysis on the:
- Impact of Free Agency.
- Perceived issues with the current model.
- Proposals to address these issues and improve the model for players and the game.

FREE AGENCY’S IMPACT ON THE TOP FOUR

HAWTHORN
- Secured on free agent: James Frawley
- But lost four: Lance Franklin, Clinton Young, Xavier Ellis, Tom Murphy

Restricted free agents have transferred to a total of eight clubs, with only Sydney being in the top four at the time.
The MAX360 resource is the first of its kind, developed by the Association to help simplify how a player’s journey is tracked and how to maximise their personal growth across all areas of life.

The creation of the resource is a major milestone in the strategic direction of the Association and an important shift in the delivery of Player Development – from a pure vocational development focus to considering the player from a holistic perspective.

In order to maximise personal growth and wellbeing, both during and after a player’s AFL career, the AFL Players’ Association delivers a range of first class programs and services.
WHY MAX360?

- Improve player journey tracking – moving from ad hoc and informal, to structured, holistic and ongoing.
- Shift the way in which Player Development is addressed – from being purely vocational development based to considering the player from a holistic perspective.
- Change the language away from ‘helping players prepare for life after football’, to ‘helping players maximise the opportunities that an AFL career provides’.
- Empower players and encourage them into the driving seat of their lives.
- Formalise the development process, allowing clubs, players and other relevant industry stakeholders to hold each other more accountable.
- Draw a deliberate and tailored line between a player’s individual strengths and interests and the opportunities available to him within football.
- Maximise the opportunities available to players and reflect the uniqueness of their AFL career.
- Enable ‘multiple bottom line’ reporting – documenting beyond just financial performance and on-field success, and including structured reporting on the holistic development of players.
- Create stronger bonds between players, clubs, industry and the broader community.

MAX360 allows the player to be engaged and empowered in all decisions regarding his off-field progress – ensuring greater ownership over his path and more meaningful engagement.

Brett Johnson
General Manager – Player Development

MAXIMISING OPPORTUNITIES

In 2014, Sydney midfielder, Dan Hannebery was one of the 45 Swans players involved in the pilot of MAX360 – a program recently developed by the AFL Players’ Association to assist players with their holistic development away from the footy field.

Having MAX360 presented to him as a program that could help maximise the opportunities that come with an AFL career, Hannebery decided to grasp the concept with both hands and really capitalise how he can develop off-field.

“Everything outside of footy – from social lives to academic pursuits, and everything in between – gets put on hold when you first start at an AFL club, and once you’ve stepped away from these things it can be hard pull them up again,” Hannebery said.

With MAX360 not solely about completing a degree or apprenticeship, it also encourages the players to know when to step away from the game mentally to avoid burning out.

“I’m currently completing a Postgraduate Diploma in Commerce, but I indicated in my initial MAX360 session that I wanted to develop my day-to-day organisation – making sure I’m replying to important text messages and emails, organising meetings and not forgetting the little things,” Hannebery said.

After their initial MAX360 session, each player individually met with Swans’ Player Development Manager, Dennis Carroll, and AFL Players’ Association’s Player Development Managers Richard Champion and Marissa Filippou to put together a personal action plan with goals for different areas of improvement.

“Alongside our off-field professional goals, the MAX360 program also encourages us to make the most of our spare time pursuing other interests so I continue to spend time doing things I enjoy, whether that’s surfing, playing golf or just going out for lunch with the boys,” Hannebery said.

Dan Hannebery
MAX360 Pilot Participant

“Looking after our general wellbeing is as important as anything – in the hustle and bustle of an AFL season, this can sometimes get forgotten.”

When it comes to footy, players are always striving to be better and there’s an endless number of ways to measure progress. That hasn’t always been the case for players away from the footy field, but the introduction of MAX360 means this is changing.

“I’m really looking forward to making the most of the opportunities that come my way in 2015 – both on the field and off it.”

Enable ‘multiple bottom line’ reporting – documenting beyond just financial performance and on-field success, and including structured reporting on the holistic development of players.

Create stronger bonds between players, clubs, industry and the broader community.

Dan Hannebery
MAX360 Pilot Participant
**PLAYER INDUCTION**

Induction is a key opportunity to introduce players to the comprehensive support and education programs the Association offers throughout and beyond their careers.

**INDUCTION CAMP 2014**

Over 100 first year players representing all 18 clubs took part in this year’s AFL Players’ Association/AFL Induction Camp held at Etihad Stadium.

On the first day of the two day Camp, the Association presented rotation sessions on:

- Off-field development
- Wellbeing
- Financial education
- Safe driving
- Effective use of social media

A panel of current and past players spoke in detail on managing the challenges of an AFL career.

The Camp also provided players with the opportunity to gain an insight into the AFL system from recently retired stars, Sydney Swan Jude Bolton and former Hawk, Max Bailey.

Bolton, who was awarded the 2013 Madden Medal, said players needed to understand the importance of engaging in off-field development and developing themselves outside of football from the very start of their career.

He reminded players that an AFL career is an impermanent one, yet the skills and experiences gained are highly transferable and they each have an immense opportunity to prepare themselves for a transition into meaningful post-football careers.

Having suffered three knee reconstructions in his 43 game career, Bailey shared his personal experience and highlighted how having a passion outside of football was crucial to coping with the mental challenges he faced during the setbacks in his career.

All first year players received an iPad at the Induction Camp thanks to the Association’s computer grant scheme.

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**CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS**

The Association’s career development programs give players the chance to develop skills and gain insights into areas that are critical to life during and post-football.

**CAREER SKILLS**

97 players representing all 18 clubs participated in the AFL Players’ Association’s Career Skills program this year.

As part of the program, players are screened using the ‘Core Skills Profile for Adults’ tool – developed by the Australian Council of Educational Research to assess a player’s literacy, numeracy, abstract reasoning and writing skills.

On completion of the testing, the Association’s Player Development and Engagement Regional Managers debrief on the results with each player individually.

This year, 13 players were identified as benefiting from extra development and referred on to a member of the Career Skills Consultant network.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLUB</th>
<th>PLAYERS TESTED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adelaide Crows</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane Lions</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlton</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collingwood</td>
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<td>Essendon</td>
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<td>Fremantle</td>
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<td>Geelong</td>
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<td>Gold Coast SUNS</td>
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<td>GWS GIANTS</td>
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<td>Hawthorn</td>
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<td>Melbourne Demons</td>
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<tr>
<td>Western Bulldogs</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL** 97
Completing the Football Induction Program in 2014 helped me transition into life as an AFL player. The topics were interesting and relevant, and the presenters really understood the industry. Participation in the program assisted me in developing a balanced time management structure and gave me a helpful perspective on how off-field development can help on-field performance.

In addition, it was also a good chance for the younger players to bond throughout the year and enjoy our first year in the AFL system.

I recommend the Football Induction Program to all first year AFL players.

Marcus Bontempelli
Western Bulldogs

FOOTBALL INDUCTION PROGRAM

The 2014 Football Induction Program saw 88 players from 16 clubs undertake the comprehensive training course during the year – equipping them with the skills to cope with the demands of AFL football and plan their off-field development focus.

Player enrolment figures were an increase on 2013 (81 players), with the program also welcoming representation from Melbourne Football Club this year.

Content covered the competencies of the Certificate III in Sport (Career Oriented Participation) delivered by AFL SportsReady, and topics included Finance, Clinic Management and a Wellbeing Program aimed at enhancing players’ personal wellness.

Following its successful introduction last year, a Career Development session was again delivered, encouraging players to explore academic and employment pathways and prepare a career development action plan. As part of the session, players engaged in coaching conversations with their AFL Players’ Association Player Development and Engagement Regional Manager to help them identify their strengths and weaknesses, behavioural profiles and suggested career pathways. At the completion of the session, players walked away with a clear focus and plan for their off-field development for the year.

Now entering its 10th year, the Football Induction Program has been recognised by AFL clubs as the leading induction program, assisting the successful transition of players into the AFL system and Complementing club football academies.

A major strength of the Program is the content delivery by former AFL players and industry experts who have first-hand experience with the demands and requirements of being an elite athlete.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLUB</th>
<th>PLAYERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adelaide Crows</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane Lions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fremantle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geelong</td>
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<td>Gold Coast SUNS</td>
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<td>Melbourne Demons</td>
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<td>North Melbourne</td>
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<tr>
<td>St Kilda</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney Swans</td>
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<td>West Coast Eagles</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Bulldogs</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL 88

2014 FOOTBALL INDUCTION PROGRAM

CLUB PLAYERS
Adelaide Crows 7
Brisbane Lions 9
Carlton 7
Collingwood 4
Essendon 4
Fremantle 5
Geelong 7
Gold Coast SUNS 5
Hawthorn 5
Melbourne Demons 6
North Melbourne 4
Port Adelaide 7
St Kilda 4
Sydney Swans 5
West Coast Eagles 6
Western Bulldogs 3

TOTAL 88

"Completing the Football Induction Program in 2014 helped me transition into life as an AFL player. The topics were interesting and relevant, and the presenters really understood the industry. Participation in the program assisted me in developing a balanced time management structure and gave me a helpful perspective on how off-field development can help on-field performance.

In addition, it was also a good chance for the younger players to bond throughout the year and enjoy our first year in the AFL system.

I recommend the Football Induction Program to all first year AFL players."

Marcus Bontempelli
Western Bulldogs
On the Road to Success

Throughout 2014, former St Kilda player Sam Dunell spent more than 160 hours putting his Bachelor of Business (Economics and Finance) to work via his Next Goal Work Placement with Bunn Administration (Toyota Finance).

In 2013, after completing his Undergraduate degree at RMIT University, Dunell was keen to put his qualifications into practice and worked closely with St Kilda’s Player Development Manager, Tony Brown, to secure work placement through the AFL Players’ Next Goal program.

The format of the program allowed him to be flexible with his placement depending on his training and match schedules, taking part in the program one day a fortnight.

“Having not been typically drafted straight out of school, I understood how short-lived an AFL career can be and decided to maximise every opportunity to network and get my name out there in the business world,” Dunell said.

“My Next Goal Placement allowed me to work closely with the heads of all the departments within the company, which gave me great on-the-ground exposure into where I would like to direct my career after footy.”

Gaining practical real life experience in his industry of interest was something Dunell decided to grab with both hands, with the results proof of his dedication.

“I’m hoping having completed work placement within the company will allow me to have a smooth transition into the workforce and give me enough background knowledge to quickly adapt to the role,” Dunell said.

“My Next Goal Placement allowed me to work closely with the heads of all the departments within the company, which gave me great on-the-ground exposure into where I would like to direct my career after footy.”

Gaining practical real life experience in his industry of interest was something Dunell decided to grab with both hands, with the results proof of his dedication.

“I’m hoping having completed work placement within the company will allow me to have a smooth transition into the workforce and give me enough background knowledge to quickly adapt to the role,” Dunell said.

“I couldn’t be more impressed with the opportunities the Next Goal Work Placement program has given me.”

Sam Dunell
Next Goal Program

Next Goal Work Placement

The Next Goal Work Placement program delivered by AFL SportsReady, inducted 31 new applicants during the year, offering players practical work and real life experience in an industry of personal interest.

Industries ranged from thoroughbred management to fashion, finance and the police force. Since its inception in 2002, the program has seen more than 400 players undertake placements.

2014 Next Goal Work Placements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Player Name</th>
<th>Club</th>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Work Placement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jed Anderson</td>
<td>Hawthorn</td>
<td>Parks and Recreation</td>
<td>Department of Environment and Primary Industries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rory Atkins</td>
<td>Adelaide Crow</td>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>Daily Grant Skate Co</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dayne Beams</td>
<td>Collingwood</td>
<td>ThoroughbredManagement</td>
<td>Global Business Tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew Boyd</td>
<td>Western Bulldogs</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>PriceWaterhouseCoopers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travis Cloke</td>
<td>Collingwood</td>
<td>Fashion</td>
<td>Lifestyle Brands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courtenay Dempsey</td>
<td>Essendon</td>
<td>Social Work</td>
<td>Ladder / AFLSR IEP Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max Duffy</td>
<td>Fremantle</td>
<td>Animal Welfare</td>
<td>RSPCA WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam Dunell</td>
<td>St Kilda</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Bunn Administration (Toyota Finance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam Gilbert</td>
<td>St Kilda</td>
<td>Property Development</td>
<td>Watersun Homes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brett Goodes</td>
<td>Western Bulldogs</td>
<td>Indigenous Mentoring</td>
<td>AFL SportsReady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sean Gregory</td>
<td>Essendon</td>
<td>Trades</td>
<td>Casa Constructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam Grimley</td>
<td>Hawthorn</td>
<td>Commercial Sales</td>
<td>Duiago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Gwilt</td>
<td>St Kilda</td>
<td>Police Force</td>
<td>Victoria Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurt Heatherley</td>
<td>Hawthorn</td>
<td>Trades</td>
<td>Monashurst Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hal Hunter</td>
<td>Essendon</td>
<td>Social Work</td>
<td>Ladder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Jamison</td>
<td>Carlton</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>PriceWaterhouseCoopers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom Jonas</td>
<td>Port Adelaide</td>
<td>Print Media</td>
<td>News Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lachlan Keeffe</td>
<td>Collingwood</td>
<td>Coaching</td>
<td>AFL VIC Calder Cannons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean Kent</td>
<td>Melbourne Demons</td>
<td>Police Force</td>
<td>Victoria Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamish McIntosh</td>
<td>Geelong</td>
<td>Sport Management</td>
<td>Stride Sports Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brock McLean</td>
<td>Carlton</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>PriceWaterhouseCoopers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steven Motlop</td>
<td>Geelong</td>
<td>Trades</td>
<td>Red House Developments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Nicholson</td>
<td>Melbourne Demons</td>
<td>Police Force</td>
<td>Victoria Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben Ross</td>
<td>Hawthorn</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>the practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dawson Simpson</td>
<td>Geelong</td>
<td>Trades</td>
<td>Van Dort Builders</td>
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<tr>
<td>Billie Smedts</td>
<td>Geelong</td>
<td>Trades</td>
<td>RO Plumbing &amp; Gas Fitting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewis Stevenson</td>
<td>Port Adelaide</td>
<td>Print Media</td>
<td>News Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesse Stringer</td>
<td>Geelong</td>
<td>Trades</td>
<td>Luke Construction Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobe Watson</td>
<td>Essendon</td>
<td>Real Estate</td>
<td>In Folio Property Advisers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derick Wanganeen</td>
<td>Hawthorn</td>
<td>Charity</td>
<td>White Lion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon White</td>
<td>Carlton</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Patersons Securities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
AFL SPORTSREADY STAFF

RAYDEN TALLIS
National Manager AFL Programs

NATHAN BOWER
Senior Educator AFL Players

PETER KATEGIANNIS
National Support Officer AFL Programs

NEXT GOAL EDUCATION PATHWAY

A total of 180 players, representing all 18 clubs, enrolled in studies with AFL Sports Ready across the Next Goal Education Pathway during the year, providing a range of academic and vocational skills and developing their careers outside of football.

The vocational pathway was introduced in 2013 and commences with the Certificate III in Sport (Career Orientated Participation). Players can then choose to progress to a Certificate IV in Sport Development, Fitness or Business.

During the year, the third phase of a Diploma of Sport Development and the Diploma of Management was combined to also offer the option of a dual Diploma of Management and Sport Development.

A one-day career advice and planning session is provided to players at the completion of the dual Diploma to help them plan for their post-football career.

Players wanting to follow a pathway into university are then offered a Tertiary Transitions program. The one to two day program is designed to assist with direct entry into Business Management, Marketing, Communication, Social Sciences, Sports Management, Sport Science, Finance, Commerce and Teaching.

AFL SportsReady signed agreements with Flinders University, the University of Canberra and the University of Tasmania as University Partners during the year, joining Curtin University, La Trobe University and Griffith University as pathway options for AFL players.

CAREER PREPARATION FOR AFL PLAYERS

ENTRY INTO AFL SPORTSREADY PARTNER UNIVERSITY COURSES

- Certificate IV in Sport Development
- Certificate IV in Business
- Certificate IV in Business Management
- Diploma of Sport Development
- Diploma of Management
- Dual Diploma (Management and Sport Development)

NEXT GOAL EDUCATION PATHWAY

SPORTSREADY EDUCATION PLAYER ENROLMENTS 2014

- Football Induction
- Certificate IV in Sport Development
- Certificate IV in Business
- Certificate IV in Fitness
- Diploma of Sport Development
- Diploma of Management
- Dual Diploma (Management and Sport Development)

PLAYER EDUCATION ENGAGEMENT

QLD
- Certificate IV in Fitness: 5
- Certificate IV in Sport Development: 1
- Football Induction: 14

NSW
- Certificate IV in Fitness: 1
- Certificate IV in Sport Development: 6
- Certificate IV in Business: 2
- Dual Diploma: 5
- Football Induction: 5

VIC
- Certificate IV in Fitness: 5
- Certificate IV in Business: 16
- Dual Diploma: 29
- Football Induction: 44

SA
- Dual Diploma: 5
- Certificate IV in Business: 5
- Football Induction: 14

WA
- Dual Diploma: 6
- Football Induction: 11

NEXT GOAL EDUCATION PATHWAY

AFL PLAYERS DEVELOPMENT & WELLBEING REPORT

02. RESOURCES
Having retired from a stellar playing career mid-way through the 2014 season, Darren Glass could be the next player we see on the coaching scene.

During 2013, when starting to take action on his life after football, Glass took part in the AFL SportsReady Next Coach program in a bid to bridge the gap between playing and coaching.

“I’ve always considered coaching an option when my playing career came to an end so I jumped at the opportunity to get involved with the Next Coach program and get some insight into what it takes to be in the top job,” Glass said.

“It was great to get some insider knowledge from the best in the business on things we don’t necessarily learn while playing, such as teaching strategies and people management.”

With one of the AFL’s most respected coaches, David Wheadon, at the helm of the program, Glass found Wheadon’s wealth of knowledge as a long-time assistant coach very helpful in putting theory into practical situations.

“David was great in putting examples and case studies from his experience to topics we were learning – anything from opposition analysis and recruiting to player development and industry meetings,” Glass said.

The trip to Stanford was very beneficial with what we experienced throughout the week and what we were able to learn from their coaching practices,” Glass said.

“It also really confirmed to me that the AFL is a world class sporting workplace and made me appreciate the facilities and opportunities available to us as professional athletes and coaches.”

Glass is now studying a Master of Business Administration at the University of Western Australia and, once the one-year full-time course is complete, he is hoping to use his years of playing and Next Coach experience to try his hand in coaching.

Darren Glass
Former West Coast Player and Next Coach participant
ELITE PLAYERS, ELITE CAREERS, ELITE PEOPLE

This year saw the introduction of two new player development workshops – the CV Masterclass and Activating Your Networks. Six clubs conducted the CV Masterclass workshop (or modified versions of the workshop), introducing players to the key elements of a contemporary CV and outlining how they can maintain a comprehensive career management document.

To assist players to approach networking with confidence, five clubs ran the Activating Your Networks workshop.

The two workshops complement the career readiness focus of the new MAX360 resource, providing support for clubs identifying a training gap and need.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLUB</th>
<th>CV MASTERCLASS</th>
<th>ACTIVATING YOUR NETWORKS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane Lions *</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold Coast SUNS *</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney Swans *</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geelong</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlton</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne Demons</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Melbourne</td>
<td></td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Modified version of workshop

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GRANT ASSISTANCE

To encourage players to explore and pursue formal education opportunities, the Association provides a range of education, training and computer grants.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING GRANTS

$550K

was provided to 417 current and past players during the year - a significant increase in applications received and funding distributed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUALIFICATION</th>
<th>CURRENT PLAYERS</th>
<th>PAST PLAYERS</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certificate I</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate III</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>Certificate IV</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advanced Diploma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bachelor Degree</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Certificate</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Diploma</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Qualification</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Course</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Unit</td>
<td>4</td>
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</table>

COMPUTER GRANTS

$60K

was allocated to 102 first year players by the AFL Players’ Association during the year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUALIFICATION</th>
<th>CURRENT PLAYERS</th>
<th>PAST PLAYERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certificate II</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate III</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate IV</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor Degree</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Certificate</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Qualification</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short Course</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Unit</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
$117,589 in grant money was allocated. Education and Training grants are also made available to past players, and assistance with study requirements are provided as part of these sessions. Resume preparation, job search skills, application review, interview preparation, career counselling and planning sessions are available for any player. A follow up phone call or meeting is then scheduled at their six month mark. The statistics also indicate how vital the Next Goal Education Pathway and Football Induction Program are in continuing to encourage players to complete higher qualifications, and raise the qualification levels of retired and delisted players upon exit.

### Retired and Delisted Player Qualifications

Ten retired and delisted players graduated with a degree during the year, with an additional five in the process of completing university. The figures were on par with 2013, and a continued improvement on 2012 degree graduate figures.

The qualification to score the highest number of graduates was the Certificate III, with 21 players having completed one upon exiting the game – once again highlighting the importance of the Football Induction Program.

### Qualification Upon Exit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification Upon Exit</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Certificate 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Certificate 4</td>
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<td>Diploma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advanced Diploma</td>
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<tr>
<td>University Degree</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Cont</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Certificate</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Retired and Delisted Career Path

Study continued to play a key role in career paths of delisted and retired players, with over a quarter (32%) of footballers completing it in some combination post-football (study – 2%, work and study – 6%, study & football – 15%, work, study and football – 9%). The study and football combination saw a notable increase on 2013 figures (15% vs 5%).

Continuing the 2013 trend, nearly half (42%) of all delisted and retired players chose a combination of work and football (33%) or work, study and football (9%) as their career path.

### Transferring Players

During the year, 127 players transitioned out of the system, consisting of 27 retirements, 72 delisted senior players and 28 delisted rookies. Of these players, 16 were reinstated either via the national or the rookie draft, or picked up by new clubs as Delisted Free Agents.

Player support meetings have been conducted with 85% of players, detailing their entitlements and future opportunities. A follow up phone call or meeting is then scheduled at their six month mark.

Career counselling and planning sessions are available for any members wanting to continue to develop their career post football. Resume preparation, job search skills, application review, interview skills and assistance with study requirements are provided as part of these sessions.

Education and Training grants are also made available to past players up to three year post their retirement or delistment. In 2014, $117,589 in grant money was allocated.

### Mind Really Matters

Since retiring at the end of the 2013 season, former Carlton defender Nick Duigan has followed his passion and is working with Youth Focus in Geraldton, Western Australia to help prevent depression and suicide within at-risk youths.

Having not been typically recruited to the AFL straight out of school, Duigan went on to study for six years, completing a Bachelor of Psychology at Flinders University and his Masters at the University of Adelaide while playing with Norwood in the South Australian National Football League.

After being drafted to Carlton in 2010 within one month of completing his studies, Duigan was keen to utilise his degree while playing AFL to raise awareness and reduce the stigma around mental illness.

“I worked one day per week with headspace and also as an ambassador for them while I was at Carlton, doing interviews with the media to improve mental health awareness and literacy,” Duigan said.

“To keep practising while I was playing AFL, I worked closely with the Players’ Association on the creation and implementation of their wellbeing programs, and also on the implementation of a wellbeing program at Carlton.”

Since stepping away from the AFL world, Duigan has pursued his passion and is now working in regional Western Australia with young people at risk.

“The rate of youth suicide in Indigenous youth in Western Australia is higher than anywhere else in the developing world, and we are taking action to ensure this statistic does nothing but improve,” Duigan said.

Using his expertise in sport and psychology, Duigan has recently played an integral role in delivering one of the pilot programs developed by Youth Focus. The program known is as ‘The Young Men’s Project’ and is an initiative that involves a group of young men in a sporting organisation being delivered psychology training, framed in strength-based performance-enhancing language.

The success of this program has seen an increase in the uptake of healthcare services in times of need within a demographic that are typically difficult to engage in therapy.

“I’m really happy with the progress we are making here at Youth Focus and am this year looking to further my studies by either doing a Masters in family counselling or suicidology,” Duigan said.

“I am really excited for what 2015 has in store.”
**PLAYER DEVELOPMENT AND ENGAGEMENT**

The Association provides support to players to help them identify their passions, interest, skills and values - ensuring the delivery of First Class Sporting Workplaces in all clubs.

**PLAYER DEVELOPMENT AND ENGAGEMENT TEAM**

During the year, the organisation implemented a new structure across the Player Development and Player Relations teams with the creation of a new team – Player Development and Engagement.

The team is headed by Marissa Fillipou, Player Development and Engagement Manager, who will work with the three Player Development and Engagement Regional Managers – John Hinge, Claire Mitchell-Taverner and Richard Champion.

The focus for the team will be to deliver outcomes across player development, member activation, engagement and ensuring the delivery of First Class Sporting Workplaces in all clubs.

A major priority for the team in 2015 will be to capitalise on the momentum created around MAX360 in its pilot year, working with clubs to roll out the program, its philosophies and ideals, across the competition.

Continuing to shift the competition towards an individualised action planning focus will be key to the work done by this team. These action plans will then be used to inform program delivery by identifying trends and common needs across playing groups.

**2015 FOCUS**

- Work with clubs to roll out the MAX360 program across the competition.
- Continue to shift the competition towards an individualised action planning focus.
- Utilise action plans to identify trends and common needs across playing groups and inform program delivery.
- Increase engagement with club coaches to collaboratively support players with their holistic growth.
- Work with clubs to improve the strategic reporting on player development outcomes across the industry.

**2014 PLAYER DEVELOPMENT MANAGERS**

**RICHARD CHAMPION**
- Brisbane Lions
- Gold Coast SUNS
- GWS GIANTS
- Sydney Swans

**MARISSA FILLIPOU**
- Carlton
- Geelong
- Melbourne Demons
- North Melbourne
- Richmond
- Western Bulldogs

**JOHN HINGE**
- Adelaide Crows
- Essendon
- Fremantle
- Port Adelaide
- West Coast Eagles

**CLAIRE MITCHELL-TAVERNER**
- Collingwood
- Hawthorn
- St Kilda

**FINANCIAL EDUCATION AND LITERACY**

The Association provides access to world class financial education and literacy programs, services and resources – equipping players with a solid understanding of financial strategies and helping them manage their money now and into the future.

**EDUCATION WORKSHOPS**

Following a review of player feedback, the Association’s education workshop offering was restructured during the year into a three stage delivery model to increase player engagement.

The format of ‘Managing My Money 2’ evolved into a new information session to help players gain a better understanding of the Player Retirement Scheme. The workshop now includes an introduction to investing and superannuation and is suitable for four year plus players. As a result of the new format, there was strong player interest with 20 workshops conducted and 221 players attending – the highest out of all three programs.

The 2013 format of ‘Managing My Money 2’ was repackaged as ‘Managing My Money 3’, again targeting five year plus players and focusing on investment tips, traps and exit strategies. Player attendance and club participation doubled during the year.

The restructured education workshop offering welcomed a significant increase in club and player engagement and uptake across the board in 2014. Workshop and one-on-one attendance increased by over 100% (48 workshops and 388 one-on-one adviser meetings) – resulting in almost half of the playing group being able to discuss their personal financial situations with an adviser.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Workshops Delivered</th>
<th>One-on-One Adviser Meetings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>388</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The education programs continue to be tailored to individual player and club needs as required, with workshop content developed to support this flexible delivery model.
**MANAGING MY MONEY 1 PLAYER FEEDBACK**

“I found this session very helpful as I just moved out from home and just left school.”
To enable the financial milestones of AFL players to be benchmarked throughout their careers, the Association developed a Financial Literacy Survey and measurement tool in 2013.

The aim of the financial health tool is to collect yearly updates from players on their overall financial statuses across key indicators. The tool also assists in benchmarking financial literacy across varying player demographics.

During the year, player benchmark data was collected from 94 inductees. Key research findings to date include:

- **80%** of inductees believe they have the ability to plan their financial future, only 43% of players passed the financial literacy test given as part of the survey.
- **75%** of inductees nominated “planning for their long term future” as a topic of importance to learn more about, and the majority of players said they wanted to learn about basic aspects of investing.
- **91%** of inductees turn to their parents or agents for help in managing their finances.

The results confirm the need for the Association’s current financial literacy program offering and will be used to monitor key indicators, identify any shifts in knowledge and behaviour and inform and develop an enhanced financial literacy program.

The data will also direct the provision of financial guidance and health checks to ensure they are occurring at key milestones during a player’s career and while they are preparing to transition out of the game.

**2015 FOCUS**

- Upgrade methods to collate and measure program effectiveness.
- Further enhance the tailored delivery of financial education and advice solutions by integrating MAX360 player action plans.
- Develop Managing My Money 1a – a new workshop for 2-4 year players reinforcing good financial habits for wealth accumulation and focusing on property acquisition.
The range of mental health and wellbeing programs delivered by the Association was reviewed and expanded to six key programs during the year – Values in Action; Stress & Stories; Surfing Your Emotions; Practical Mindfulness; Wellbeing Workout; and a Coaching Booster.

The R U OK? workshop was also developed and piloted with three clubs and will be rolled out nationally in 2015. The workshop assists players in recognising signs of stress and illness in teammates, starting conversations, providing support and building resilience through connection.

In total, 85 wellbeing workshops were delivered across AFL clubs in 2014.

All of the Association’s mental health and wellbeing programs are evidence based and draw on best practice mental health and wellbeing science.

### WELLBEING PROGRAMS

A key focus for 2014 was the development of a flexible, module-based suite of wellbeing programs, tailored to meet individual club and player needs and complement existing club programs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM ABOUT</th>
<th>PROGRAM</th>
<th>ABOUT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top performers are aware of their unique set of personal values that motivate proactive behaviour, guide problem solving and lead to better decision making.</td>
<td>Values in Action</td>
<td>Values in Action helps players clarify what they stand for as a person and learn how this affects their behaviour, mood and performance. The program primarily assists with clarification, decision making, motivation and behaviour change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unhelpful self-talk and limiting thoughts can create stress and derail important goals. Stress &amp; Stories assists players in learning how to identify and manage their internal ‘stories’.</td>
<td>Stress &amp; Stories</td>
<td>The program primarily helps with stress management, helpful thinking and staying focused.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical effort and discomfort have long been associated with sporting success, yet elite performers understand that the mind and emotions also play a vital role. Surfing Your Emotions teaches players how to manage all emotions – anger, fear, pride and joy – and tolerate emotional discomfort in the same way they have learnt to tolerate physical discomfort – by treating it as just another part of the game.</td>
<td>Surfing Your Emotions</td>
<td>The program primarily helps with understanding emotions and managing emotions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical Mindfulness helps players strengthen their mental focus and develop mindfulness skills – the ability to tune-in and unhook from distraction.</td>
<td>Practical Mindfulness</td>
<td>The program primarily focuses on developing mental focus, achieving clarity and calm, and unhooking from stress and worry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In order to thrive as athletes it is essential that players not only address their physical fitness but also fine-tune their mental fitness. The Wellbeing Workout teaches players five simple, evidence based daily behaviours that contribute to psychological flourishing and lowering stress.</td>
<td>Wellbeing Workout</td>
<td>The program primarily helps with building resilience, managing stress and enhancing happiness and wellbeing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Coaching Booster program assists clubs that are looking to recap, troubleshoot or capitalise on progress. Tailored to club requirements, the Wellbeing Team run a repeat or a booster coaching session on any of the Wellbeing Workshop topics.</td>
<td>Coaching Booster</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### NATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY NETWORK

During the year, the National Psychology Network was extended to include additional psychologists in Geelong, Gold Coast, Sydney and Adelaide – complementing the existing psychologists in Melbourne, Perth, Brisbane, Gold Coast and Canberra and bringing the total network of registered psychologists to 18.

Players are encouraged to view the services on offer as an opportunity to grow and develop their mental fitness at any stage of their life – not just at times when things go wrong.
WELLBEING CAMPAIGN AND EVENTS

2014 saw the Association both continue and expand our collaboration with health and wellbeing campaigns and events, in an effort to spread the wellbeing message to players and the community.

AFL PLAYERS’ OFFICIAL MOVEMBER NETWORK

Under the banner of the AFL Players’ Official Movember Network, club captains, rising stars and greats of the game were encouraged by the Association to support Movember, raising awareness of and money for men’s health.

More than 140 Mo Bros and Sistas joined the AFL Players’ network and raised $37,660 for men’s health. The team included the 2014 MVP Nat Fyfe, Brisbane Lions club champion Tom Rockliff, Fremantle skipper Matthew Pavlich, and spearheads Jay Schulz and Drew Petrie.

FIVE WAYS TO WELLBEING

This year’s AFL Players’ AFL Induction Camp once again introduced all new recruits to the Five Ways to Wellbeing – Connect, Move, Tune-in, Learn and Give.

The set of evidence-based actions are simple things that players can do in their everyday lives to build resilience, happiness and meaning.

After seeing the campaign in action at Induction Camp, Brisbane Lions did their own successful club roll out.

THE AUSTRALIAN MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVE GRANT

In October, the Movember Foundation announced that the AFL Players’ Association together with the Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) had won a $3 million grant as part of the Australian Mental Health Initiative.

The grant will fund a three year wellbeing and mental health campaign for AFL Players’ and the broader Australian male community.

Funding will be put towards the development of digital wellbeing curriculum and a video-gaming campaign aimed at building resilience, wellbeing and assisting in the prevention of mental illness.

The Australian Mental Health Initiative is the largest ever non-government investment in men’s mental health in Australia – allocating $22.3 million to fund programs that help change the face of men’s health.

Jeremy Macvean, Movember’s Asia Pacific Director, said the Foundation received an overwhelming number of applications – which highlighted the quality of the Association’s successful application.

By partnering with some of the very best research and applied wellbeing science organisations in Australia, we hope to build a game changing digital platform that enhances the mental health, resilience and wellbeing of all Australian men

Dr Jo Mitchell
Wellbeing Services Manager

BAND4HOPE

Support for the Band4Hope Project continued during the year with 100 AFL Players’ Band4Hope copper wristbands circulated throughout the broader football community in Australia to raise money for the player’s charity – Ladder.

Band4Hope empowers people to spread hope through trackable wristbands passed on to inspire acts of kindness and raise money for charity.

The bands are intended to be worn for a month before being passed on to another person who displays an act of kindness or inspires hope. The bands are inscribed with a unique ID allowing them to be tracked around the world as they are passed on.

The Association joined the Band4Hope movement in 2013 due to its relevance to player and community wellbeing.

VALUES INK

During the year the Association developed and launched our first wellbeing application for iPad, iPhone and Android – Values Ink.

Values Ink is a free tool for helping people identify what they stand for in life and encourages values-based action. The app features a simple card sort task that helps you explore and clarify your life values.

Values are enduring beliefs and attitudes that guide our daily behaviour. In essence they reflect what we stand for in life and who we want to be. People who know their values are often happier, more focussed and live a more meaningful life.

2015 FOCUS

- Commence development and roll out of “Game Changer” - the Movember funded project for men’s wellbeing, resilience and mental health.

- Strengthen collaborations with AFL and mental health industry partners to deliver mental health and wellbeing services to past and current players.
I’d like to thank the PA and those who were part of creating the RAP. For those guys to sit down and look at us as an organisation and say how can we get the message out there about reconciliation in our work place, is a big part of reconciliation for me - it is the acknowledgement and the welcome.

Adam Goodes, Chairman Indigenous Advisory Board

The Indigenous Players’ Advisory Board is the first of its kind in Australian sport and was established by players with the aim of continuing to improve the AFL landscape for Indigenous players. The Board consists of a minimum of one Indigenous player representative from Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland and New South Wales and four representatives from Victoria.
BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES IMPLEMENTATION

In 2013, the Association launched its best practice guidelines for supporting Indigenous footballers. The guidelines were developed to:

- Ensure all Indigenous players are supported consistently, regardless of the club to which they are drafted.
- Assist clubs to gain an understanding of the Aboriginal culture through the eyes of players and Indigenous Australians.
- Provide the support required to retain Indigenous players in the AFL system and maximise their careers in the game.

The key focus for 2014 was to meet with clubs and players and gain a detailed understanding of the programs that are currently in place to support Indigenous players.

To date, 12 clubs have been reviewed. Meetings with the remaining six clubs will be conducted in 2015. The results of these meetings and reviews will assist the Association in identifying areas of opportunity for service improvement, and establishing consistent delivery of Indigenous support programs across all clubs.

AREAS OF REVIEW INCLUDED:

INDUCTION
- Visit to home community when drafting an Indigenous player
- A strong relationship with at least one family member of the player
- Induction resource provided to new players, including guidelines of expectations
- Availability of an Indigenous host family
- Allocation of an Indigenous mentor upon arriving at the club

PERSONAL SUPPORT
- Additional family support offered for young Indigenous parents
- Partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups to assist players if required
- Development of individual plans with players
- Engagement of past Indigenous players into club
- Player encouragement to undertake financial planning courses

CULTURE
- Cultural leave covered under annual leave policy
- Completion of Cultural Awareness Training at least once a year with all players and staff members
- Club engagement in Indigenous Round activities
- Implementation of a Reconciliation Action Plan
- Player attendance at Indigenous Camp

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
- Establishment of a player development plan with all Indigenous players
- Indigenous players engaged in professional development
- Provision of sufficient player development human resources
- A clear understanding of player off-field interests

EDUCATION SUPPORT

Eight Indigenous players completed either a Certificate IV in Education Support or a Diploma of Education Support with RMIT during the year, with 21 enrolling in the two courses in 2014—a significant increase on 2013 new enrolments of eight players.

RMIT University developed the courses on behalf of the Association for Indigenous players looking to gain employment in a range of Indigenous community and education settings, or in organisations that run Indigenous community programs.

To date, 12 clubs have been reviewed. Meetings with the remaining six clubs will be conducted in 2015. The results of these meetings and reviews will assist the Association in identifying areas of opportunity for service improvement, and establishing consistent delivery of Indigenous support programs across all clubs.

NAIDOC WEEK

NAIDOC Week celebrations are held across Australia each July to celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Association joined in the celebrations this year, enjoying a lunch with past Indigenous players. At the event, Alan Murray and Cory McGrath shared their football journey and an update on the implementation of the Association’s Reconciliation Action Plan was given.

INDIGENOUS ROUND

The 2014 Indigenous Round was a big success this year seeing for the first time in VFL/AFL history every side in the competition wearing a guernsey specially designed for the Round. The Association assisted in promoting the artists and the work the clubs put into this initiative.

A “Dreamtime at the ‘G’” function was hosted by the Association and attended by key stakeholders involved in the Indigenous programs throughout the season.

The Round was also used as a chance to promote the great work being done by players – past and present – to help tackle racism and celebrate the diversity in our game.

Occupations that can be gained from the qualifications include:
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education officer.
- Indigenous mentor, education assistant, education worker, teacher aide, teacher assistance.
- Cultural liaison officer, assisting in development of community and school partnerships.
- Indigenous language and culture teaching assistant, home tutor.
- Homeland teaching assistant.
2015 FOCUS

- Host Indigenous Camp in Perth (15-20 February 2015) under the theme of Leadership.
- Develop a Multicultural Working Group from the playing group.
- Develop a best practice resource to assist clubs and players to support the cultural needs of multicultural players and foster an inclusive environment.
- Continue support of #FOOTY4IDAHO and Pride March.
- Develop the Association’s second RAP.
- Develop a Multicultural Players Map.

PRIDE MARCH

Under a joint initiative with Athlete Ally, the Association coordinated four high-profile AFL players to join approximately 30,000 people in St Kilda’s Pride March in February – an annual event that celebrates the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community.

Carlton’s Brock McLean, Richmond’s Daniel Jackson and St Kilda players Jarryn Geary and Sam Gilbert marched alongside Jason Ball – a gay footballer who plays for Yarra Glen and has become a spokesperson and role model within the gay community.

The March was another positive step towards equality and inclusiveness within AFL and the wider football community.

#FOOTY4IDAHO

For the third season in a row, the Association threw its support behind International Day Against Homophobia (IDAHO), held on the 17th May around the world.

This year the player-driven social media campaign featured prominent AFL figures – including AFL Players’ Association President Luke Ball – in a video pledging their commitment not to use homophobic language and to stand up to those who do.

The Association asked fans to join in taking this pledge, and to share the message via social media to help raise awareness of the damaging impact homophobic language can have within our society.

ALUMNI

The AFL Players’ Association’s Alumni provides a range of health and wellbeing benefits to recognise the contribution that past players have made to the game and support them in their life post-football.

AFL PLAYERS’ TRUST

Since the inception of the AFL Players’ Trust in November 2013, the Committee has approved four applications and provided over $55,000 in assistance to past players facing hardship due to injury or ill health.

The AFL Players’ Trust builds upon existing mechanisms of support provided by the AFL to past players, and includes:

01 The Geoff Pryor Hardship Grant of assistance (up to $5,000 for player hardship cases).

02 A more extensive benefit – which may be in the nature of a grant of financial assistance or the provision of/access to additional services or benefits – for those players who suffer significant temporary or long term hardship.

The Players Trust is governed by the Players’ Trust Committee who have the discretion to determine:

- Whether or not the applicant is approved.
- What level of support would be appropriate.
- Whether or not conditions, if any, apply to the grant of assistance.

2014 welcomed former Collingwood and Fitzroy player, Murray Browne, to the Players’ Trust Committee. His appointment to the Committee came following Murray joining the AFL Players’ Association Board as the Past Player representative.
The AFL Players’ Association re-established the Alumni Advisory Board during the year.

Chaired by former player, Murray Browne, the Board aims to develop the best possible retirement program for the Association’s Alumni members.

Browne will be working alongside a group of club Past Player Association presidents including Barry Capuano, Frank Goode and Paul Dimattina. Former Fremantle player Brad Wira will be the Board’s Western Australian delegate and financial consultant.

The Board will meet quarterly to discuss issues concerning past players, including the topic of health and wellbeing, which was on the agenda of the Board’s first meeting held in August.

"We want to help support all the AFL club Past Player Associations, help them to get stronger and introduce a range of services they can provide to their past players. What we want to be is a really good support system to all the clubs so if they need anything they can put their hand up and we can help them out.

Murray Browne, Chair
Alumni Advisory Board
**FINANCIAL PROSPERITY**

**FINANCIAL SERVICES**
Alumni members all have access to the services of qualified financial advisors, who have extensive experience in both the football industry and the business world.

**THE AFL PLAYERS’ AND AFL INDUSTRY SUPERANNUATION FUND**
The AFL Players’ and AFL Industry Superannuation Fund is open to all Alumni members to join. The ability to become a member of a large group superannuation plan and its associated buying power, enables members access to a range of discounts and concessions.

**CONTINUING EDUCATION**

**EDUCATION AND TRAINING GRANTS**
During the year, over $117,000 in education and training grant assistance was provided to 95 past players who finished playing within the last three years. These grants may be used for university studies, TAFE courses, short courses and licences.

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**2015 FOCUS**

- Develop a business directory website to provide Alumni members with relevant business information, opportunities and discounted goods and services.
- Implement a ‘Corporate Career Pathway’ whereby transitioning players are able to step straight into meaningful employment after they exit the AFL System.
- Commercialise events such as Golf Days to encourage more funds into the Alumni Program to enable a greater value of services.
- Explore the Lifetime Health Care Program which may see the Association making contributions to a past players’ Private Health Insurance (refer to Mid-term Collective Bargaining Agreement Review outcomes).
- Continue to grow the Alumni membership, ensuring all past players are aware of the program’s services and benefits.
- Build upon existing benefits to ensure the Alumni program continues to set the benchmark for the way in which our game demonstrates its support and value to its former players.
- Continue to develop strong communication and engagement with Alumni through monthly newsletters, past player functions, AFL Players’ Association events, LinkedIn and the Business Directory.
- Continue to promote and facilitate Players’ Trust, ensuring past players are financially able to receive necessary medical care.
WORKPLACE CULTURE SURVEY

In 2013, the Association developed and launched an Annual Workplace Culture survey. The aim of the survey was to drive performance, engagement and empowerment in stakeholders. The format of the survey engages internal and external stakeholders on what is important to them from a workplace culture perspective - encouraging clubs to initiate player development conversations.

The end result is a transparent and credible benchmark of player development performance that can be employed by stakeholders and regulators when monitoring performance.

In order to continue to monitor trends in player insights and improve workplace culture, the Association once again visited all clubs in August and conducted the survey with the playing group.

The same sample size of 680 players were surveyed on how their club supports their off-field development, asking them on a scale of 0 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree) to rate the extent to which they agree with specific statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>2013 % OF PLAYERS WHO SCORED 6 AND ABOVE OUT OF 10</th>
<th>2014 % OF PLAYERS WHO SCORED 6 AND ABOVE OUT OF 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My work commitments allow adequate time for study and / or work placements</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My work commitments allow adequate time for family / other important relationships</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My work commitments allow adequate time for leisure</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My work commitments allow me to have a ‘mental break’ from footy between matches</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When changes to my football-related schedule occur, my club ensures I have enough time to plan my off field schedule around those changes</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off field development is taken seriously at my club</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My club expects me to engage in off field development</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel my club cares for me as a person, as well as a player</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s a club’s responsibility to provide players with an opportunity to develop both on and off the field</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RESEARCH

In order to have a clear understanding of a club’s cultural environment and influence best practice culture, an investment in research projects is crucial.

In 2013, the Association developed and launched an Annual Workplace Culture survey. The aim of the survey was to drive performance, engagement and empowerment in stakeholders. The format of the survey engages internal and external stakeholders on what is important to them from a workplace culture perspective - encouraging clubs to initiate player development conversations.

The end result is a transparent and credible benchmark of player development performance that can be employed by stakeholders and regulators when monitoring performance.

In order to continue to monitor trends in player insights and improve workplace culture, the Association once again visited all clubs in August and conducted the survey with the playing group.

The same sample size of 680 players were surveyed on how their club supports their off-field development, asking them on a scale of 0 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree) to rate the extent to which they agree with specific statements.

Analysing the results of players who scored statements as a 6 (agree) and above out of 10, a significant improvement on 2013 results is apparent.

Players who responded saying they agreed that their work commitments allowed them to have a ‘mental break’ from footy between matches increased from 39% in 2013 to 60% in 2014.

Likewise, players who responded saying that their club ensured they have enough time to plan their off field schedule around changes to their football-related schedule increased from 41% (2013) to 61% (2014).
OFF-FIELD ENGAGEMENT & ON-FIELD PERFORMANCE RESEARCH

In 2012 and 2013, a comprehensive research study was conducted by the Australian Catholic University looking at the relationship between off-field engagement and on-field performance.

The research was presented to the AFL Board in 2014, with more detailed findings released in the form of an infographic (see following page).

The results presented in the infographic show meaningful associations between issues of player work/life balance, engagement in non-football activities and levels of player on-field engagement.

We also know that being engaged in one’s work is associated with performance/productivity in both contemporary workplaces and in professional sport.

In the present study, for example, players’ experience of athletic engagement was significantly associated with coaches’ ratings of player performance for season 2013.

These results suggest that supporting players in maintaining a healthy balance between on and off-field activities should be part of a club’s prudent high performance strategy.

CONCUSSION SUPPORT AND RESEARCH

The Association continues to play a pivotal role in seeking to ensure the AFL industry implements concussion management protocols, support structures and research initiatives that are in line with world sport best practice. The Association is currently focusing on a range of key focus areas, including:

EDUCATION
- Increasing education of AFL players to improve the players’ awareness of the potential health risks relating to concussion and respect for the measures put in place to mitigate the potential damage of concussive incidents.
- Ensuring individual current players are aware of the protocols and support that are in place following an incident.

RETURN TO PLAY PROTOCOLS
- Working with the AFL and the AFL Doctors’ Association to introduce improved return to play protocols that remove as much uncertainty as possible and reduce the risk of a player being returned to play after a concussion.

RESEARCH
- Promoting the Past Player Concussion Screening Survey as part of the joint research initiative with the AFL and Florey Institute of Neuroscience and Mental Health.
- Advocating for further research into concussion, including exploring a rapid point of care diagnostics tool using bio markers.
- Ensuring current players are aware of the support available following a concussion, including advanced functional MRI scanning.

PA CONCUSSION GROUP
- Consulting with independent concussion experts with a view to forming a Players’ Association Advisory Group.

MENTAL HEALTH AUDIT

In collaboration with the AFL, the Association commissioned a mental health audit of current AFL Players to be carried out by the research team at the Orygen Youth-Health Clinical Program.

The aim of this research is to help broaden our understanding of AFL players’ mental health and wellbeing, and the ways in which it is similar to or different from the broader Australian community.

Data collection for the research will be completed in early 2015, and research findings are expected to inform the Association’s ongoing mental health and wellbeing strategy.

VOLUNTEERING CULTURE

A culture that both supports and encourages players in undertaking volunteer work can lead to health benefits, not only for the players but for the wider community. To explore this belief in more detail, a player-wide volunteer study commenced during the year. Led by La Trobe University’s Faculty of Health Science, the primary aim of the project was to explore the volunteer work and mandated community involvement of AFL players.

Specific issues that were examined were the experiences, perceptions and beliefs of AFL players with respect to:
- The types of volunteer work that AFL players are engaging in.
- The amount of volunteer work (exceeding the mandated amounts) AFL players are engaging in.
- AFL players’ attitudes and beliefs regarding volunteer work.
- AFL players’ motivations to participate in volunteer work.
- The facilitators and barriers to volunteering in AFL players.
- AFL players’ attitudes and beliefs regarding mandated community work.

Findings will be released in 2015 and look set to provide extensive data exploring the ways in which volunteering and mandated community involvement experiences differ among players in the league. Results will also provide useful information for the future implementation of programs and organisational planning with respect to the allocation of mandated player appearances.
**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OFF-FIELD ENGAGEMENT & ON-FIELD PERFORMANCE**

**WHY DO THIS RESEARCH?**

There has been much anecdotal support from athletes and coaches in various sports indicating that engaging in interests outside of professional sport and preparing for a post-athletic career are beneficial for performance. There has also been conflicting opinions from both athletes and coaches suggesting that engaging in activities that prepare for life after sport can be a negative distraction from the immediate focus necessary to achieve in sport. So the AFL Players’ Association, in conjunction with researchers from ACU, investigated how involvement in off-field activities was associated with players’ performance as footballers during season 2013. This project was funded by the AFL Research Board.

**PHASE 1**

In phase one a detailed case study of an AFL club with respect to its culture and how it related to support for player off-field development and well-being was undertaken.

Several important themes were identified. They related to two overarching concepts – club support for off-field life and the players’ perception of the quality of their free time away from football.

A player survey was then developed around these concepts and piloted in three AFL clubs for refinement before launch to the wider AFL player community.

**PHASE 2**

430 AFL players took part in the study. Representing 14 clubs. Data was collected during July & August ’13.

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**PLAYER BACKGROUND**

63% of players’ fathers had achieved at least a senior certificate of education. 73% of players’ mothers had achieved at least a senior certificate.

Among the sample there was a higher prevalence of parents who held a Bachelor degree than in the general population.

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**ATHLETIC ENGAGEMENT**

The mean athletic engagement score suggested that members of the player sample on average were highly engaged in their football. There was, however, a wide range of scores in this data with a minimum score of 0 and a maximum score of 8.

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**QUALITY OF FREE TIME**

The sample player on average appeared to have favourable perceptions of club support.

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**SUPPORT FOR OFF-FIELD LIFE**

Compared with the club support measure, on average players had a lower perception concerning the quality of their free time.

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**SELF-CONCEPT & ATHLETIC IDENTITY**

- AFL players on average had athletic identities similar to that of Olympic level and college athletes.
- Players typically reported strong ratings of importance for non-athletic dimensions of their self-concept.

Previous research overseas has indicated that athletes with strong but not excessive athletic identities are more likely to show both as an athlete and also beyond the athletic role.

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**WHAT DO THESE RESULTS MEAN?**

The results presented in this infographic show meaningful associations between issues of player work-life balance, engagement in non-football activities and levels of player on-field engagement.

This may be interpreted as a performance-based argument for AFL clubs to support the work life balance and holistic well-being of its players. Although participation in post-athletic career development did not necessarily make players better footballers, a quality experience in these activities contributed to their overall feelings of engagement in football.

The results also identified that players held strong values for dimensions beyond the athletic role and it is the club environment that is most likely limiting their development in these domains as opposed to a foreclosed or narrow conception of self.

Finally, the results presented are consistent with the AFL Players’ Association’s notion of a first class sporting workplace where the holistic development and well-being of athletes is both championed and celebrated in a mutually beneficial manner.

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**FINDINGS**

**PREDICTING PLAYERS’ QUALITY OF ENGAGEMENT ON THE FIELD**

- Players’ perceptions of club support for off-field life, the quality of their free time, and time spent engaging in a social life going out were meaningfully associated with the way they engaged in their football (i.e. their confidence, dedication, enthusiasm, and energy for football) after controlling for variables such as team success that season and athletic identity.

With respect to predicting positive on-field engagement, it was players’ feelings around being supported in off-field life and the quality of their free time that were the strongest predictors rather than simply the amount of time spent in social, recreational and family based activities.

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**PREPARING FOR LIFE AFTER FOOTBALL: BENEFICIAL OR DETRIMENTAL TO OFF-FIELD ENGAGEMENT?**

Participating in alternative career development (ACD) activities appeared to be unrelated to levels of off-field engagement when comparing engrangers and non-engangers.

Similarly, the amount of time invested in ACD activities did not show any meaningful positive or negative association with the way players engaged in their on-field responsibilities.

For those who were involved with ACD, the perceived value of their experiences in these activities had a very small but significant positive association with their engagement in their football.

These results suggest that players can engage in ACD without any fear it will jeopardise their football and that clubs can support these activities without compromising their core business.

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We would like to thank all those who contributed to and assisted in the completion of this study, particularly the AFL Research Board and its members for their support. We would also like to thank the 15 clubs, the player development managers and executive staff who created the time and space for us to engage with the players. Thanks also to the players who gave up their time to provide the data and the associated insight into their worlds. Finally, we would like to thank David Parakin and Matthew Pink for their enthusiasm in supporting this project.