

## **INQUIRY INTO PUBLIC DISTURBANCES AT MACQUARIE FIELDS**

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**Date Received:** 17/01/2006

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**Theme:**

**Summary**

The Director  
Standing Committee on Social Issues  
Legislative Council  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Madam/Sir

Please find attached submission to the Inquiry into Public Disturbances at Macquarie Fields.

AFL (NSW/ACT) has consulted extensively with local groups on this issue and was encouraged by local Member, Steven Chaytor, to make this submission. The approach proposed in this submission was also presented at the first meeting of the Macquarie Fields Steering Committee in June 2006 and has received enthusiastic support from all stakeholders consulted.

The AFL's extensive experience around Australia in addressing social issues affecting young people, particularly indigenous youth, is highly relevant in the Macquarie Fields situation. AFL (NSW/ACT) would welcome an opportunity to discuss this proposal with the Standing Committee on Social Issues.

Please do not hesitate to contact me by telephone on 83338008 (office), 0412933326 (Mobile), by email [allanm@aflnswact.com.au](mailto:allanm@aflnswact.com.au) for further information.

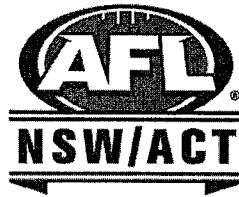
Yours Sincerely



Allan McKinnon  
Manager, Business Operations

17 January 2006





**NSW Legislative Council Standing Committee  
on Social Issues**

**Inquiry into Public Disturbances at  
Macquarie Fields**

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*A practical way of addressing the issues of school drop-out, low self esteem, alienation and anger amongst young men living in Macquarie Fields and other targeted communities in NSW*

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**A Submission by the AFL (NSW/ACT) Commission Ltd  
(January 2006)**

***“Since the inception of the Academy, not only has there been a significant reduction in crime within the Kalgoorlie Boulder area, but the incidence of antisocial behaviour involving youth has declined.”***

**Paul Bond  
Acting Superintendent  
Goldfields-Esperance District  
WA Police Service**

## Introduction

The AFL is a leading community citizen in the Macquarie Fields area. "Bob Prenter Oval" in Fields Road is a major AFL facility, housing the Campbelltown Kangaroos Australian Football Club. The AFL has recently opened an Office at the venue, accommodating two full-time Managers and a team of Development Officers. A junior AFL association also operates throughout the region.

At the national level, the AFL is widely recognised as a leader in the development of national sports policy and practical programs to address social issues, particularly as they affect young people. The AFL's landmark initiatives in the area of racial and religious vilification, indigenous programs such as at Clontarf (WA), Rumbalara (Vic), Kickstart, NAIDOC Week activities and Indigenous Traineeships Blacktown (NSW) are some examples of the AFL addressing its social responsibilities.

Following the public disturbances at Macquarie Fields in 2005, AFL (NSW/ACT) resolved to increase its level of activities in that community and the Campbelltown/Macarthur region generally. Rather than reinventing the wheel, AFL (NSW/ACT) examined a range of existing programs around Australia that might be available "off the shelf". The program that clearly stood out as having the most potential to make a real impact was the AFL Academy programs run by the **Clontarf Foundation in WA**.

After reviewing relevant literature and much consultation with key stakeholders including Campbelltown Council, Schools, Regional Education Office, community groups, clubs etc. it was decided that the Clontarf model could be adapted to address the Macquarie Fields community and implemented as described in this submission.

## Defining the Issues – Macquarie Fields

Below are some of the socio-economic features of the community living in the specific neighborhood in Macquarie Fields where the public disturbances occurred:

- 25.4% - Unemployed
- 52.4% - One parent families
- 44.9% - Population under 20 years
- 7.9% - Indigenous Population
- 88% - State Housing
- 64.9% - Weekly Income less than \$400 per week
- 17% - Population >15years have completed Year-12 at school

With regard to the Indigenous population, the following facts were identified in the *Review of Aboriginal Education in NSW*:

- An Aboriginal student has nearly twice the risk of not completing 13 years of school as a non-Aboriginal student
- Completing Years 10 or 11 increases an Aboriginal person's chance of employment by 40 percent
- Completing Year 12 increases employment prospects by a further 13 percent
- There is an over-representation (35 percent) of Aboriginal detainees in Juvenile Justice Centres.
- While the proportion of non-aboriginal students completing Year 12 in NSW increased from 63.9% to 67.6% in the period 2001 to 2003, aboriginal students dropped from 23.8% to 18.2%
- School suspension rates are 3-4 times higher for aboriginal students than non-aboriginal students in years 7-10 in NSW.
- The percentage of Aboriginal students of all ages in Behaviour Disorder and Emotional Disturbance classes rose from 18.4 percent in 1996 to 30.7 percent in 2003.

The challenge is to reduce absenteeism and school drop out for young people in the Macquarie Fields area.

### **The Clontarf Model**

The Clontarf Foundation has dramatically improved school attendance in selected communities in WA over a period of seven years. It operates a network of Academies throughout WA. While this model focuses on Aboriginal males, the program can easily be adapted to reflect the broader demographic of the Macquarie Fields area and potentially include females.

Purpose:

*"To improve the discipline, life skills and self esteem of young aboriginal men and by doing so equip them to participate more meaningfully in society"*

- Based on the principle that "failure to experience achievement when young, coupled with under-privilege, can lead to alienation, anger and worse"
- Education is the key
- Football is used to attract teenaged Aboriginal males to school and to keep them there

- High school absenteeism has reduced, behaviour improved and retention rates increased though to Year 12 (now comparable to wider population)
- 83% of 2003 graduates are in full-time employment
- Achieves this through Australian football coaching and mentoring program in partnership (but independent of) selected high schools and colleges
- Operates in and around the school timetable 3 times per week
- Natural football ability is not the main criterion for entry
- Often the less talented players prove to be better leaders and role models than their more talented peers
- With minor adjustment, the Program is capable of catering for other “at risk” groups including non-Aboriginals
- Involves high profile AFL coaching staff and players
- Commenced in 2000 with 25 boys, now operates in Perth, Kalgoorlie and Geraldton with over 300 participants
- \$4.6m WA Government commitment to roll out across the state
- \$2.5m Federal Government Commitment
- Major sponsors include BHP billiton, Foodbank, Westfarmers Ltd, Commonwealth Dept. Education, Science and Training, Bankwest, Budget, Kleenheat Gas (and more)
- Motto:

*“From little things big things grow”*

(Paul Kelly)

### **Adapting the Clontarf Model**

AFL (NSW/ACT), in consultation with local stakeholders, has developed a proposal to establish an Academy program in Macquarie Fields based on the Clontarf Model. The **objectives** of the program will be to:

- Reduce school truancy and absenteeism
- Increase school retention rates from year 7 to year 12
- Improved academic performance
- Increase employment
- Improve self esteem, lifestyle and more positive engagement in society
- Increase participation in local club AFL and other sports
- Identification and development of talented players

While the objectives are similar to Clontarf, the **scope and design** of the program will be unique to Macquarie Fields as follows:

- Commencing with 45 Year 7/8 males
- Expanding to up to 150 participants, 12–18 years over 5 years
- Girls - Possibility of including Netball at any stage
- Macquarie Fields HS, Sarah Redfern HS and James Meehan HS in Year-1
- Run feeder programs “AFL Kickstart” in local Primary Schools 10-12 year olds
- Targeting Indigenous, Pacific Islander and other “at risk” groups
- TAFE involvement
- Possibility of eventually adopting a regional focus within the high indigenous population of the wider Macarthur region
- As the region does not have a strong AFL culture, the program will include extra incentives to be involved such as:
  - Star AFL players will be involved
  - Visits to AFL Games
  - SCG, Telstra Stadium, MCG visits
  - Possible interstate games
  - Strong cultural emphasis through Music, Art, Concerts
  - Family involvement
  - Great Food will be provided at each training session
- Strong emphasis on development of skills that are transferable across sports (e.g. Leadership, Teamwork, Healthy living, Discipline, Ball-skills, Fitness, Speed, Endurance, Strength and Conditioning, Agility)
- Academy participants will not be required to play AFL as their number one sport but will be encouraged to continue to participate in their current sport of first choice

## **Consultation**

A wide range of stakeholders in the Campbelltown region have been briefed about the proposed model. All have expressed support for the program to go ahead. These include:

- Macquarie Fields High School
- Sarah Redfern High School
- James Meehan High School
- NSW Department of Education – Regional Office
- Department of Sport and Recreation
- Mayor of Campbelltown, Cr Russell Matheson



- Campbelltown City Council
- Macquarie Fields Steering Committee
- Airds Community Information Forum, Airds-Bradbury Youth Centre
- Campbelltown Kangaroos AFL Club
- Tharawal
- Local Members, Steven Chaytor, Chris Hayes and Pat Farmer

An interim steering committee met on a monthly basis during 2005 and had advanced planning towards commencement in 2006.

### **Existing Infrastructure**

A major advantage of establishing an AFL Academy in the Macquarie Fields area is the infrastructure that is already in place. In the last 12 months, AFL (NSW/ACT) has significantly increased its resources in Macquarie Fields as follows:

- Office opened at Bob Prenter Oval
- 2 full-time Development Managers (DO) appointed
- Team of part-time DOs appointed

In addition, the following already exist:

- Major AFL Facility – Bob Prenter Oval
- Campbelltown Kangaroos AFL Club
- Junior AFL Association
- Macquarie Fields High School adjacent to Bob Prenter Oval
- Two other High Schools within 5 minutes, James Meehan High and Sarah Redfern High
- Council Indoor Leisure Centre adjacent to Bob Prenter Oval
- Aquatic Leisure Centre adjacent to Bob Prenter Oval

### **Funding**

Submissions for funding have been presented to the NSW Government and to the Federal Minister for Education, Brendan Nelson. The Australian Football League will also provide funding and resources for the program. As is the case in WA, the AFL will use its extensive corporate network to secure additional funding from major national companies. Support will also be sought from local government and local businesses.

As in WA, once an Academy program has been established in Macquarie Fields, it will then have the potential to be rolled out to other targeted communities in NSW such as Mt Druitt, Redfern and Dubbo.

## **Conclusion**

This submission is based on the premise that education always was, and always will be, the key to addressing social and community issues. Young people in the Macquarie Fields area, particularly aborigines, have a much higher rate of absenteeism, suspension and school drop-out between Years 7-12. Sport can play a major role as a tool to keep young people in school.

The AFL is a national leader in several key social issues, particularly as they affect young people. The resources of the AFL and the skills and experience of its coaches, development staff and volunteers in working with young people are unmatched in Australia. The highly successful Clontarf Academy model in WA has demonstrated stunning success over a seven year period at improving school attendance by young Aborigines. This has been strongly recognised by both the WA Government and the Federal Government with a multi-million dollar commitment for a statewide rollout of the program in WA.

The AFL strongly urges the NSW Government to examine the WA model closely and to partner with AFL (NSW/ACT) to adapt the program and implement it in the Macquarie Fields area in 2006.

## **References**

*Demographic Profile for Selected Areas of Macquarie Fields – 2001 Census of Population and Housing; Campbelltown City Council*

*Review of Aboriginal Education - Chapter 3 Barrwayaygam, Miindalaygam "Growing and Learning": The Life Course; NSW Government*

*Clontarf Foundation Information Memorandum 2005; Clontarf Foundation*