

Dear Sirs,

I would like to thank and congratulate you on finally bringing the ARU to account. Their destruction of the game goes back a long way and without your support we would have got another ARU review with their misrepresentation and behaviour swept under the carpet. This follows along with the continued under funding of the development of Rugby in Western Australia, western Sydney, country Rugby and the Australian Capital Territory. The ACT over the years has also been treated appallingly by the ARU and the NSW Rugby organisations. Despite bringing extra quality they have kicked ACT schools and the club (Vikings/Kookaburras) out of their competitions. The Vikings were also kicked out of the Brisbane competition. They won the Premiership every season they were in that competition.

Others can supply further background to the treatment of the game in western Sydney and country Rugby as they know far more than I would especially in regards to the treatment of Penrith and Parramatta who are no longer represented in the National Rugby Championship. The Western Sydney Rams were originally set up to compete in the Australian Rugby Championship which lasted a season and played their home games out of Parramatta Stadium. They no longer have Western Sydney in their title. The Perth Spirit was the best supported team in that competition and were financially stable. The ACT who fielded a team in that competition had strong financial backing. The competition closed mainly due to the costs of running the Melbourne Rebels organisation that didn't have a Super Rugby team supporting them at the time. I fear this is what will happen to the Perth Spirit if they still compete in the NRC.

If Mr Pulver and the other ARU representatives continue to display a dismissive attitude, provide vague answers and turn the Inquiry in to a question and answer session I suggest you bring them to task for obstructing your investigation. It was astounding that Mr Pulver was thrown to the wolves after not being present at recent ARU media conferences and the meeting with Mr Forrest in Adelaide. They still also continue to display a patronising attitude towards Rugby fans in Western Australia who have the backing of supporters in Australia and also overseas.

Apart from sacking the vast majority of the Western Force/Rugby WA staff Mr Pulver has not implemented a future plan for the game in WA nor bothered to go in to discussions with other competitions that may take on the Western Force. The South African Rugby Union has found a competition for their two teams to join and there are reports out of South Africa that suggest that more teams are interested in leaving the Super Rugby competition. This makes the retention of the Western Force and involvement of Mr Andrew Forrest paramount. Instead like their attitude towards Mr Alan Winney they are refusing to listen to what both parties are saying.

There needs to be a root and branch review of the Melbourne Rebels organisation from day one and Victorian Rugby. I was living in Victoria when Melbourne was competing with Perth for the fourth Super Rugby licence. They submitted an underwhelming bid that was full of entitlement, thinking due to Melbourne's size and prestige they should get it over Perth who were out of sight and mind. There is nothing to suggest that mind set has changed. I was hugely impressed with the Perth bid and the community and media involvement they had supporting them. They got regular Mums and Dads on board who is the life blood of any sport. The Perth bid was overwhelmingly supported by the ARU board that then had a vision of expanding not contracting the game in Australia. This is despite obstruction by certain individuals in Sydney who wished to take Australian Rugby back to the 1980s and that attitude is still prevalent there today.

Mr Pulver and Mr Cameron Clyne have stated that the Rebels weren't viable from day one needs to be looked at along with the administration of the game under the leadership of Mr John O'Neill as they were brought in to the competition under his watch. The game was under enormous strain at the time yet the ARU pushed for another television market to get more dollars in to the sport. We still haven't seen the benefits of that extra television money and it is clear that the ARU have burnt their windfall. The ARU were competing against the South African Rugby Union for the introduction of a 15th team in to the competition. When the competition structure was being discussed it was mentioned that the Force join a South African Conference yes that's right. It shows how well thought of the Force were back then in the ARU's minds. In the end the Rebels were introduced in to the competition and there was an Australian conference that included the Force.

The Australian Rugby Union was also cost cutting at the time and reducing a number of pathway structures that were vital to the likes of the Western Force. Players were flying across the country to play club Rugby in Sydney or Brisbane. The Brumbies found it difficult with players coming and going to play club Rugby elsewhere so I couldn't imagine how hard it was for the Force to monitor their players' development. The Brumbies have now got all their contracted players playing in the ACT club competition and it appears that the Force have done an excellent job in keeping their players based in Perth. Both also have strong NRC teams which have led to the growth of local development and strengthening of the local club Rugby competitions. The Brumbies have got more consistent results on the field and the upswing of the Force's performances started to show this year with a number of Perth developed players getting valuable game time. This has also reflected in another strong showing so far in the National Rugby Championship to go with the title they won last year.

The Rebels have had issues from scratch and unlike the Western Force didn't mobilise a support base that was buying in to the team with memberships and sponsorship deals. The Western Force had tangible support that was putting their hard earned money to get the team running. They have had cultural issues within their team and hired the likes of Mr Brian Waldron in the role of Chief Executive Officer. It needs to be looked in to why it has costed them so much more than the Western Force to run that organisation despite the Victorian Government support and private ownership models.

It needs to be investigated in to whether Mr Cox was facing financial difficulty in New Zealand at the time he purchased the Melbourne Rebels and the sale of the club to the Victorian Rugby Union who have to prove whether they have the funds to support the team in the long term. Otherwise they will be a further strain on the Australian Rugby Union which will lead to more resentment in other jurisdictions in the country.

It has now come to light that the Melbourne Rebels have now signed the Western Force Head Coach Mr David Wessels are looking at contracting Force coaching staff and players based upon Memorandum of Understandings. I would like the committee and the relevant financial services bodies to launch an investigation in to how the Rebels are going to finance these specific contracts and whether they plan on using ARU funds to do so.

On top of this it appears that the Queensland Reds are in financial difficulty and I would also like you to investigate in to whether they have received additional unbudgeted loans or bailouts from the ARU.

I would like you to call on Mr John O'Neill to your inquiry as he needs to be brought to account. So far he has walk unscathed in all of this. Mr O'Neill left the ARU with a golden hand shake of over \$2 million that he should have returned given the state the game was left in. Before he resigned he was also involved in other organisations while being largely responsible for the running of the game in Australia. Was Australian Rugby really his priority? If I was ever to have any sympathy for Mr Pulver this is it. The game was in an appalling state when he took over and he was fighting factions in Sydney who didn't like it when he told them that their club competition will no longer be the third tier of Australian Rugby by introducing the NRC competition.

Mr O'Neill has had two stints as CEO of the ARU. In his first stint there was tension between himself and the Brumbies as he had suggested that they should look in to moving to Melbourne. As far as I can recall the Brumbies didn't have a representative on the ARU board despite having the most successful Australian Super Rugby and supplying quality players to the Wallabies who were building to becoming the best team in the world. Moving the Brumbies to Melbourne or even Perth didn't eventuate so there were discussions of bringing in a fourth Australian team. There were questions over whether Australian Rugby had the depth for a fourth side and didn't have a national competition to develop players. Naturally Mr O'Neill would have pushed for a Victorian team as there were British and Irish Lions tests, Rugby World Cup quarter finals and Bledisloe Cup tests in Melbourne.

By the time Australia and South Africa got approval to add extra teams in to the Super 12 competition as it was then Mr O'Neill had left the ARU. Mr Gary Flowers was the CEO and he brought in a bidding process and a national competition in the Australian Rugby Championships. The ARC was played in 2007 lasted a year and as soon as Mr O'Neill had come back to the ARU as CEO to replace Mr Flowers he scrapped the ARC due to costs as I mentioned earlier and the Sydney and Brisbane club competitions took its role as the third tier of Australian Rugby to develop players for the Super Rugby competition. This led the movement of Force and Brumbies players to those competitions. Rebels players also featured heavily in those competitions. There have been reports that numerous clubs were struggling financially and we need to know if this is one of the root causes. Other development pathways were also addressed to reduce costs. Mr Pulver has brought back those pathways and has introduced others so he should be commended for that.

Mr O'Neill hired a new Wallabies coach in Mr Robbie Deans a New Zealander who had a strong reputation as the leading coach in Super Rugby. The Wallabies started off well under Mr Deans however in the lead up to the 2011 Rugby World Cup results started to slide including losing to Samoa and Scotland at home. However Mr O'Neill rewarded Mr Deans with a contract extension. Australia finished 3rd in the World Cup, results didn't improve after the tournament which led to people questioning Mr Deans re-appointment. A poor performing Wallabies team is very costly to the ARU and they have struggled with sponsorship deals. That still occurs up until this current day.

The ARU's problems run so much further and you are right that there are so many more questions that need to be asked.

Keep up the good work.

Kind Regards