



**Australian Gridiron Officials Association
AGM 2021
Directors Report**

Sunday 29th August 2021

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Executive Summary

The 2020/21 year for the Australian Gridiron Officials Association (AGOA) was marked by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and with the introduction of new board members resulted in a review of our operating framework. This report provides a review of the year and has been compiled by the Board of Directors and the CEO.

The Board of Directors for the 2020/21 year were:

Miles Newman (ACT), Greg Evers (NSW), Paul Mercer (VIC), Shane Oset (ACT), Pamela Tuft (WA), Mathew Peterson (SA).

AGOA Operations:

Secretary – Brian Harwood

CEO – Paul Taylor

Treasurer – Mathew Peterson

Chairperson – Pamela Tuft

Training – Miles Newman

Rules & Mechanics – Paul Mercer

The following directors have terms expiring in the year 2021:

Paul Mercer, Mathew Peterson, and Greg Evers.

Introduction

This report will provide an overview of the operations and achievements of AGOA throughout the financial year of the association. The financial reporting period for the AGM is 01/03/20 – 28/02/21. As such the directors report to members will cover the same time frame.

As an outline to members, this report details of the operations including governance, member communications, rules, and mechanics, training, and the COVID-19 impact. The financial report as prepared by the treasurer will be provided as an appendix to the report.

Governance

ABN / ARBN Registration

AGOA exists to represent the national interests of gridiron officials in Australia. As such, AGOA needed to have the appropriate registration to represent associations in every state. This process involved transitioning from an association incorporated in NSW to registering for an Australian Registered Body Number (ARBN) which allows AGOA to operate nationally. Further to this, AGOA registered an Australian Business Number (ABN) and have paid to register Australian Gridiron Officiating as a business name.

Through the above actions, the Board has improved the protection the operations in Australia and better allowing national representation.

Core Operating Framework by Shane Oset

The purpose of the Core Operating Framework is to provide a clear explanation of the AGOA role, mission, and responsibilities. The reason for creating this framework was for a number of reasons:

1. To formally establish AGOA's role and mission statement.
2. To categorise the nature of AGOA's responsibilities.
3. To understand how our existing committees, initiatives and policies fit within our prescribed responsibilities.
4. To identify any areas for improvement or innovation.
5. To ensure future endeavours contribute to AGOA's role and mission statement.

It was agreed by the committee that AGOA's role is to be "the peak national body for gridiron officiating within Australia" with our mission being to "promote the safety, professionalism and enjoyment of gridiron officiating within Australia."

Achievement of our role and mission would be through four key areas of responsibility:

1. Governance
2. National Operations and Regional Engagement
3. Training & Development
4. Recruitment & Retention

In addition to our Core Operating Framework, it was proposed that AGOA should adopt a "values" philosophy that we should reflect as an organisation and as individuals. The intention would be to integrate these values into all facets of our training and development, to form the basis of our culture and identity. The proposed AGOA Values are:

- Respect
- Integrity
- Teamwork

The Board continues to work towards finalising procedures and policies in line with those determined to be integral to the operations of the Association.

Complaint Handling

The process for complaint handling by the association as a whole is being reviewed. This task is being led by the CEO, Paul Taylor. There will be further action and the development of a complaint handling group after the AGM.

Member Communications

Website & Social Channels

The AGOA website was established in 2020 and the AGOA board would like to thank Bryan Cross for his huge effort and commitment to getting the website live. www.ago.org.au represents a place for the current news and historical information of the Association to be made available in one place.

The ongoing maintenance and updating of the website have proved to be challenging due to the stretch on volunteer resources. It is under review by the Board and a contingency and update to the processes is on the agenda for the upcoming year.

Review of the open and current Facebook profiles and pages has been discussed. The intent is to remain with one public facing page and one group for members. AGOA Training and Development is the Facebook page for members and is the active page for notices and discussions.

Online Video Conferencing

Due to the inability to maintain face-to-face training sessions and meetings, AGOA made the decision to use Zoom for ongoing member communications.

The new AGOA Zoom account is available for use by all member states and can be accessed via a request to secretary@ago.org.au

Rules, Mechanics & Training

Rules & Mechanics by Paul Mercer

Despite the lack of football games to officiate both locally and nationally, it has still been a busy year, with several achievements outlined hereunder.

I continue to participate as a member of the International Advisory Group to the International American Football Officials Association (IAFOA) Manual of Football Officiating (the “MOFO”) and am now also a contributor to the International Federation of American Football (IFAF) Tackle Rules discussion group which reviews and recommends potential rule changes. We are also fortunate to have Mark Looi from Queensland representing Australia’s as part of the IFAF Flag Rules and Mechanics Facebook discussion group.

Updating of AGOA Training material

Whilst not strictly a Rules & Mechanics role, working in conjunction with Miles Newman (AGOA Director of Training), we took the opportunity provided by the COVID lockdowns to revamp and refresh the training modules and Quick Reference Guides. For my part, this meant reviewing and updating all rules and mechanics-based material to ensure its currency. This was a significant exercise in terms of time, but one that was both necessary and important.

Annual rules review

Each year, AGOA provides its recommendations to the GA Board on the IFAF rule changes, and any local variations deemed necessary for local conditions. This now also includes COVID-related variations. It is indicative of the trust GA has in AGOA that these are almost always accepted with minimal discussion.

One of the challenges over recent years has been to reduce the number of ‘local’ variations so that all states are essentially playing to the same rules. It is pleasing to note the work of state officiating groups in encouraging their leagues to adopt the national rule set and the goodwill from leagues in recognising the benefits of so doing.

A ‘GA rules variation’ document is produced each year and this year we also have a ‘9 on 9’ variations document. The next challenge is to produce a standardised ‘7 on 7’ set that broadly follows the IFAF rule book as there currently seems to be many variations for small-sided games.

The intention is ultimately to also have a GA-approved rule set for Flag football, but this may prove more challenging. There are several private organisations around the country running flag competitions and each seems to have their own set of rules.

Adoption of a national Video judge rule (IFAF equivalent of ‘Instant Replay’)

With the technology now available, and increasing involvement by private streaming organisations, more games in Australia are being live streamed than ever before. This inevitably increases the demands and expectations for some form of ‘Instant Replay’ in our competitions.

To ensure that we were in the forefront of any debate, a Video judge discussion group was created in March 2021. Comprising representatives from all officiating associations and areas, a ‘Working Group’, chaired by Mark Looi (who has several years of experience using ‘Instant Replay’ in Qld) was formed. Their remit was to consider and recommend whether

any variations should be made to IFAF Rule 12, and MOFO Section 24, for Australian purposes.

I'm happy to report that all their recommendations were accepted by GA, and because of their work we now have a national standard for the use of a Video judge in our games. I'd like to place on record my thanks to Mark and his group for their great work in this area.

Reviewing game footage

One of things I was able to do over the last twelve months when Victoria was in lockdown was to watch a lot of game footage from other states. Apart from keeping myself up to speed, several states were happy to take feedback on rules and mechanics matters and plays for discussion.

This is an area where we can not only develop greater nationally consistence in performance, but also use it as a means of encouraging officials to be more analytical when watching game footage, leading to better understanding of both the practical application of the rules and philosophies, and the mechanics of officiating.

It is my intention to continue to work in this area with a view to expanding its use as and where resources allow.

National Rules Review Panel

At present, there is no formal mechanism for coaches to have any input into the rule review process. Discussions with GA about forming a national panel comprising both officiating and coaching representatives are ongoing, and I would hope to see something put in place within the next twelve months.

In closing, I'd like to also thank our CEO, Paul Taylor, and my colleagues on the Board for their support and assistance during the past twelve months, and all the officials who viewed the videos, tested themselves with the quizzes and participated in the discussions posted on the Facebook Group. Let's hope we can all get back to officiating more live football games sooner rather than later!

Training by Miles Newman

AGO Training runs a number of programs to support the training of officials across Australia and New Zealand.

Training Systems.

We have online training systems the AGO Academy, a [YouTube channel](#) of training videos and online Qualification Records.

- In the past year we have completely reviewed the AGO Academy content and ensured it is accurate and up to date, for his work on that I would like to commend the work done by Paul Mercer.
- We also have incorporated the IFAF Videos by Frank Kristensen into the Academy as part of the Course Catalogue, which is open to all registered members to use at any time, about 100 ten-minute videos on rules and mechanics.
- The AGO Academy software is paid for by Gridiron Australia annually.
- We also provide licensing for HorizonWebRef which is a scheduling software available to all state associations. This allows us to maintain performance records for all officials. Its use is by choice of the state.

Courses.

We have up to date courses for comprising over 120 modules:

- Level 0 – Club Official
- Level 1 – Basic State Official
- Level 2 – Advanced State Official
- Referee – Club Level
- Referee – State Level
- We are currently exploring with narration for these courses and integration of further video for the next generation of online courses.

Results.

The current statistics are

- Registered Officials by state:
 - ACT 8
 - NSW 16
 - QLD 26
 - NQLD 7
 - SA 6
 - TAS 6
 - VIC 25
 - WA 16
 - NZ 7
- Registered by Level
 - Level 4 – International - 4
 - Level 3 – National – 18
 - Level 2 – 44
 - Level 1 – 51
- Male / Female
 - Female – 8
 - Male – 102

Next Year

We are looking at a few program enhancements for the next year

- Formal Flag Officiating courses – Club and Full qualification
- Further audio-visual enhancement to the basic courses

COVID Impact

National Tournaments

Gridiron Australia national tournaments represent a unique opportunity for training and development of AGOA officials. In 2020, GA had planned to host the Gridiron Australia National Championships (GANC) a combined camp style tournament for both senior men's and women's competitions. This was a new format and represented the opportunity for a large panel of officials to travel together and spend a week fully immersed in football.

Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic the GANC was cancelled. Whilst it goes without saying that all involved parties were greatly impacted and disappointed, this created challenges for AGOA to review the national standing for their officials.

The usual 2-yearly Men's AGL competitions are used to review and rank the most senior officials nationally. The junior and women's competitions provides a development tournament for newer or less experienced officials to learn and gain experience on the national stage.

The lack of a national tournament left AGOA without the same opportunities for development of officials. This remains an ongoing consideration as we move into another uncertain season.

State Competitions

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic there were varying impacts across state level competitions.

The Queensland and North Queensland seasons went ahead and with the work of Mark Looi and Queensland Gridiron Officials Association (QGOA) a COVID-safe return to play process was developed. This provided a comprehensive process for the QLD based officials and was utilised to mitigate risks to officials in a COVID environment.

The seasons for SA, WA and NSW were minimally impacted by COVID in their states at the time of their seasons. Modified mechanics were implemented as deemed appropriate by the local GOA's based on the current COVID state of play.

Unfortunately, due to the intense COVID outbreak in Victoria, Victorian Gridiron Officials Association (VGOA) officials missed a full season of football due to the cancellation of the Gridiron Victoria (GV) season.

Continued engagement of all officials nationally presented a challenge during this past year and the AGOA board continues to discuss ways in which to keep officials engaged when Gridiron season are impacted.

AGOA Considerations

Due to the impact of COVID on not only gridiron but also the personal lives on officials it was agreed by the board to reduce the membership fee to \$15 for all levels. This was put into place for the previous year and is again the agreement for the coming year.

Financial Report

Treasurer's Report by Mathew Peterson

Included in Appendix A & B are the Profit and Loss Statement and Balance Sheet for the Australian Gridiron Officials Association for the financial year ending 28th February 2021.

AGOA recorded a deficit of \$2,720.48 for the financial year, primarily due to a lack of Gridiron participation and operations as a result of the COVID pandemic.

Bank balances as of 29/02/2021:

Community Solutions One Account	1601.41
Community Solutions Cash Reserve	7639.99
Paypal	0.00
Total	9241.40

Notes on the accompanying financials.

Income

Membership Fees – Significantly down from last year – ordinary membership fees were set at \$15 for all members, as opposed to previously \$35.00 due to the reduced gridiron operations for the year.

Expenses

- Legal Fees relate to Business Name and ARBN Registration Costs
- IT Expenses relate to Zoom licensing (\$190.16), two-year website hosting (\$267.76) and Dropbox subscription charges (\$190.21)
- Membership Management Services relate to Revolutionise subscription (\$349) and Horizon Webref subscription (\$562.69)
- Training System Licensing/Hosting relates to iSpring subscription.
- Mentoring Program relates to a Women's Leadership In Sport seminar, covered in full with the Women's Leadership in Sport grant received last financial year.
- Other travel costs relate to Uber reimbursements in Hobart.

Balance Sheet

WA Gridiron Officials were owed \$3,615.00 at 29/02/2021, payable on receipt from Gridiron West. These funds were received and paid in mid-March 2021.

Conclusion

The operations of AGOA are ongoing irrespective of COVID and the unfortunate impact to gridiron seasons in each state. The board considered the year one of consolidation and review whilst the usual on-field involvement was so limited.

The extensive efforts of Paul Mercer and Miles Newman must be noted in the previous year as they both gave a lot of time into the overhaul, updating and review of the training systems. The AGO Academy is the cornerstone of our offering to officials nationally and as such represents one of the biggest resource requirements.

The AGOA board continues to want to prioritise and increase the communication and service offering to officials. The board invites all members to consider volunteering to the association in any capacity.

APPENDIX A – PROFIT & LOSS STATEMENT

Australian Gridiron Officials Association (NSW) Inc.

Profit and Loss Statement

For the period from 01/03/2020 to 28/02/2021

Accrual basis

	28/02/2021
Income	
Membership Fees	1,010.00
Interest received	5.64
Total — Income	<u>1,015.64</u>
Less: Expenses	
Admin Costs	
Legal fees	538.00
Software Licenses	
IT Expenses	648.13
Membership Management Services	911.69
Training System Licensing/Hosting	268.53
Total — Software Licenses	<u>1,828.35</u>
Total — Admin Costs	<u>2,366.35</u>
Financial Institution Charges	
Paypal Commission	2.94
Mentoring Program	
Mentoring Programs	1,305.00
Other Travel Costs - Mentor	61.83
Total — Mentoring Program	<u>1,366.83</u>
Total — Expenses	<u>3,736.12</u>
Net profit (loss)	<u>(2,720.48)</u>

APPENDIX B – BALANCE SHEET

Australian Gridiron Officials Association (NSW) Inc.

Balance Sheet

As at 28/02/2021

Accrual basis

	28/02/2021	29/02/2020
Assets		
Accounts receivable	4,150.08	5,170.08
Cash at bank	9,241.40	9,612.88
Total — Assets	13,391.48	14,782.96
Liabilities		
Accounts payable	349.00	-
Western Australian Gridiron Officials	3,615.00	2,635.00
Total — Liabilities	3,964.00	2,635.00
Net assets	9,427.48	12,147.96
Equity		
Retained earnings	9,427.48	12,147.96
Total equity	9,427.48	12,147.96