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Social Responsibility by Australian Football Clubs in the 1890's

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Social Responsibility by Australian Football Clubs in the 1890’s

Introduction

This paper examines the Social Responsibility (hereafter termed SR) by Australian football clubs during the late nineteenth century. The concept of SR emerged in the 1950’s (see Carroll, 1999) as a forerunner to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and its application to businesses in the 1970’s (Leoni, 2017). While SR and reporting is now common in many organisations, there have been a limited number of historical studies in the management literature. Historical studies that have emerged have found evidence of SR dating back to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in small family businesses (Leoni, 2017), and large public and private companies (Hoffman, 2007; Morf *et al.*, 2013; Procter, 2014; Husted, 2015; Jammulamadaka, 2016; Prieto, *et al.*, 2017; Corker, 2018). Absent from the historical management literature are investigations of SR amongst sporting organisations, even though some contemporary research exists (see Walters, 2009). Sport is rich in context for the study of management theory, and lends itself well to SR related research (Seifried, 2014). Thus, this paper aims to contribute to the literature that highlights SR from the context of a sporting organisation, and findings have the ability to reinforce the history-of-managementthought perspective on SR, which espouses that current approaches are oftentimes products that have evolved from the past conceptualizations (Evans *et al.*, 2013).

Australian Football is the country’s indigenous game, and traditionally has been the largest spectator sport. Since Australian football began in the 1850’s and after official clubs and leagues were formed, the sport quickly became an integral component of Australia’s cultural

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3 fabric, due in large part to the broad social reach. In the 1860's and 1870's attendances at
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5 football matches reflected the importance of the social occasion equally as much as the
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7 sporting spectacle (Hess, 1996; Andrews, 2000). In 1877 it was reported that 'At the football
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9 match: There is no more popular outdoor gatherings in winter time'. **Figure 1 from the**
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11 *Australian Sketcher* titled "Ladies at the football match" shows both men and women
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13 **dressed in high chivalry, where the act of going to the football seemed to be just as**
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15 **interesting as the game itself (Hess, 1996).**
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22 INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE
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26 While the social aspect of going to and watching football is noted, few historical studies have
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28 provided evidence of the SR that football clubs offered beyond just being a game and
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30 affording an afternoons outing (Pascoe, 2003). **Historians of Australian football have**
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32 **rather focused almost extensively on individual players, team scores and premierships**
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34 **won or lost. This attention on team success is to the detriment of individual club's social**
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36 **contribution, particularly in the late nineteenth century (Halabi, 2016). Indeed, the**
37
38 **importance of football to the social history of colonial Australia cannot be told without**
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40 **an account of this unusual game (Pascoe, 2003).** Given the lack of SR studies in the
41
42 sporting and historical context, the research question to explore in this investigation is how
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44 did major Australian football clubs practice what is today known as SR in the late nineteenth
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46 century? The motivation is to contribute to the historical management literature of which
47
48 there is very little linking SR with early Australian football clubs.
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56 In examining SR from a football club perspective, the paper uses an archive of digitized
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58 newspapers. Newspapers have been utilized in previous studies (see for example Prieto, *et*
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3 *al.*, 2017; Liguori, 2012), yet the use of digitized newspapers is rare in historical
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5 management research. Digitization has expanded the research possibilities, particularly in
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7 historical social issues (Ayres, 2013). **While much of the SR and reporting by**
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9 **organisations are today contained in annual reports, these are absent for the time-**
10
11 **period of the current study (see Halabi *et al.*, 2012). Instead, this paper focuses on the**
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13 **newspaper narratives of Annual General Meetings (AGMs) to obtain a yearly summary**
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15 **of the non-financial information and SR related activities.** In the 1890's, the local
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17 suburban media extensively reported on football clubs and their AGMs. AGM information
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19 and narratives have been used previously to examine the social contribution made by
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21 corporations (see Maltby, 2004), and in historical management studies (see Corker, 2018)
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23 thus reinforcing their usefulness for this study.
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31 The rest of this paper is structure in the following way. **First, an overview of the**
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33 **development and importance of SR is provided. This is followed by theory that shows**
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35 **the connection between SR and stakeholders. Contemporary literature on SR and**
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37 **sporting clubs is then noted, followed by a history of early Australian Football. The**
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39 **methodology follows which justifies the use of newspapers and AGMs, and the thematic**
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41 **analysis. Results are presented and discussed according to the football clubs SR to**
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43 **stakeholders.** Finally, the conclusion examines the contribution of the study to the existing
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45 literature, some limitations and some directions for future research.
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51 **Social Responsibility and Stakeholders**

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53 The study of SR had its formal origins in the 1950s and the work of Howard Bowen's
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55 (1953) *Social Responsibility of the Businessman* (Marens, 2008). However "the seeds of
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57 SR emerged thousands of years ago and have grown with the evolution of commerce"
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(Evans *et al.*, 2013, p. 9). Acknowledging that the past exists in a reciprocal relationship with the present, Evans *et al.*, (2013) noted that some of the ancestry of SR started with the Code of Hammurabi drafted in 2250BC. SR was also advanced in the medieval times and during the Renaissance Age (Evans *et al.*, 2013). Moving on to the Industrial Revolution, there was much evidence to support the importance of businesses addressing SR, particularly toward the human element of the labour force. Many instances exist demonstrating greater responsibility to workers. For example, between 1800 and 1825, it is reported that a Welsh textile mill owner introduced shorter working hours, provided decent housing for workers, stopped child labour in factories and provided education opportunities for employees' and their children (O'Toole and Vogel, 2011). The focus on labour is evident throughout the UK, and extended to other countries, for example Jammulamadaka, (2016) reported evidence of work practices in Mills in India in the early twentieth century that were informed by notions of custom and fairness, and which resulted in flexible hours, socially acceptable wage outcomes and work sharing for employees.

From a focus largely on the labour force, SR developed to emphasize the responsibility of businesses toward the wider community, particularly after the early 1900s (Hoffman, 2007). As corporations grew, they needed to become more public trustees and Evans *et al.*, (2013) described this as the scientific management movement, where business does not operate in isolation from society. The modern age of the corporations and their prominence and dominance in the business sector subsequently lead to the growth of the term CSR. This is even though as Hoffman (2007) noted that corporations still prefer to use the term social responsibility. Today the term SR reflects the policies or actions which identify an organisation as being concerned with society-related issues and is the

obligation of the firm to use its resources in ways to benefit the society at large (Marens, 2008). In relation to SR, organizations need to consider all parties or stakeholders affected by organizational decisions (Carroll, 1999).

A stakeholder is any group or individual who can affect, or is affected by the achievement of the firm's objectives (Freeman, 1984), and the concept was formally introduced in the 1960s (Hoffman, 2007). Stakeholder theory asserts that business can be understood as a set of relationships among groups that have some connection in the activities of that business (Freeman and Parmar, 2010). Organisations that integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations on a voluntary basis must invest heavily in their relations with stakeholders (Zink, 2007), and therefore stakeholder theory is linked to, and does explain SR activity (Roberts, 1992; Proctor, 2014). **Companies and organisations have a social responsibility to take into consideration the impact of its activities on all of its constituents, including employees, customers, suppliers and the general community (Bird *et al.*, 2007). A firm's ongoing legitimacy depends on its ability establish a social contract with its stakeholders including the community in which it operates (Klettner *et al.*, 2013), and businesses are ethically obligated to enhance the welfare of society (Proctor, 2014). As noted by Morf *et al.*, (2013, p. 88) "*organizations feel increasingly more accountable (answerable) as they become more embedded within society, compelling them to become more transparent and disclose activities that may significantly impact their stakeholders*".** The responsiveness to stakeholder demands is a key requirement for firms wishing to develop a competitive advantage from social initiatives (Black and Härtel, 2004).

Like the historical analysis of SR, the concept of an organization serving multiple constituent groups was expressed in the thoughts of classical business thinkers (Morf, *et*

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3 *al.*, 2013). Organizations cannot flourish, and will cease to exist if they do not derive
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6 their power from meeting the needs of their multiple stakeholders (Morf, *et al.*, 2013).
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8 Behaving in a socially responsible manner is increasingly seen as essential to a firm's
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10 long-term survival, and many organizations both large and small have introduced some
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12 form of SR reporting to further social good, beyond the interests of the firm
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15 (McWilliams *et al.*, 2006).
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19 A consistent debate in the SR literature is whether organisations should be focusing their
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21 resources on meeting the demands of a wide range of stakeholders at the expense of
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23 shareholder wealth (Karnarni 2010; Orlitzky *et al.*, 2011). This debate is similar to the early
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25 1800's when co-owners of a textile mill began to question the mixture of philanthropy and
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27 business. The complaint "wasn't that the mill was unprofitable - it clearly was - but that it
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29 could be made more profitable still if only the owner ceased treating his employees so well
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31 and, instead, increased dividends to it's investors" (O'Toole and Vogel, 2011, p. 64). This
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33 scenario reflects current research which suggests Pareto efficient outcomes (Varian, 1996),
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35 and a positive association between social performance and financial performance (Margolis
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37 and Walsh, 2003). Firms who fail to meet these societal demands risk not only their
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39 reputations, but their existence (see Mintzberg, 1983; Branco and Rodrigues, 2006).
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42 While the general public today insists that firms behave in a way that does not adversely
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44 affect the environment, or society (Marens, 2008), the notion of social responsibility that
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46 intersects with economic activity goes back several centuries (Proctor, 2014).
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54 There are a number of benefits to corporations, which engage in social activities beyond a
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56 pure profitability focus. These include improved corporate image and relations with
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58 stakeholders, better recruitment and retention of employees, and improved internal decisions
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making (Adams, 2002). Further, disclosing information on social and environmental issues provides a better understanding of all activities, and reduces criticism from external and internal sources (Adams, 2002).

Social Responsibility in Sport and Sporting Clubs

While Walters (2009) reported that there has been little academic analysis of the role of sport in the context of SR and social activities, there has been a growing adoption and implementation of social responsibility related practices in the last twenty years (see also Breitbarth *et al.*, 2015). Sport occupies a unique role in society, and research has shown it can have a greater impact on various issues than the SR initiatives by commercial organisations (Babiak and Wolfe 2006; Smith and Westerbeek, 2007). In particular, the popularity and global reach of sport ensures that these social activities have mass media distribution and communication power (Smith and Westerbeek, 2007).

Sport enhances social initiatives in its ability to develop partnerships (Levermore, 2010). Initiatives that use sport to assist social and economic development have been supported by leading organisations such as the Fe´de´ration Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), the International Cricket Council (ICC), and the Professional Golf Association (Walker and Parent, 2010). At a club level, almost every professional sport team worldwide has either a community outreach department or a foundation associated with, and responsible for, overseeing the delivery of socially responsible initiatives, or promotes proactive strategies and nurture resources that promote healthier, more resilient communities through expanded social inclusion (Slack and Shrives, 2008; Babiak and Wolfe, 2009; Frost *et al.*, 2013).

Like corporations, there are a number of benefits to sporting clubs when engaging in social initiatives. These include generating favourable brand imaging, retaining and increasing fan loyalty and increasing membership and ticket sales. Wider benefits include community cohesion and social capital (Hague and Mercer 1998; Jarvie, 2003), improved education (Lambourne, 2006), improved physical and psychological health, youth appeal and cultural understanding and integration (Walters, 2009).

The operational activities pursued by sporting organisations are however different to corporations. Sporting organisations through their committees and managers, need to liaise with many stakeholders including other clubs, leagues, individual athletes, coaches, mentors, spectators, the community, governing bodies and legal organisations (Smith and Westerbeek, 2007; Trendafilova *et al.*, 2013; Adapa, 2018). A distinguishing feature of clubs (or teams) is their focus on more community-directed social efforts (Walker and Parent, 2010). Such localised involvement is understandable, given the active role historically played by sport teams in the communities in which they reside (Walker and Parent, 2010). Sporting organisations continuously strive to create and maintain a high level of public awareness and interest (Adapa, 2018).

Australian Football and Football Clubs

Australia's indigenous code of football – commonly known as Australian Football began in 1858 when members of the Melbourne Cricket Club (MCC) formed a club to stay fit during the winter (Blainey, 2003). The first Australian football clubs were founded by amateurs who paid to play the 'noble' and 'gentlemanly' game largely for enjoyment and camaraderie (Cordner *et al.*, 2007). In the 1860's informal games in Melbourne, pitted clubs in suburbs against each other. Later clubs began to compete for trophies, and thus some prestige. Fierce

rivalries often developed in the 1870's, and large crowds attended games (Blainey, 2003; Cordner *et al.*, 2007).

Early football however lacked a sense of formality. Some games had to be abandoned due to continual encroachment of spectators, and roped off areas were insufficient to hold back excited crowds (Cordner *et al.*, 2007). To deal with these issues, and to improve facilities, spectators began being charged to attend matches. This later led to an organized competition known as the Victorian Football Association (VFA) which was formed in 1877. **The league was a 'sportsman' league - a not-for-profit organisation owned by its affiliated clubs (Vrooman, 2015). Club objectives focused on utility maximization, and to win games, while upholding a traditional amateur status (Frost *et al.*, 2017; Solberg and Haugen 2010). After the establishment of the VFA League, club finances became more important, and the growing enthusiasm for football drove increases in paid club membership and the numbers of people who paid to watch matches (Halabi *et al.*, 2016).**

In the early 1880's the newly formed VFA competition was attracting very good crowds (Pennings, 2012). Grounds were improved, the level of skill displayed by the players had developed, umpires had firm control of the games and new clubs were being established throughout Melbourne's suburbs and the rest of Victoria (Cordiner *et al.*, 2007). In 1886, The *Sportsman* noted "*The oldest footballer cannot recollect anything like such a crowd as that assembled upon the Cricket Ground at South Melbourne last and it says a lot for the public liking for the game when fully 30,000 people will turn out on such a disagreeable day, in anticipation of witnessing a good match. Every nook and corner round the playing space was packed fully 20 deep, whilst the branches of the surrounding trees nearly broke down with the weight of boys, crowded there like so many sparrows, and the pavilion roof nearly*

gave way from a similar cause. A temporary fence had been erected round the playground, and several mounted and foot police were present to keep the space clear, if necessary; but, except in one or two places where the fencing gave way, their services were not called into requisition” (Sportsman, 8 September 1886, p. 8).

Method

To explore how major Australian football clubs practiced SR in the late nineteenth century, a qualitative approach was undertaken through examining the narratives of AGMs reported in suburban newspapers. While annual or stand-alone reports today largely provide information about SR activities, thorough investigations through football club archives, libraries and via club historians, revealed that most Australian football clubs in the country’s major league do not have copies of these for the time-period of this study (Halabi *et al.*, 2016). Empirically, AGMs have shown to be a useful forum for promoting transparency and upholding accountability (Carrington and Johed, 2007). Historical research has also demonstrated that AGMs were an important medium for putting forward financial and social information (Maltby 2004; Corker, 2018).

Newspapers are an important source of data for qualitative researchers and provide rich information that can be used to inform research or encourage new projects (Sikka, 2010).

While some management based historical studies have used newspapers (see Liguori, 2012; Colley, 2017; Prieto *et al.*, 2017), they have been generally underutilised, with methodologies choosing to adopt and analyse other written records of historical events (Procter, 2014; Jammulamadaka, 2016; Corker, 2018).

Like Australian football, the print media in Melbourne during the late nineteenth century enjoyed enormous increases in circulation and readership (Grow, 1986). **These ‘engines of influence’ (Morrison, 2007) grew from the populated areas of Melbourne that co-incidentally also supported a major Australian football club (Grow, 1986).** The suburban newspapers were often published weekly and regularly devoted columns of about 750 words to local football activities (Grow, 1986). **The newspapers were usually between 4 – 8 pages, with up to half being advertisements and announcements, making their football coverage during the playing season significant.**

Football clubs relied on their suburban newspapers as a major way of interacting with the community (Grow 1986). **The football related information conveyed through newspapers included the fixture of games, their location, results, club meetings and social events (Pennings, 2012). Clubs formally acknowledged the importance of newspapers for their ‘kind and generous treatment’ (Record, 31 March 1900, p. 3), and were viewed more positively than the larger metropolitan based publications, because of their community focus. (Standard, 30 March 1895)**

For football clubs, AGMs were important public events that were required to be held each year, and so became an established aspect of the clubs existence. These AGMs were conducted within the local community, for which an open invitation was extended. The meeting focused on the events pertaining to the previous calendar year. Typically, agendas followed the following format: Once the meeting begun the minutes of the previous AGM were confirmed. A summary was then made of the team performance and may have highlighted specific individuals. The financial report was then presented and discussed.

After raising any general business, the election of new or returning board members would then be conducted and the formal meeting would conclude.

To obtain the narratives of the AGM, the National Library of Australia's Newspaper Digitisation Program (ANDP), and the 'Trove' search engine was used. **Trove began in 2008, and now has more than 21 million pages of digitised newspaper pages from over 1000 newspapers [1].** Trove searches focused on key words in sequence such as 'annual general meetings', 'AGM', 'annual meetings' 'annual reports', or singular words such as 'profits' or 'loss'. Key words were then associated with any of the football clubs in Victoria's main competitions over the 1890's [2].

This paper examined club AGMs in the last decade of the nineteenth century, which aligned with the call for research in this time-period (Pascoe, 2003). This decade was also suitable because one major league club had begun in 1892, and some Trove newspapers ceased to be available early in the twentieth century. Table 1 highlights the football club, the suburban newspaper, and the years the AGM narratives were sourced. **In summary there were 93 articles used for the analysis (total for clubs in parenthesis).** The number of AGMs used for the data in this study could be considered a good representation of the total population of AGMs held over this period for the League clubs during the decade 1890 – 1900 [3].

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

The articles were read a number of times to gain familiarity with the content. When a narrative was considered relevant, these were extracted, and coded based on what SR contribution the club did, to whom, where and how (Eriksson, and Kovalainen, 2008).

This coding led to a thematic analysis - a commonly used technique for organising data from narrative management based studies (Schwartz, 2015). **The patterns or themes that emerged from the data fitted neatly into social responsibility contributions made according to club stakeholders and coding was based on players; the committee and other volunteers; the wider community and ladies (Friedman *et al.*, 2004). By organising in this manner, the methodological principles and problems inherent in presentism meant the doctrines of the present serve as the criteria for organizing, interpreting, and judging past ideas (Seidman, 1983). The results section is presented according to the SR contribution made to the individuals or groups whose support was needed for the club to fulfil its objectives (Freeman, 1984).**

Results

Players

Football players were the main ‘employees’, and primary stakeholder of football clubs. The SR that clubs showed to players reflected similarities in importance to the human element of the labour force in commerce (Evans *et al.*, 2013). All clubs acknowledged the players contribution during the season; after they had played a number of seasons; had retired; left the area, or when a personal milestone was reached.

As formal payments to players were outlawed in this competition (see Halabi *et al.*, 2016), prizes were the way clubs looked after their “labour”. Prizes were many, and given to the best players, the leading goal kicker, or the most ‘*regular attention to training*’ (Pahran Telegraph, 1 April 1899, p. 5). When clubs achieved their objective of being the premiership team, players received mementos such as gold medals (Standard, 9 April 1898, p. 2) or illuminated photo albums (North Melbourne Advertiser, 7 April 1893, p. 3). Incentives were provided at training to make players comfortable, for example, ‘*your committee introduced a*

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3 *system of providing refreshments for the players on each Thursday evening. This had an*
4 *immediate effect; and the attendance considerably improved, and before many weeks the*
5 *coffee and cake (as it was usually termed) with a little harmony was looked forward to and*
6 *much enjoyed by the players'* (North Melbourne Gazette, 3 April 1896, p. 2-3).
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15 Players were regularly recognised for their loyalty, the following being typical. *'Mr Baker*
16 *moved that present and future players, who had played with the team for three years, be*
17 *enrolled as honorary members of the club, He looked upon the honour as a just one, well*
18 *earned by those who had played for the amusement of the general public'* (Williamstown
19 *Chronicle, 30 March 1895, p. 3).* Players were also recognized for long service, some *'with*
20 *handsomely framed long service certificates'* (Mercury and Weekly Courier, 25 March 1898,
21 *p. 3).*
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33 If players were to leave or retire, they also received gifts, with narratives such as the
34 following being typical. *'On his retirement on 17th September last, was made the recipient of*
35 *a small souvenir from the club, for his valuable pest services, and the committee express*
36 *regret at having to part with such a brilliant and consistent player, and who, they may safely*
37 *say, had not a single enemy, which no doubt was owing to his gentlemanly play'* (North
38 *Melbourne Advertiser, 7 April 1893, p. 3).* When players reached certain milestones,
39 presents such as *'Tea and Coffee services or silver plates'* were given (Fitzroy City Press, 2
40 *April 1896, p. 2).*
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54 **Football was a physical contact sport with socially-sanctioned violence which produced**
55 **its share of injuries (Vamplew, 2016). All clubs showed a great deal of care and**
56 **responsibility to their injured players.** The following from the Fitzroy club (Fitzroy City
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Press, Thursday 2 April 1896, p. 2) is an example of the extreme gratitude the club and its members had for a fellow player. *'The club had been more than usually unfortunate in having their players hurt, the most severe one incapacitating their friend 'Teddy Melling -, the last of the old players of the club'. Owing to the generosity of the members and supporters, and to other gentlemen who admired that sterling player, the club was enabled to give Mr. Melling and his family a home for life, a house having, been bought in 'York-street, North Fitzroy'. (Cheers)'. At another club, a concert was organised to raise funds for an injured player. '(The Chairman) was glad to hear that the members were about to do something towards assisting a plucky and young courageous young player who was injured during the season (Mr Shore), and he hoped all would do their best to make the entertainment on that occasion a success'* (Richmond Guardian, 1892, p. 4).

All clubs bore the cost of medical expenses, which in some cases were large. The Essendon club for instance noted that *'Over £80 had been paid away for medical attendance on the various members who were injured during the season, the club again experiencing their usual misfortune in having players incapacitated'* (North Melbourne Advertiser, 3 April 1891, p. 2). As well as doctors, clubs provided specialists such as dental surgeons, and masseurs (Mercury and Weekly Courier, Friday 24 March 1899).

There is multiple evidence that clubs provided players who were unable to play with funds. *'In the last annual report it was notified that Mr. W. G. Charrctt had retired from the football field owing to ill health. Your committee made arrangements and played a match with the Footscray Club, early in the season, the result being that we were enabled to send Mr. Charrett the sum of £18 17s. 5d* (Record, Saturday 27 March 1897, p. 2, 3). Also on the unfortunate death of one of its players, the Essendon club noted *'condolence was expressed*

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3 *with the parents and friends of the late Mr. William Leaver who lost his life when playing*
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5 *with the second twenty. The unfortunate circumstances surrounding this sad event induced*
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7 *the committee to defray the medical and funeral expenses (£12), and they feel certain the*
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9 *members will cordially endorse their action'* (North Melbourne Advertiser, Friday 7 April
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11 1893, p. 3). Former players were also acknowledged on their passing.
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17 Clubs often rewarded players with a trip, paid from club funds. Trips were an opportunity to
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19 provide social 'togetherness' and 'spirit' and assist the team in winning matches. *'During the*
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21 *season the committee thought it advisable to give the team an outing, two trips being taken to*
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23 *Ballarat; one in May and another in October. On both occasions your team proved victorious*
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25 *and the players generally had a most enjoyable trip'* (Record Saturday 27 March 1897, p. 2,
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27 3).
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31 32 33 **The Committee and Volunteers**

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35 **While footballers played the game, the committee ran the club and much of this**
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37 **included arranging social functions.** *'Your club has been extremely fortunate in having*
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39 *had associated with it office-bearers, who have done much to preserve the social standing of*
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41 *the F.F.C., and who have fostered a feeling of good fellowship amongst the team'*
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44 (Independent, 1 April 1893, p. 3).
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49 The role of office bearers involved a great commitment, particularly to ensure the social side
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51 of the club was met, for example, *'Dr Malcolmson said he was sorry that he felt in duty*
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53 *bound, not only to himself but also to the club, to resign his position as president. His*
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55 *practice had so largely increased that he could not devote the time to the social requirements*
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57 *of the club that he thought was due from the president'* (Standard, 30 March 1895, p. 3).
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Like players, upon retirement, committee members received gifts as acknowledgement of their work. Other stakeholders who helped the club achieve its objectives included volunteers such the secretary, treasurer, medical staff; trainers; timekeepers and caretakers. These were recognised with thanks, for example, *'For the care and skill shown by Drs. Guseaden and Malcomson in the treatment of injured players, the Committee expressed their deep obligation...[and]...were also gracefully remembered by the Committee, for their impartial attentions to the team'* (Port Melbourne Standard, 9 April 1898, p. 2).

The Community

The wider community are regarded as a major stakeholder of sporting clubs in contemporary research (Trendafilova, *et al.*, 2013; Smith and Westerbeek, 2007), and there is evidence of this connection in football clubs in the 1890s. The community were openly invited to football games, charity events and also the AGM.

There are a number of instances where clubs conducted events on their own and with other clubs to support to benefit their local communities. For example, *'During the past season the Richmond Club took steps to alleviate the distress that prevailed in Richmond owing to the effects of the great flood, ... with the assistance of the North Melbourne Club* (Sportsman, 29 March 1892, p. 6). Football clubs also worked together to benefit various organisations. *'The sufferers from the Bijou Theatre fire and the London Dock Laborers Fund received material assistance from the proceeds of two matches (one extraneous) with Carlton, the committee of which club generously acted in conjunction with the executive by handing over its portion of the proceeds from both matches.'* (Record, 15 March 1890, p. 2).

At least four clubs raised funds to support local hospitals, and these were widely reported in the AGMs. The Fitzroy club for example noted *'An innovation was made at the last Annual Meeting in taking up a collection for St. Vincent's Hospital, a sum of six guineas being received, which was supplemented by £4 4s from the funds of the Club. Your Committee intend to continue this laudable practice at each Annual Meeting'* (Fitzroy City Press, 8 April 1897, p. 3).

Many AGMs reported attendance by delegates of competing clubs. The football league's governing bodies at the time were made up of representatives of individual clubs, and by virtue, competing clubs had an interest in others (Trendafilova *et al.*, 2013; Smith and Westerbeek, 2007). Competing club attendees usually spoke highly of the inviting club and the *friendly rivalry and spirit* (Record, 1 April 1899, p. 2, 5). A regular occurrence at the completion of the AGM formalities was the presence of musicians and singers to entertain the crowd, again reinforcing the social event. Some clubs would call for donations after the entertainment as a way of raising funds, or reducing debt (Standard, 1 April 1899, p. 4; Independent, 28 March 1891, p. 3).

Ladies

While men occupied positions of status in football clubs, women 'kept the structure in working order' (Senyard, 1995, p. 87; see also Hess, 2000). The AGM narratives acknowledges the social contribution made by women, and the clubs gratitude in helping them achieve their objectives.

Women were openly invited to football games and AGMs. At a Collingwood AGM for example *'the galleries were thronged with ladies'* (Mercury and Weekly Courier, 25 March

1898, p. 3). Most clubs recognised the positive effect women had, and reported ways to make their football experience more favourable, the following being typical. *'The Rev H. F. Scott then gave a speech, the main part of which was he hoped that football matches in Footscray would be made so that everyone would be able to take their wives, sisters, and sweethearts, without having their ears filled with disgusting language, during the progress of the game, by some of the 'barrackers' and that the committee would do their best to see it done'* (Independent, 28 March 1891, p. 3).

Women were heavily involved in fundraising activities and social programs, and the funds provided an important source of income to clubs. When the Geelong club decided to eradicate its heavy liability and conduct a fair, it called on all supporters and particularly "ladies to assist" (Geelong Advertiser, 13 March 1895, p. 3). The Port Melbourne club also noted the contribution of women and their gratification. *'In December last a bazaar was arranged by the ladies of the district, to assist the Club out of its large monetary difficulty, and it is pleasing to say realised the handsome sum of £289 1s 3d, and your Committee take this opportunity of tendering their most sincere thanks to each and everyone of the ladies that assisted to make the bazaar the great financial success it undoubtedly was; also to especially thank Mrs. Malcolmson (president), who threw her house open for the use of the sewing classes* (Standard, 2 April 1892, p. 3).

Woman associated with football clubs were welcomed at some social events. When a special effort was made to increase the clubs funds through a concert, at one club, the *'Administrator of the Government at that time, Lady Madden and the Misses Madden attended'* (Mercury and Weekly Courier, 19 March 1896, p. 3).

Discussion and Conclusion

While SR did not exist in Victorian Australia in the formal sense, this research has shown that characteristics of SR were evident in Australian Football clubs. Football clubs engaged in many SR activities that benefited stakeholders and the surrounding communities. There has been a lack of historical recognition of what might be called SR practices by football clubs, and this study contributes to the historical management literature of which there is very little linking any notions of SR with early Australian football clubs (Pascoe, 2003).

The SR initiatives of clubs in the late nineteenth century focused on a variety of stakeholders. The SR followed the development of businesses in industrial countries as football clubs focused much of their initial SR on their labour force (players). Without the players, clubs could not fulfil their utility maximization objective. Clubs therefore rewarded players with prizes, trips, incentives at training, and gifts for years of service. Focusing resources on the players was a way of retaining key people in the organisation – much like those initiatives from historical research (McWilliams and Siegel, 2006; Hoffman, 2007; Morf *et al.*, 2013; Jammulamadaka, 2016; Leoni, 2017; Corker, 2018). Families of players or volunteers within the club also benefited through generous gifts and donations, particularly if players had become injured, or on their unfortunate death. With club members, clubs helped to co-ordinate the community, and raise money for worthy causes. In one instance a house was purchased through communal efforts to assist a popular and incapacitated player.

Generally football clubs appeared more community focused than businesses. Businesses extended their SR to the wider community in the early 1900s (Hoffman, 2007), yet this

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study provides evidence of the SR of football clubs to their communities earlier. This finding reinforces that Australian Football clubs were very community driven, and undertook activities which raised money for charities and events which affected their surrounding areas. This reinforces the clubs strong community origins (Slack and Shrives, 2008; Frost *et al.*, 2013). The period of time saw donations emerging to aid hospitals (Fitzroy City Press, 8 April 1897), while clubs worked together with their competitors to raise funds.

Aspects of SR found in this paper can be seen in contemporary Australian football clubs. Today clubs promote their SR activities to many stakeholders through annual reports and on club websites. The annual report of one Australian Football club acknowledged that ‘*We recognise we have a Social Responsibility to engage in community activities*’ (Hawthorn Football Club Annual Report, 2014, p. 7). **SR activities of clubs continue to support players, hospitals, and charities – those which had their roots in the late nineteenth century, and thus confirming the history-of-managementthought perspective (Evans *et al.*, 2013). Today a number of Australian football teams have taken stands on social issues such as racism, domestic violence, and depression. These issues while appearing go beyond those presented in this paper, have their roots in community development and involvement.**

The findings of this study lengthens the historical SR literature for sporting clubs. While Australian football club histories continue to highlight winning teams, premierships, and major characters including players and committee members, the clubs social contribution to their stakeholders and community is also significant and extends to the foundation of the game and clubs. In the absence of annual reports or

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3 **other publically available information that does not extend to the 1890's (Halabi, *et al.*,**
4 **2016) such findings should be more prominently addressed when club histories are (re)-**
5 **examined.**
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12 A further implication of this paper is the emergence of digitized newspapers as a data source
13 for management researchers. A digitized newspaper archive such as Trove in this instance
14 provides the potential for greater management historical research opportunities. The detailed
15 narratives found in these past newspapers make them a rich source of information that could
16 be used in complimenting other management archives such as written records and existing
17 literature of historical events (Corker, 2018; Jammulamadaka, 2016; Procter, 2014). **Using**
18 **newspapers in conjunction with other data sources could provide a more detailed**
19 **picture of business and management events and give a wider and more meaningful**
20 **understanding of historical organisations. Sport provides a rich context for the study**
21 **of SR, and newspapers can enhance these research possibilities (Corker, 2018,**
22 **Seifried, 2014).**
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40 A limitation is that the newspaper reports may have been the impressions and opinions of
41 journalists and not completely objective. Newspaper reporting does suffer from selective
42 bias and what is published maybe a commentary of each newspapers reporting of the clubs
43 AGM and not AGM itself. This is an objection that cannot be refuted in this or other studies
44 (Maltby, 2004). Grow (1996) acknowledges that local biases were apparent football
45 coverage of local suburban newspapers, yet these mainly focused on results of games,
46 umpires, the behaviour of crowds and the amateur / professional debate. In terms of the
47 AGMs it is difficult to assert that the quantitative and qualitative information portrayed in the
48 newspapers was not reported correctly. The many different articles used in this study, and
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their representation of the population of AGM’s in the late nineteenth century suggests a degree of consistency and reliability in the reporting of football club’s SR. **A further limitation is that the AGMs may not have reported all the significant non financial information of football clubs, or if these were reported they may not have formed part of the newspaper article. Donations to charities and hospitals for example may have been made by clubs but not reported in the articles.**

While limitations exist, this paper has contributed to the historical management literature of which there is very little on sporting clubs. Further research opportunities exist to enhance these findings. While this study focused on the 1890s, a more detailed study might focus on a case study of one clubs’ SR over a longitudinal time period. Research may also be focused on one type of stakeholder – for example the community, and how clubs attempted to enhance community welfare, and the many groups within this community.

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End Notes

[1] As at January, 2019 see, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/about>.

[2] In 1890, the VFA comprised twelve clubs. A further club was added to the competition in 1892. Eight of these clubs broke away from the VFA to form the Victorian Football League (VFL), in 1897, and this become the state’s major league. The football clubs in this study were those thirteen clubs which made up the VFA. Clubs which were added to the VFA in 1897 were not included. Further, the Carlton and Melbourne clubs (which were part of the VFA in 1890) were very much inner city and no suburban newspaper was specifically devoted to covering their affairs in a similar manner to other suburban clubs. These clubs were excluded from the study, leaving a total of eleven clubs.

[3] The Collingwood club held its first AGM in 1892, meaning only 9 AGMs were available for this club. The ten other clubs held all 11 AGMs between 1890 and 1900, making the total 119.

Figure 1: *Australian Sketcher*, "Ladies at the Football Match", 7 July, 1877, Source: State Library of Victoria

Football Club	Newspaper	AGM Years and (total)
Footscray	Footscray Independent	1890, 1892, 1896-1900 (7)
Williamstown	Williamstown Chronicle	1891-1900 (10)
North Melbourne	North Melbourne Advertiser North Melbourne Courier and West Melbourne Advertiser North Melbourne Gazette	1891-1899 (9)
Essendon	North Melbourne Gazette	1890-1892, 1894, 1896 (5)
Collingwood	Mercury and Weekly Courier	1892-1900 (9)
Fitzroy	Fitzroy City Press Mercury and Weekly Courier	1890-1900 (11)
St. Kilda	Prahran Telegraph Prahran Chronicle Chronicle, South Yarra Gazette, Toorak Times and Malvern Standard	1892-1897, 1899, 1900 (8)
Port Melbourne	Standard	1890, 1892, 1894-1899 (8)
Geelong	Geelong Advertiser	1890-1891, 1893-1899 (9)
South Melbourne	Record	1890, 1892-1899 (9)
Richmond	Richmond Guardian Sportsman	1891-1898 (8)

Table 1: Football Club, Suburban newspaper, and AGM years