

## **New Zealand Secondary Schools Football Association**

### **Chairman's Report 2021**

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As I sit writing this report, once again in lockdown, it is heartbreaking to think of all of the players who have now had the last two National Tournaments cancelled. There are no doubt senior students who now have never experienced the thrill, challenge and comradery of representing their school at football during the winter tournament week. Once more, these last few days and weeks have been challenging times for the whole of the country, let alone the school football community.

This year our decision was made much easier by School Sport NZ taking the initiative to make the decision to cancel tournament week on behalf of all the sports codes involved. I am sure it was not an easy decision to make, but it was certainly the only one that could be made at the time, given that we are now entering the second week of lockdown and we are only a few weeks away from tournament week. We thank Mike Summerell and everyone else at School Sport NZ for their clear communication and leadership in dealing with this difficult decision.

It is perhaps some small comfort that at least this year we have seen the majority of local school competitions throughout the country either fully completed or certainly near completion.

At the end of October last year we had to say goodbye to our much loved Malcolm Cowie. It was a shock to us all when we heard that Malcolm had passed away unexpectedly. Unfortunately I was not able to attend the funeral in person, but the Exec. was very well represented and I thank all those that made the journey to Auckland to pay their respects. Malcolm gave significant service to NZSSFA, including 18 years as Chairman. He led overseas tours and significantly developed the growth of teams involved in tournament week. When he stepped down as Chairman, he was made patron of our organisation. Malcolm will not just be missed by his beloved St Kent's, but by many people throughout the Auckland and New Zealand football community. Tributes flowed in recognising his "positive attitude, enthusiasm and strong management" for growing football at secondary school level across New Zealand. His wise words, twinkling eyes and beautiful dry Scottish sense of humour was a feature of many a tournament, AGM, game-day sideline and after-match function.

New Zealand Secondary Schools Football continues to be a member of the New Zealand Sport Collective. They manage the commercial, media and marketing rights of the association. Again with nationals being cancelled, the opportunities that were being presented with this agreement, in particular with live streaming, will be missed out on.

The Secondary School Age Working Group (SSAWG) has made good progress over the last 12 months. Ian Francis and Richard Hutchinson from the Global Leisure Group have completed the consultation exercise and fed back their findings to the group. The recognition of the importance of school football for many young players was clearly evident and having the freedom to choose where they play also came through strongly. Other important matters such as player workload and the setting up of a Secondary School Football Advisory Group to inform the overall plan and delivery models for secondary school football have been outlined. Alex Chiet (National Sport Development Consultant) who has led this group believes that the consultation process has given us a "strong mandate for progress!". The next steps are as follows ;

- Richard and Ian will take the feedback from the group and shape up a report outlining the key findings from the consultation process. There will be another opportunity for feedback from the group .

- NZF will then take those findings and develop an action plan over for the next 3 years based on the recommendations from the report
- The SSAWG will meet again to discuss the final recommendations and draft action plan

Obviously the implementation of the action plan will be where the true test of this work will be seen. I am optimistic that there will be some positive changes on the horizon and that these changes will not be at the expense of school football.

With the continued restrictions on international travel, we have had to make obvious changes and be flexible with our international programme. With the help of Phil Parker (OFC Player Development Officer) and the Australian Schoolboys Association, we have managed to put together an exciting alternative to our usual program. Games with travelling Cook Island teams and New Zealand Maori representative teams are planned for these October holidays. Australian Schoolboys are due to arrive on these shores in January 2022 and a comprehensive programme has been planned for both our under 15 and under 19 teams. I would like to thank the significant work done here by Michael Taylor. Michael continues to work tirelessly in an effort to provide meaningful, competitive games for our representative teams, and we congratulate him on his 2021 promotion to the Senior Leadership Team at New Plymouth Boys High School. Feedback from the coaches and managers of our teams regarding the recent trials held in Auckland, Christchurch and Wellington has been very positive. Numbers in attendance and the quality of the players have both been very encouraging, and we look forward to finally seeing our young men competing against these other representative teams.

The association's finances are sound. It is likely we will have to refund SKY Sports payment and we may lose future payments from them. However, all these funds are used to pay for live streaming which, with tournaments being cancelled, will not happen anyway. Unfortunately the cancellation of this year's national tournament week has also meant that we have taken a financial hit and lost some money that will be impossible to recover - namely the t-shirts and certificates which have already been printed. Continued careful management of our expenditure will ensure viability. Discussions are currently being had regarding accessing any possible help from the government through their COVID recovery budgets

As Chairman of the New Zealand Secondary School Boys Football Association, I would like to express my sincere thanks to all of the people who have enabled school football to be played this season. In particular, the volunteers whose tireless work makes everything possible.

I would like to thank the Executive for the hard work completed this year in supporting our Association. My special thanks must go to our National Administrator (CEO), Leigh Perry, for all the time and effort she puts into the organisation and her proactive attitude in supporting the executive. At times the role of National Administrator is a thankless one when dealing with all the correspondence. It is a job she undertakes with consummate ease and professionalism.

Thank you to the schools, for your continued support of the Association, the representative teams and the tournaments.

Neil Penfold  
August 2021