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Jeff's wake up call

MICHAEL WARNER

A 15-MINUTE phone call with AFL chief executive Gillon McLachlan prompted Hawthorn president Jeff Kennett to apologise for comments he made about security staff at Marvel Stadium.

A defiant Kennett hit the airwaves early yesterday to declare he wouldn't be "driven into the ground by some sort of political correctness".

But by mid-morning, and after a chat with McLachlan, Kennett conceded he had got it wrong on Monday by suggesting some security at AFL grounds were "new arrivals" who didn't "appear to have a great knowledge of our game".

McLachlan yesterday condemned the comments, but said no action would be taken against the former Victorian premier.

"I've spoken to Jeff today and told him I clearly believe that he's wrong and I know Jeff regrets his comments," McLachlan said. "People want to be judged on the performance in their roles, not their origin or background."

Kennett told the *Herald Sun* he realised his mistake after a day of reflection.

"I apologise. It's not what I meant, but it's how it came out," Kennett said.

"I've been a defender of the cause for so long it doesn't matter, but it was inappropriate and the best thing to do was



Yesterday's *Herald Sun*.

accept responsibility, and that's what I've done."

He said McLachlan had not forced him into the backdown.

"We spoke for about 10 or 15 minutes," Kennett said.

"He didn't ask me to apologise nor did he insist upon it, but on reflection it was the right thing to do."

Asked if he accepted that his comments could be considered "racial stereotyping", Kennett said: "I can see how people would draw that conclusion."

Western Bulldogs president Peter Gordon said Kennett's comments were divisive.

"It's really disappointing ... as a general guide for Jeff and for everyone else, if you're starting a sentence with, 'I'm not being racist but ...', chances are you're about to say something racist, so better just not to do it," Gordon told SEN.

McLachlan said the league had the power to sanction Kennett under Rule 35.

"But that requires a complaint, and that's not what's happened here," he said.

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IT'S GOOD TO HEAR YOUR VOICE, GILL

CONIGLIO TRADE BLOW

JEFF Kennett may have ruined Hawthorn's hopes of snatching prized free agent Stephen Coniglio from Greater Western Sydney.

Giants chief executive David Matthews said Coniglio, who is an AFL multicultural ambassador, would not be impressed by the Hawks president's gaffe about security officers at Marvel Stadium.

The Hawks are one of several clubs linked with the 25-year-old midfielder.

"At the Giants we are very

focused on diversity and inclusion and Jeff Kennett's comments serve to undermine the efforts of a lot of people within the game and at community level," Matthews said yesterday.

"They were offensive and the irony is they came from the leader of a club that gets linked to having an interest in our vice-captain, Stephen Coniglio.

"Well, good luck selling yourself to a person of Stephen's character."

JON RITSON

IN the end, this was about communication.

The AFL has to communicate more with its fans.

The stadium operators need to communicate more with the AFL when they are changing their security approach and certainly need to tell their security staff to chill out.

And the security staff absolutely have to be better with the fans.

The central point yesterday when Gillon McLachlan fronted the media was a positive one: Safety.

But somewhere along the line over the past two weeks it became a shemuzzle.

CHIEF FOOTBALL WRITER



MARK ROBINSON

The AFL didn't read the temperature in the stands or listen to the fear and anger on talkback radio until the issue became volcanic.

And when fans speak of feeling intimidated by security staff, there is a serious issue.

The optics of fans being asked out of seats on Friday night and Saturday night at

Marvel Stadium was just too much.

The take-out yesterday was a commitment from McLachlan to listen to the fans and to "get the balance right" to ensure the fans feel safe and free from intimidation.

He also promised the "behavioural officers" would back off.

"My personal opinion is they're not right and they should go," he said.

Observers can judge McLachlan harshly or not after addressing the situation yesterday. Some will say he didn't entertain the nitty gritty, others would say he delivered

on the bigger issue of fan concerns.

Hopefully, everyone can move forward — together.

That lack of togetherness between those at headquarters and those in the grandstands is one of the reasons why yesterday was promoted as a fever-pitch press conference.

It wasn't anything of the sorts, despite a worthy press group throwing bombs.

The learnings for the AFL are evident, that McLachlan, and by extension football boss Steve Hocking, have to be more visible.

McLachlan needs to put his head up more when issues



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Critics Kerr-unched

FORMER West Coast ace **DANIEL KERR** is flying the flag for his sister **SAM** at the Women's World Cup in France.

And he's doing it in style, as evidenced by a video showing him slugging a pint while wearing a T-shirt featuring his sister's famous quote (below) after the Matildas' victory against Brazil.

Sam Kerr hit out at critics after the 3-2 win last week at the World Cup, telling them to "suck on that one".

The siblings are "super-

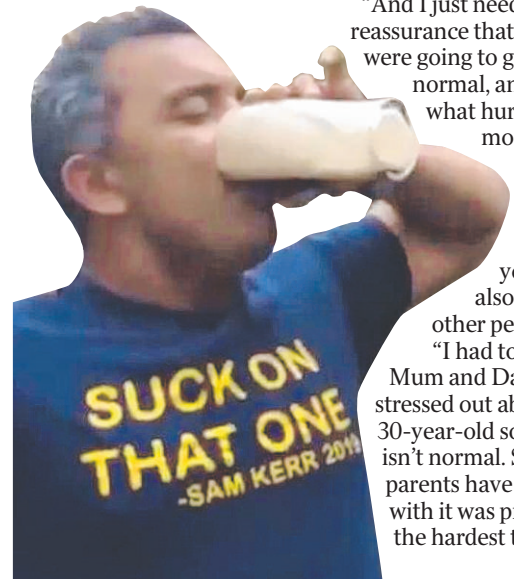
close", but Sam revealed in a chat with former Western Bulldogs captain **BOB MURPHY** on his Fox Footy show *Bob* that she didn't speak to Daniel for two years.

The Eagles premiership star had a number of off-field incidents late in his career, then spent five nights in prison in 2014, a year after his retirement.

"I didn't speak to him for two years and he always says, 'The thing that brought me back on to the road was that everyone spoke to me except you'," Sam said.

"And I just needed that reassurance that things were going to go back to normal, and that's what hurt me the most is that when you do things that affect yourself, it also affects other people."

"I had to watch Mum and Dad be stressed out about their 30-year-old son, which isn't normal. Seeing my parents have to deal with it was probably the hardest thing."



CATS GO TO COACH GURU

IT'S an audience with the coaching messiah.

Coaches from far and wide, including overseas, continue to make the trek to AAMI Park and the door of Melbourne Storm coach **CRAIG BELLAMY**.

Two of the AFL's best young coaches took the opportunity on Saturday night. With Geelong having the bye, assistants **MATTHEW SCARLETT** and **COREY ENRIGHT** spent time in Storm's inner sanctum as the purple haze dismantled Newcastle Knights.

They were joined in the box by New Zealand rugby great **WAYNE SMITH**, who has visited a number of times.

Hawthorn coach **ALASTAIR CLARKSON** keeps regular counsel with Bellamy. Other AFL coaches to have picked his brain on match day include Collingwood's **NATHAN BUCKLEY** and St Kilda's **ALAN RICHARDSON**.

Former Adelaide coach **NEIL CRAIG** was in Storm's coach's box for the Anzac Day game and ex-Melbourne Victory coach **KEVIN MUSCAT** has also appeared.

Amy magic rubs off

IN January, US Open winner **GARY WOODLAND** had a moment with Special Olympics golfer **AMY BOCKERSTETTE** that warmed hearts around the golf world.

Bockerstette, who has Down syndrome, and Woodland played the famous par-three 16th hole at Scottsdale during a practice round before the Phoenix Open.

They have since kept in touch and, after his US Open win on Monday, Woodland made a FaceTime call to Bockerstette. "I used your positive energy today. You were awesome," he told her.

Bockerstette was the star at the 16th in January.

After hitting her tee shot into a bunker, she splashed it out and brilliantly sunk the putt for par.

THE WHISPER

WHICH sports star's much-hyped weight-loss program has disappeared from view after they fell off the wagon? We hear a business arrangement regarding the lost kilos campaign has subsequently got messy.



AFL chief executive Gillon McLachlan faces the media yesterday; and (far left) Hawks president Jeff Kennett doubles down on his comments about security workers at AFL matches (inset). Pictures: AAP, CHANNEL 7



A security guard is ushered away in Sunday's North Melbourne-GWS clash.

UMPIRE SAVES THE DAY

JON RALPH

STAY in your lane. That will be the demand to Blundstone Arena's security guards after an extraordinary "near miss" during Sunday's North Melbourne-Greater Western Sydney clash.

A casual security guard will not be sacked but instead counselled on protocol after he tried to break up an on-field scuffle between North captain Jack Ziebell and Giants backman Heath Shaw.

As he approached the pair, he was told by umpire Nathan Williamson to move back.

Cricket Tasmania chief Nick Cummins said yesterday the incident had been reviewed by arena officials and he was sure it would not be repeated. He could not remember a similar incident in his 20 years in sports administration.

"I cannot think of this happening before in any sport in Australia. He is a casual security guard, he's not full-time," Cummins said.

"The contractors use him for the weekend, so possibly he didn't understand his role was to keep people off the venue, not get involved in things on the arena."

"Straight after the game we met with the AFL and EPS, the security company, to understand how and why."

"There hasn't been any directive from the AFL to increase our security and this incident and what has been going on at Marvel are quite different."

Venue operator, Cricket Tasmania, confirmed the security company, Elite Protective Services, was being used for the first time for AFL games in Hobart after a successful season providing security for Big Bash cricket last summer.

Cummins said the security guards were told to be on the fence line to ensure fans did not enter the arena.

"They crouch next to the fence and he was there and the scuffle took place and he shuffled over there to help and he was standing on the white line," he said. "The umpire said, 'Go away, we don't need your help'. The umpire handled it really well ... It was a near miss."



McLachlan needs to put his head up more when issues fester

fester, like this one. Hocking, too.

When the country was rabid about Dane Rampe climbing the goal post, Hocking remained silent for several days.

McLachlan had his say the day after, which was clumsy. By the Monday the issue was in flames.

Hocking might not have thought it was a pressing issue, nor that it needed clarification, yet the rest of the football world was having puppies.

The *Herald Sun* understands there will be an internal review about the availability of the sport's two most important

people in light of the past two weeks.

It needs to happen.

Fundamentally, it's about keeping fans safe, keeping fans informed and bringing the fans along for the ride so the events of the past fortnight are not replicated.

Because what we've experienced across all levels in these past two weeks has been insane.

"What we've got here," it once was said, "is a failure to communicate."

Yesterday may ensure communication is the buzz word at headquarters from here on in. mark.robison@news.com.au