

FIFA's FAILURE TO ADDRESS ALLEGATIONS OF CORRUPTION PROPERLY
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There are two schools of thought about the 21-month long investigation by Michael Garcia into the conduct of the 2018/2022 World Cup bids.

The first goes like this.

Within the limited powers available to him, he did the best job possible and conducted a thorough investigation that FIFA is desperate to keep quiet.

The second goes like this.

His report did the job FIFA wanted it to do – that is, the two winning bids did nothing wrong but some of the losing bids were a bit naughty.

Mr Garcia's public pronouncements tend to lead people to believe the first scenario. He's on the record calling for his report's publication prior to the Eckert summary report appearing, and his criticism of FIFA was excoriating in his resignation letter last month published in the *New York Times*. In fact, it closely resembled many things that will be said and written here today and previously.

However, his critics say that he only started this rhetoric once the *New York Daily News* revealed that the FBI and the United States Internal Revenue Service were involved in their own set of investigations with a cooperating witness or two – and this spooked Garcia and his Lexington Avenue law firm into damage control because he had found nothing.

But whichever scenario it is – and the second one appears as credible as the first – I can say this: Lord Triesman, who is here today, was smart for not taking part in it.

Whoever heard of a genuine investigation that did not have the power to compel witnesses, impose penalties for giving false or misleading evidence or to follow the money trail? Whoever heard of an 'independent' investigation conducted by someone paid by the organisation he is supposedly independently investigating?

Yet I did agree to be interviewed when asked, as did Phaedra Al-Majid. Despite warnings from some people, I thought I was doing the responsible thing and I relied on guarantees of confidentiality. But on the basis of what we know so far, it seems that the only people who have come out the worse for wear from Garcia's investigations are those who upset FIFA's narrative of there being 'nothing to see'.

In this regard – whichever scenario one accepts about Michael Garcia – he is almost as much a victim of FIFA's self-serving decision-making and culture of silence as Phaedra and me.

Over the five years since I was dumped from the Australian Bid team – because, according to my boss, the trio of international FIFA insiders employed by us as

consultants didn't like the fact that I raised too many questions about what they were up to on our behalf – many people have wondered why I bothered to speak out. Indeed, many in my own country – not elsewhere - have criticised and disparaged me for daring to do so.

After all, it's not as if we won. We received only one vote.

It's not as if any Australians were benefiting personally from what was going on.

It's not as if anyone thinks we couldn't host a fantastic World Cup – we would, as the Asian Cup at the moment is showing.

But the answer is simple.

First, from an Australian perspective, the Bid was funded by the taxpayer. No private money was involved. The stewardship of taxpayer monies is generally taken very seriously in Australia.

Second – and this is really what has brought us all here today – the way the Bid was conducted, the deals, counter deals, double deals and subterranean behaviour of so many of the protagonists is not how football – or any sport - should be run.

It is not how the World Cup – which is such a fantastic, global event that is the showpiece of the sport and enjoyed by billions - should be decided.

But what happened to the losing Australian Bid is as much a lesson in the murky ways of FIFA as the winning Qatar or Russia bids.

Because there were *two* Australian bids.

The one for which I was largely responsible – where we positioned ourselves as the 'fun, relaxed, safe and secure' World Cup, the 'no worries' tournament where everything would work like clockwork and everybody would have a wonderful time. With all my heart, I believed it then and still do.

But there was also the second one.

The one that only a handful of people knew about; where meetings took place behind closed doors; where \$10.5 million was allocated for football development in Oceania, Asia and Africa; where visits were made to Russia, Qatar and China on our behalf; and where – maybe for a bit of comedy on the side considering his own confederation was also bidding - apparently the support of Jack Warner, then the President of CONCACAF, was critical to our chances. This is the world in which our international consultants were comfortable – and one of which my former boss said to me many times 'there are things going on in this Bid that I can't tell you about but you have to help me get through this.'

What allowed this to happen?

FIFA. Not only is this the preferred operating style of FIFA, but it was in the bidding guidelines.

While bidders were warned against seeking an “advantage” from Executive Committee members, the guidelines also required bidders to support football development through a legacy program. When there are only 24 voters, it’s fairly obvious whom to target.

For example, Australia gave \$4 million of taxpayers money to fund ‘sports development’ projects in Oceania after it was requested by the then President of Oceania Confederation, Reynald Temarii.

Were these projects intrinsically worthwhile? Probably.

Would the funding have been awarded at that time without the Bid? No.

Was Reynald Temarii a member of the Executive Committee? Yes.

Was he subsequently suspended from the Executive Committee after being the subject of a sting by *The Sunday Times*? Yes.

What were Australia’s expectations once that money was given? I’ll let you figure that out.

Funding for development purposes has long been the vehicle by which FIFA officials have bestowed and sought favours of one kind or another. The incumbent President Blatter’s first job at FIFA 40 years ago was as the lone ‘development officer’ allocating grants to member associations.

There is a role for FIFA football development programs. But the program has to be managed transparently, prudentially and independently, and should not coincide with elections and bidding processes.

Only recently, Sepp Blatter dipped into FIFA’s reserves to give each of its 209 member associations a Christmas bonus. This isn’t Sepp Blatter’s money: it’s football’s, but it may as well be his in terms of the votes he expects to receive in return in May.

Within the Australian Bid team, we always knew that it would be won or lost by what we didn’t know; what went on behind closed doors; and what our international consultants would do on our behalf.

When we looked at the funds allocated to ‘development’ in the budget, we made jokes about it being ‘brown paper bag money’.

And this was the tragedy of the bidding process.

Today isn’t about pointing fingers at Qatar, Russia, the USA, England, Australia or any of the other bids – or even Sepp Blatter. It is about the environment overseen by Sepp Blatter that led to this conduct, the decisions made by the Executive Committee and the role and culpability of football’s confederations and associations.

It was expected, the Executive Committee expected, those ‘inside the tent’ of the FIFA world knew: that the bids would be won by favours and largesse - not on the merits of the individual country. Many bidders behaved accordingly. Despite what the summary report prepared by Judge Eckert said, I suspect nearly all bidders indulged in similar behaviour but some were cleverer than others, or operated in a milieu more accommodating of such behaviour, and probably with deeper pockets.

If Australia had garnered only one vote by advocating our bid on its merits, I would not be here today – and I would never had said anything.

A contest fought and lost on a level playing field is one fought with honour and is an acceptable loss. We see it almost every day on the playing field with 22 players, three referees and a ball.

Instead, we felt compelled to play the game the FIFA way.

A contest fought and won the FIFA way is neither honourable nor acceptable.

This failure of governance with the bidding process is not a one-off. There is a litany of scandals that have plagued the organisation for decades.

It also should not be a surprise to anyone.

Any organisation that is not routinely subject to external scrutiny based on full transparency will inevitably become self-serving, arrogant and beholden to no-one except the long serving privileged and sinecured individuals who control the organisation.

There is no mechanism for renewal that the market and prudential regulations provide for private sector organisations; or that changes in governments elected through universal adult suffrage provide for public bodies.

Without transparency and external scrutiny, flawed governance practices inevitably emerge and pervade the culture of an organisation.

Such organisations are also inured to change from within, as FIFA has demonstrated time-after-time. Those who have tried and failed include Judge Gunter Hirsch, Sylvia Schenk, Professor Mark Pieth, Alexandra Wrage and Michael Garcia.

Evolution is no longer enough. More of the FIFA Executive Committee's pretend Damascene conversion to transparency should not be tolerated. It is a revolution we need.

It is the equivalent of the tearing down of that Berlin Wall, as Damian Collins alluded to the other day.

This is why it is time for the world football community, and sponsors of the game concerned about more than their bottom-line reputations, to demand that the cleaners be put through FIFA.

It is time to reclaim football. It is time to build a new FIFA.

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