

## WHISTLEBLOWING – THE FIFTH PILLAR OF DEMOCRACY

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I'm not comfortable talking about what it's like to be a whistleblower - for two reasons.

First, I don't want to be defined only as a 'whistleblower' – not that it is a bad thing - but I have done so much more in life and in football than speak out about the Australian World Cup bid. I prefer to focus on turning my experience as part of the bid into something positive, such as the #NewFIFANow campaign. The second reason is that, even after more than five-and-a-half years, there is still a lot that is incredibly painful about the experience.

But Jens has impressed upon me that it is important for this audience to hear the story.

### **Australian Bid**

I was head of corporate and public affairs for the Australian football association, known as FFA, and was a senior executive member of the Australian Bid team responsible for media, public relations, promotions, marketing, and government relations.

The Australian Bid was entirely publicly funded at a cost of 32 million Euros.

I wasn't happy with the three international consultants we had engaged, as I thought we were spending a lot of money on them and they didn't appear to be doing much that was useful. One of them was responsible for some key deliverables, but two of them operated in a different stratosphere to me. Their stratosphere was subterranean.

Some of these consultants came with baggage and history – a fact that was known inside the organisation. For example, when I was informed that one of them, in particular, was joining us, my boss took his copy of Andrew Jennings' 'FOUL', handed it to me, and told me to re-read the chapters on our new consultant.

I asked questions – many times - about what they were doing, why had we engaged them, pointing out their deficiencies, making note of when they said they would do things and they didn't. I didn't agree with giving \$5 million to Asia, \$4 million to Oceania, or allocating between \$4 and \$8 million to Africa for which one consultant, Fedor Radmann of Germany, had 'special responsibility'.

The joke in management meetings was that it was 'brown paper bag' money.

Our consultants made multiple visits to Russia, Qatar and China on our behalf for reasons that were not clear.

Jack Warner must have thought it was Christmas every time he saw an Australian – pearls, trips for his U20 team, Prime Ministerial visits with bottles of fine Australian red wine ... and, finally, a \$640,000 payment to upgrade a stadium in Trinidad and Tobago just two months before the vote.

We didn't learn about this particular donation until more than two years *after* the vote because no-one announced it. As it turned out, the stadium was owned by Jack's family, the money ended up in Jack's personal bank account and the cheque was a generic Travelex cheque that circumnavigated the globe from Sydney to London to New York to Port of Spain.

But, according to the FFA president – one of Australia's most successful and powerful men – none of this was known to them. They thought the donation was a good idea to help out a nation in need; although they also sheepishly concede that perhaps we were a bit naïve.

But I wasn't. It was clear to me that the consultants provided an essential service in the FIFA world. They knew which part of the machinery needed greasing. They were comfortable doing deals, counter deals and double deals. They knew what to do if someone sought a favour. They knew what conversations to have with whom. They provided the cover for plausible deniability for so many officials.

When I had raised concerns about the lack of accountability over funding, I was told it was none of my business. When I asked questions about the consultants and what they were doing, I got no answers.

### **Being sacked**

Instead, I was sacked from my job.

It took place in the head office of the global retail property empire built by the billionaire president of FFA. I was told I would never work in Australia again.

I wasn't even given a chance to go back to my office, pack-up my desk and collect my personal things. I wasn't given a reason for losing my job, but I knew then that it was because the three consultants didn't want me around. Thirteen months after my sacking, my ex-boss confessed to me that I was the "victim of something much bigger than FFA."

### **Disparagement starts**

What followed in the days and weeks after I was sacked was an institutional and systematic discrediting of me.

- The biggest selling newspaper in the country had their sports gossip columnist write that I was sacked because I was "bumptious". He had never met me. I had never even had a telephone conversation or exchanged an email with him.
- Another sports journalist wrote that I was sacked because I had stuffed-up the relationships with the state governments, with whom FFA was negotiating over stadiums. I was never responsible for this and the journalist knew it.
- In online forums, it was written by people who, again, had never met me that I was sacked either because I was no good at my job or having an affair with either my boss or the president of FFA or both.

- One of the consultants told anyone who would listen that I had to go because I was going to lose Australia the bid.

Only five weeks before I was sacked, I had received the maximum end-of-year bonus for a job well done. Prior to my departure, and after the international launch of all bids in Cape Town in December 2009, the Australian Bid was rated by *World Football Insider* as equal first of the nine bidders. Soon after, it slipped to 5<sup>th</sup>. By the end, it came stone, motherless last.

### **Dealing with it**

There's not a lot you can do about being trashed – unless you have enough wealth and emotional energy to take-on everyone legally.

You just have to let it wash over you. You spend a bit of time licking your wounds. You go over conversations in your head. What if I had said this? What if I had done that? Could I have done anything different? Was I putting 2+2 together to get 5 instead of 4? Had my imagination overtaken my intuition? Had my intuition overshadowed the evidence?

But after a while, you recalibrate. You know the metrics of your life.

You remember a conversation here; an email there; a meeting somewhere else; a comment that didn't make sense. And you know – without any doubt – that the questions you were raising – the appropriate way, internally, to your boss – were the right ones.

And, as it turned out, the uncomfortable ones.

Over the following months, the disparaging personal comments continued and they continue to this day. I was a disgruntled former employee. I was 'bitter and twisted'. I was making it up for revenge. I had a screw loose. I was unhinged. I was a troublemaker. All the usual things that are said about people who dare to question the status quo.

At the same time, there were those who thought 'who cares?' Does it matter that we gave \$4 million to Oceania? How else did I think we were going to win? Everyone else was doing it, why shouldn't we? The ends justify the means. One journalist asked me what it was like to be the most hated woman in Australia.

By the end of 2010, I was officially declared 'public enemy number one' by FFA and the word went out to journalists, football officials and players that they should have nothing to do with me. You soon learn who your real friends are.

Immediately after we lost so badly, a prominent media personality in Australia, who was also a member of the FIFA Ethics Committee, interviewed his buddy, one of our consultants, who lamented that the reason we had lost was because Australia played it clean and Qatar had been dirty.

It was a cringeworthy, self-serving interview from a consultant who was paid \$1.5 million and got us only one vote. It was hypocritical because he and our other consultants attempted to play the same game. And I also thought it was racist to accuse Qatar of playing

dirty, when we were unwilling to admit we did the same thing - only, perhaps, not as well or with shallower pockets.

I didn't know the detail of Qatar's bid. Even before Phaedra Almajid said something about the Qatar bid, the assumption around the world was that Qatar had 'bought' the bid. In fact, so confronting was Qatar's win to the world that Russia's win in just two rounds of voting went largely unnoticed – let alone the conduct of losing bids.

But what I realised is that both Qatar – the winner – and Australia – the loser – were saying much the same thing: that is, they didn't break any rules, they played within the bidding guidelines.

And that is why my target has not specifically been Australia, except to the point that it is illustrative, but FIFA and football administration more broadly.

Australia played the World Cup bidding game the way they did because that was the environment set for it by FIFA.

It is an environment that had been in place for decades. It was an environment that suited FIFA's way of doing business - the 'FIFA Way' as Loretta Lynch referred to it. It was an environment in which bid leaders can stand-up and say: 'I didn't have that conversation with that person' or 'We didn't pay any bribes' ... because they most probably didn't.

### **Michael Garcia**

In April 2013, out of nowhere, I received a friendly email from Michael Garcia, who was then head of the FIFA ethics committee. I was sceptical about a so-called independent investigation by someone paid by FIFA to look into FIFA's decision-making. However, he reached out to me and so I did what I saw as being the responsible thing; I spoke with him.

By October 2013 – in fact, while I was here at the previous Play the Game conference – he had arranged for me to travel to New York to see him the following month.

As well as a promise from him about my confidentiality, he asked me not to speak with the media about my visit. I told him that it was already known because I had mentioned it at this conference two weeks before.

Five months later when he came to Sydney, he admonished me for an article that appeared in the UK media about the visit. I reminded him that the journalist concerned had actually sat on the story for six months.

We then had a further discussion about an issue related to our Bid that had perplexed me for years, and which also perplexed him and his team – and which, only recently, has become clearer. We went back and forth over this issue for another two months or so.

And then I heard nothing until November last year.

I received a text message from a friend that said: "You need to look at the Eckert report. Urgent." I turned-on the computer, and read this about me:

“The relevant individual undermined its own credibility by talking to the media.”

After reading the entire 42-page summary, including critical remarks about Phaedra Almajid also, talking it over with a handful of people, thinking about it, and getting through the shock, the anger and the hurt .... I was delighted.

Here was a supposedly reputable German Judge putting his name to a summary report of an investigation which:

- a) didn't even get to speak to Spain or Portugal;
- b) was told by the Russians that they had thrown their computers out and couldn't really help – and they accepted this!
- c) said there was nothing wrong with the winning bids;
- d) identified 'problematic conduct' from Australia – which, by the way, is relevant in respect of the current DFB/Beckenbauer investigation; and
- e) singled-out two women from 75 witnesses who had been prepared to trust Garcia, been prepared to put their heads above the parapet and say 'this is what we know', and all but identified and discredited them.

It was not only disgraceful treatment, it was really shoddy work.

My immediate thought was that the *first* Mike Garcia I met, in New York, didn't do this. And while I hadn't met him, surely a respected German Judge didn't do this.

FIFA did this. This was their work. Because the Eckert summary report was FIFA's narrative.

It showed just how broken FIFA and their culture. It is this deeply rotten culture of FIFA, which I identified in a presentation I gave to the Governance Institute of Australia in 2011, as the principal reason that FIFA will only be mended through independent reform led by an eminent person.

### **#NewFIFANow**

As a result of the Eckert summary report, I was put in touch with British MP Damian Collins who had previously spoken out about FIFA. Damian, Jaimie Fuller and I came up with the concept of #NewFIFANow. Jaimie and I had discussed the need for a campaign to rock the socks off FIFA, and had done a lot of preliminary thinking about it, since we had met at the 2013 Play the Game conference.

Since the #NewFIFANow launch in January, we have had cut-through in key areas. Obviously helped significantly by the arrests in May, we are also starting to make a difference. Slowly, very slowly. As I say regularly – I have the same view about the corrupt edifice of FIFA as the world had in relation to the Berlin Wall: it is not a matter of *if* it will come down, but *when* and *how*.

## **But wait, there's more**

However, for me, as a whistleblower, FIFA wasn't finished.

In March, I was invited to appear live on German television to talk about #NewFIFANow.

What I was confronted with was a senior executive of FIFA wanting to talk about and exaggerate something from my past 23 years beforehand. The law of Australia, and many other western countries including Germany, considers this matter so minor that it is officially a non-matter and it is a breach of law to talk about it. So I won't.

But what it told me was that, if a senior FIFA employee, aided and abetted by the Chair of the Audit and Compliance Committee, was so ready and willing to break the law of another country in an attempt to discredit me, I was obviously worrying them. Their concern was on two points. First, the campaign for #NewFIFANow; and second, the major issues I brought to the table of Mike Garcia which directly implicated people at the very heart of the 'FIFA Way'.

In case that wasn't enough to intimidate me they went further.

On the flight home – 24 hours at 40,000 feet and heading into the Easter break – they published a website using my name, used some of my genuine blogs to make it look authentic, and created a Bitcoin account using my name to solicit donations towards the publication of my unpublished book.

It took three weeks and several thousand dollars to shut both of them down.

On at least two occasions, my computer has suffered massive external invasion, and websites I own have been spam-attacked to the point where the hosting company had to shut down all their sites for four days. These attacks have been traced to Zurich.

## **Conclusion**

It's more than five-and-a-half years since I was sacked. It's more than five-and-a-half years since I had a job. It's almost five years since the 2018/2022 votes took place. It's two years since I went to New York to meet with Mike Garcia. It's one year since the Eckert summary report.

Thanks to the absurdity of the Eckert report, the pressure that groups such as #NewFIFANow have been able to place on FIFA and their sponsors, and the investigation of the US and Swiss authorities who, let's not forget, refer to FIFA as a racketeering organisation – it's been quite a year.

As a woman who grew up in the generation and in a country where education, a career and family were all part of a package of a complete life, my career and my working life was taken away when I was still in my 40s. For all the wrong reasons; because I blew the whistle and took a stand.

The fact that 11 of the 22 men who voted on 2 December 2010 are now banned, suspended, indicted or under investigation shows what I knew all along – the decision-making framework was corrupt because the FIFA Way of doing business is corrupt. It has been for decades.

Just like FIFA itself, the World Cup vote was always a busted flush.

I have long held the view that sport is a community asset. It belongs to the people; those who run our sports do it as a privilege and an honour as custodians, not as some sort of right as owners.

Because of this, I don't feel as if I have done anything more than is my responsibility to my country, to the sport I love and, because I was on the 'inside' and saw what was going on, on behalf of the many decent people who are fans and players who would like to see world football governed in *their* interests.

Just as the media is the fourth pillar of democracy, I see whistleblowers as the fifth pillar – auditors of accountability and guarantors for good governance. People who are willing to ask questions for no personal gain and invariably at great personal cost.

I am committed to the cause of #NewFIFANow not because I'm bitter and twisted, but because I'm a football fan, parent and global citizen who values democracy, accountability, transparency and probity in our international institutions.

I first started asking questions about the World Cup bidding process and the shady characters around it in 2009. If anything I have said, written or done between then and now, contributes in any small way to a world governing body for football where decisions are based on evidence and merit, where they are taken in the best interests of the game and those who love and play it - then the past six years haven't been entirely wasted.

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