

"We are not without change ourselves..."*

Bruce Holloway reviews the NZ Soccer annual report.

I'd have to agree with a former NZ Soccer councillor who recently privately lamented that our national association's annual meetings (congress these days) have become a 5-minute wonder rather than an opportunity for all within the game to get together and discuss ideas and focus on progress.

It's only three years ago since Dia Gilbertson gave a stirring talk on the need for grass-roots involvement at the annual meeting in Taupo. But these days the sport is exclusively run from the top down with everyone else well marginalised.

New Zealand Soccer made \$270,000 on its operations to December 31 2001, as was reported to the annual congress in Auckland on May 18, but I'd have to say I was highly disappointed at the lack of detail in the financial statements and totally alarmed by the superficiality of the accompanying annual reports.

The accounts give away little detail under the most broad headings. Sponsorship and grants were \$1,770,000, up from \$1,426,000, but sources were not listed, as used to be the practice.

Sponsorship is lumped in with grants, while all revenue is accounted for under five broad headings, including "other revenue" of \$457,000.

The net effect is that NZ Soccer stakeholders get to know very little detail. This astounds me. Considering the financial shit we would be in if not for the windfall of Oceania grants and TAB money, I reckon it's good enough to acknowledge these sources in the accounts -- though of course that would

immediately show the financially successful year was not due to anything the board had done.

Under their so-broad-as-to-be-meaningless categories, these accounts were next to useless in trying to analyse financial trends in the game. Upon inquiry, NZS operations manager Alex Hayton was at least good enough to forward me details I had sought to establish comparative income trends in the past few years.

Oceania confederation grants were \$200,000, up from \$50,000 in 1998 (the last time full detailed NZS accounts were published).

The TAB figure was \$130,000 ((\$103,000) and player levies were \$600,000 (\$371,448). The Hillary Commission contributed \$200,000 (\$57,000) and the NZ Sports Foundation \$55,000 (\$6927).

Elsewhere in the accounts "event receipts" brought in \$688,000 but "event management" cost \$963,000. Ian Wells, the board member responsible for financial comment, noted in passing they secured "significant TV rights" for the Australia match, which was nice of him, because otherwise you would have no way of knowing.

Office expenses almost doubled to \$122,000, while "governance" expenditure (whatever that is) was up 50 per cent to \$405,000 from the previous year. Salaries mushroomed to \$696,000 (\$247,000 in 1998).

All in all it paints a picture of NZ Soccer being far less self-reliant than

even a couple of years ago. But the bottom line is it's hopeless trying to analyse these accounts. They are designed to tell you as little as possible. This is a common ploy with public companies, but NZ Soccer is an incorporated society, for goodness sake, where such an approach is unsanctionable.

By comparison, under their old presentation methods you could see how much, for example, soccer got from appeal fees. And gate receipts were tabulated for All Whites matches. In short, there was a far greater degree of transparency.

The player levy grab is interesting. Players are paying more to NZ Soccer than they do to their own federations, despite the early promises on how the federation structure would have money flowing in the opposite direction.

Kevin Stratful's chairman's report is typically shallow and pathetic. Eight miserable paragraphs of emptiness that say nothing.

In his CEO's report Bill MacGowan urges people to get in behind their federations "and make it work rather than working against the system" (which, by inference, rather suggests there are more problems than NZ Soccer is prepared to directly admit) and notes the game has never been healthier from a marketing and sponsorship perspective.

But while not as bad as Stratful's woeful effort, MacGowan's report is also more notable for what it doesn't say. For instance, if the goals of qualifying towards the 2006 World Cup and the 2005 Women's World Cup are so important, how come the annual report fails to address progress towards these?

Sandy Davie, the national women's coach, presents a women's report which

glosses over the diabolical situation of the Swanz getting hardly any meaningful games.

But once again there is no corresponding men's report. Our men's national coach, for the second successive year, has not been called to account in the same fashion, though at least Ricki Herbert gives a useful summary of youth development and academy work as High Performance Manager.

Considering our world ranking rose from 90 to 83 during the year there was definitely scope for somebody to at least give a few patsy Stratful-type comments,

even if nothing more rigorous or intellectual could be managed. Shabby stuff.

Rod Pelosi gives a detailed refereeing report. There's a delightful perversity to this. Nobody can be stuffed making the effort on the main-course fare, but the whistlers can give us chapter and verse on what went down in refereeing circles.

There is a promising inclusion of "Offshore Kiwis – a selection of high profile New Zealanders playing overseas".

It lists 14 players, including three women, and is an excellent practice for an annual report.

But it curiously fails to mention the following players who were subsequently named in Mick Waitt's inaugural All Whites squad: Aaran Lines (Dresden), Chris Zoricich (Newcastle), Michael Utting (Supersport), Scott Smith (Woking), Gavin Wilkinson (Portland), Gerard Davis (Stanford), Danny Hay (Leeds), Raf De Gregorio (Dortrecht), Glenn Collins (Carolina). We can only assume being in the All Whites squad no longer rates as "high profile".

*** This was the most insightful observation we could extract from Kevin Stratful's annual report.**

