

Open Letter Calls For Eddie McGuire To Resign, Demands Action From Collingwood Sponsors

First Nations and culturally diverse politicians, academics and activists demand action from the club and its corporate backers following a report that found systemic racism at the Magpies.

By Carly Williams 8th February 2021



An open letter demands Collingwood President Eddie McGuire quit.

A number of prominent Australians have signed an open letter to the Collingwood Football Club demanding President Eddie McGuire step down following the release of the leaked 'CFC Do Better' Report.

The report found evidence of “systemic racism” within the Magpies. The club’s management, including McGuire, have not apologised or announced further action to address the problem. Last week McGuire was forced to backtrack on his disastrous comments describing the report’s release as “an historic and proud day” for the club.

The letter calls for the Magpies to appoint a team with “recognised credentials in truth-telling and reconciliation processes” to oversee the 18 recommendations of the report. It also calls on Collingwood’s sponsors, including Nike, CGU Insurance and Emirates Airlines to make clear and unequivocal statements rejecting racism.



The press conference, which included Collingwood CEO Mark Anderson, President Eddie McGuire, Collingwood Integrity Committee members Jodie Sizer and Peter Murphy, was labelled as "delusional" and a "dumpster fire" by sports commentators.

“The Collingwood Football Club’s response to the leaked ‘CFC Do Better’ report is unacceptable and insulting to those who have suffered vilification by the club’s President, its supporters, and within the club itself,” the letter says.

“We believe Eddie McGuire has proven himself incapable of leading the Collingwood Football Club through any meaningful transformation. We call on him to step down immediately,” the letter says.

Signatories include Victorian Greens Senator Lidia Thorpe (*Gunnai-Gunditjmara*), historian Dr Gary Foley (*Gumbaynggirr*), writer and social commentator Celeste Liddle (*Arrernte*), author Tony Birch (*Fitzroy Blak*) and producer Jason Tamiru (*Yorta Yorta*), the grandson of Aboriginal football legend, civil rights leader and Governor of South Australia, Sir Doug Nicholls.

“For too long this club, led by Eddie McGuire, has been at the forefront of systemic, discriminatory racism,” Greens spokesperson for Sport and First Nations people Senator Lidia Thorpe said in a statement.

“How are we allowing people like Eddie McGuire, in such high positions of power, to continue with his leadership role? Eddie’s got to go.”

“Collingwood should not be avoiding the truth - they need to acknowledge their failures, respond to the ‘Do Better’ report’s recommendations, and act to stamp out systemic racism.”

Federal Labour MPs Peter Khalil and Dr Ann Aly have also signed the letter, along with the chair of Professional Footballers Australia (PFA) and former Socceroo Francis Awaritefe.

Musician Neil Morris (*Yorta Yorta*), writer Benjamin Law, and Yumi Stynes are also signatories.

The letter adds: “We stand with Nicky Winmar, Michael Long, Adam Goodes, Joel Wilkinson, and all those who have been subject to vilification by the club, its fans, and within the club itself. We support their right to acknowledgement, apology and compensation as recommended by the ‘CFC Do Better’ report.”

Heritier Lumumba, whose account of a “culture of racist jokes” at the club where he played 199 games from 2005-14 prompted the report.

In 2017, Lumumba went public with allegations teammates had nickname him “chimp” and said the club failed to support him and punished him for daring to speak out about McGuire’s 2013 “King Kong” slur at Adam Goodes.

Collingwood publicly denied Lumumba’s claims along with coach Nathan Buckley.



Heritier Lumumba played 199 games with the Magpies from 2005-14.

Lumumba labelled the club’s response to the *Do better* report as “cowardice” and “delusional”.

“What I saw was a clear case of cowardice,” Lumumba told ABC radio. “It was a clear case of a football club that is delusional.

“They keep pointing to courage, and they’re the ones who are leading the charge (against racism). No, they are absolutely not the ones leading the charge,” Lumumba said.

Read the letter in full below:

An open letter to the Collingwood Football Club

Racism is dangerous.

To First Peoples in this country, racism means a long, violent, and bitter history of invasion, occupation, displacement and genocide. To this day, it remains a matter of life and death. For immigrant communities of colour, it means harassment, marginalisation and trauma.

For us, racism is not a series of gaffes or ‘mishaps’ that can simply be brushed aside.

The Collingwood Football Club’s response to the leaked ‘CFC Do Better’ report is unacceptable and insulting to those who have suffered vilification by the club’s President, its supporters, and within the club itself.

A finding of systemic racism is not an excuse for powerful individuals to avoid accountability by blaming a lack of policies and procedures. It is an indictment of a fundamentally dysfunctional culture that develops when powerful individuals fail to act responsibly.

It is unacceptable that the Collingwood Football Club has sought to suppress and subsequently minimise the important work of Dr Larissa Behrendt, Dr Lindon Coombes and their team to document the historically entrenched failures of the club regarding racism.

As a major public institution, the club’s response to this report sets a dangerous example of how victims of racism should be treated in all facets of public life. Since both Collingwood and the AFL have demonstrated that they are not capable of responding to this report and its findings in an appropriate way, we as a community have no choice but to act.

We say enough.

We believe that there are administrators, staff, fans and members of the Collingwood Football Club who truly wish to see it transcend its history. This can only happen with a radical shift in leadership.

We believe Eddie McGuire has proven himself incapable of leading the Collingwood Football Club through any meaningful transformation. We call on him to step down immediately.

We stand with Heritier Lumumba and his call for the Collingwood Football Club to acknowledge its failure to prevent him from being subjected to racism by his teammates, as well as the decision by senior club figures, including Eddie McGuire and Nathan Buckley, to punish and discredit him when he spoke up against racism and came forward with his experiences.

We stand with Nicky Winmar, Michael Long, Adam Goodes, Joel Wilkinson, and all those who have been subject to vilification by the club, its fans, and within the club itself. We support their right to acknowledgement, apology and compensation as recommended by the '*CFC Do Better*' report.

We call on the Collingwood Football Club to appoint a person or people with significant and widely recognised credentials in truth-telling and reconciliation processes to oversee the implementation of all 18 recommendations of the '*CFC Do Better*' report.

We call on Collingwood's major sponsors, Nike, CGU Insurance, Emirates Airlines, LaTrobe Financial, and Coles to make clear and unequivocal statements rejecting racism