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Frankston Dolphins senior coach Pat Hill with players Corey Buchan and Blake Mullane.
Picture: Jason Sammon

[AFL](#)

AFL Victoria terminates Frankston Dolphins' VFL licence

Paul Amy and Christian Tatman, Frankston Standard Leader
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THE final siren appears to have sounded on the debt-hit Frankston Football Club.

The administrator handling the VFL club's affairs said this afternoon that AFL Victoria had terminated the Dolphins' licence to play in the state league.

A statement from Worrells Solvency and Forensic Accountants said Paul Burness and Con Kokkinos were called in to a meeting with AFL Victoria this morning.

“At the meeting they were advised that the club's licence to compete in the VFL would be terminated imminently. As a result, FFC will not be able to compete in the VFL competition into the future,” the statement said.

It said the decision “concludes any prospect of a club restructure and the voluntary administrators will now turn their efforts to an orderly closure through an inevitable liquidation of the club”.

“It’s a very disappointing outcome for a club with a history dating back to 1887. The proposal to creditors, which we recommended, would have seen the club continue into the future and would have provided the best possible outcome for staff, creditors, members, and supporters,” Burness said.

“As a business operating in Frankston, I am acutely aware that the club’s closure will have far reaching consequences for the local community.

“I would like to thank the players, coaching staff, employees, the board, sponsors, and supporters for their help and dedication throughout this difficult period.”

The statement said it was believed that AFL Victoria had concerns about “non-financial matters such as the historical on-field performance”.

The club went into voluntary administration four weeks ago with debts of more than \$1 million.

“While we are disappointed with the decision, we were not in a position to give any assurances on matters such as the future performances of players,” Burness said.

“As voluntary administrators our role was limited to dealing with the financial issues facing the club.”

Dolphins coach Patrick Hill said he was shocked by the news.

He said he believed there was a will and intention for the club to work through its financial difficulties, and the players and coaching staff had committed to staying at Frankston.

“I’m stunned at the moment, having found out three minutes ago,” an emotional Hill said at 5.20pm.

“It’s caught me off guard. It’s caught us all off guard. We all wanted to keep going. We’re a proud club. There were people putting in some big hours trying to get something going.”

Frankston is staging its best and fairest on Thursday night.

“I’m sure it will be a sombre occasion,” Hill said. “As a group of players and coaches we’ll get to enjoy each other’s company one more time before everyone goes off on their separate footy journeys. That’s football, I suppose. You don’t stay together forever. You all have your own journey. It’s just probably a little earlier than I expected. I expect it will be an emotional night on Thursday.”

Hill added: “I feel for the players. A lot of them will be right. For some of them, it means they won’t get to play VFL footy any more. These are young men striving to be the best they can be. They’ve been incredibly loyal to me.

“They’ve turned down offers to play elsewhere, big money offers. They want to be great citizens and they want to be good sons and good footballers and all of a sudden it’s going to be ripped away from these young men. That makes me a little emotional.”

Frankston Mayor James Dooley said the club’s demise was a “sad day for football”.

“The Dolphins have given a legitimate avenue for rookie players who have been overlooked in the draft for acceptance into the AFL,” he said.

Cr Dooley said it was “too early” to say who would take over Frankston Park — home of the Dolphins.

AFL Victoria’s decision to effectively boot the Dolphins out of the competition follows a multi-million dollar redevelopment of the Kars St social club.

Leader reported in April last year that cost of the \$3.4 million Frankston Dolphins Football Club redevelopment project has blown out by up to \$300,000.

AFL Victoria contributed \$250,000 to the project along with money from other levels of government.

Former president and Dolphins legend Alan Wickes said he and other key supporters were “absolutely gobsmacked” by AFL Victoria’s decision.

Wickes said he was furious members had not been given an opportunity to put their case to AFL Victoria.

He is now planning to lead a deputation of members to AFL to put the case for survival.

But he acknowledged it was a “long shot”.

“We are a few goals down kicking into the breeze at three quarter time, but anything is possible,” he said.

Wickes said it was likely members would hold a protest if AFL Victoria did not give them a hearing.

ABC sports commentator and ex-Frankston player Paul Kennedy tonight accused the AFL of turning its back on “one of its richest and proudest footballing regions”.

“It makes the announcement while its executive walks the red carpet in fancy suits,” Kennedy said.

“No Frankston in the VFL means boys and young men aspiring to be their best have no place to better themselves beyond local ranks. If the AFL was worried about Frankston then why didn’t it provide more help.

“Think about what - and who - the peninsula and Frankston have given to the great game of Aussie rules in the past 125 years. Look at the names. Then tell me this not a lazy, shallow,

heartless decision. And the responsibility for this axing lies not only with the branch-level AFL Victoria. It is with the AFL's boss and his advisors.'

The administrator said on Saturday that the future of the club would be decided at a meeting on October 3.

Worrells Solvency and Forensic Accountants said it had finalised its report of the Dollies' finances and through the Frankston board would present an offer to creditors.

If they accepted the club would survive and employees, coaching staff and players would receive the money they were owed.

Under the proposal, payments to the creditors would have been made over four years.

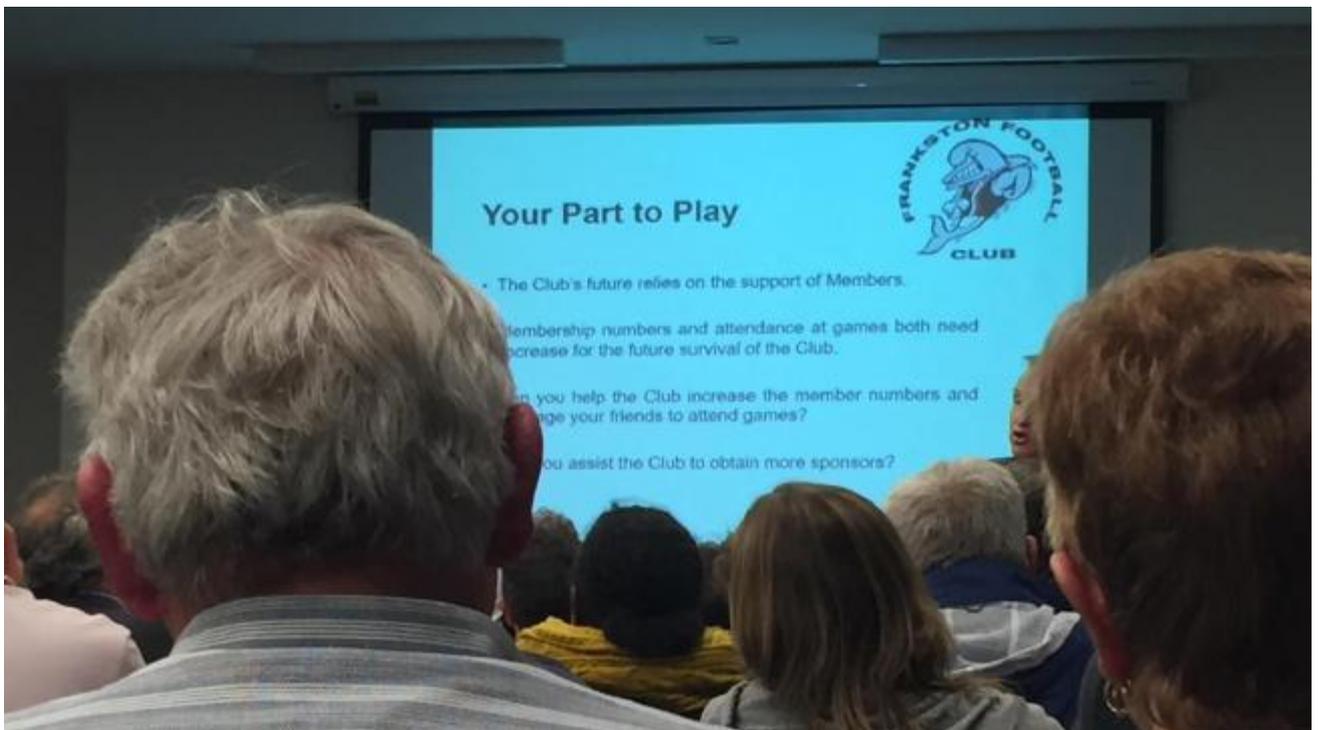
Burness said Frankston Council had indicated it was willing to give the club rent relief should it continue.

In light of AFL Victoria's decision the administrators said they would now tell creditors and stakeholders that a liquidation of the club was inevitable.

The liquidation is expected to be confirmed at the meeting on Monday, October 3.

Leader sent AFL Victoria spokesman Anthony Stanguts questions relating to the Dolphins this morning. Stanguts has yet to respond.

Three former Frankston players — Luke Beveridge (coach), Matt Boyd and Tory Dickson — are involved in the Western Bulldogs' grand final team.



Frankston Dolphins members and supporters packed a meeting held by administrators to discuss the financially stricken club's future.