



Kylie Rogers  
AFL  
General Manager - Commercial

7 October 2020

Dear Kylie,

**Re: Unpaid Dancers for AFL Grand Final**

Thank you for your letter explaining the context of your decision to seek unpaid dancers to perform as part of the half-time entertainment for the Grand Final in Queensland on October 24. Unfortunately, there is growing evidence that the casting brief was sent to professional performers in a number of capacities, suggesting that there was a deliberate attempt to engage the best dancers the AFL could, for no payment.

While it is not the wish of MEAA to undermine the opportunity for young Queensland people to participate in what you describe as a 'tribute to the Queensland community', we still have objections to the utilisation of voluntary dancers in place of employment opportunities for professionals.

The MEAA's position is based on the follow evidence;

- The AFL's claim that the dance segment of the grand final half-time entertainment was conceived to only require the services of non-professional enthusiasts from the community is not supported by their casting brief that specifically calls for audition submissions from "professional standard" dancers.
- The level of the audition choreography itself has been assessed by dance industry leaders within the MEAA to be beyond that of "community" standard, requiring professional level skills and commensurate rehearsal time both inside and outside the four weeks of (unpaid) rehearsal at Metricon Stadium. This will also become clearly evident to the wider public on the evening of the Grand Final, when 300 "strong performers" execute professional standard choreography.
- The MEAA regard the AFL's emphasis on "community engagement" to be disingenuous, as the casting brief explicitly states that dance schools must not submit their entire school, troupe or class. According to the AFL's casting brief acquired by the MEAA, dancers are required to apply and audition on an individual basis. The MEAA therefore views this decision by the AFL to be about undercutting the value and employment opportunities of professional dancers by replacing them with volunteers.
- The MEAA rejects the AFL's assertion that because volunteer dancers have been used in place of professionals in the past, this practice should continue

uncontested. What has historically been an unethical practice continues to be an unethical practice. There is a clear opportunity both now and in the future for the AFL to demonstrate its integrity by removing the exploitative approach to events such as the 2020 Grand Final.

The MEAA has no issue with the engagement of community dancers. We agree that the opportunity to perform at the Grand Final is one which brings communities together and provides incredible experience for those dancers who find joy in the art of dance outside their usual profession. However, the MEAA believes this should be in addition to employing a reasonable proportion of professional dancers within the proposed entertainment segment and not at the expense of paid opportunities for professionals.

The MEAA proposes that the AFL consider the following two initiatives:

1. A reasonable payment to each volunteer performer as financial recompense to recognise the considerable time spent in rehearsals and covering travel and other costs.
2. The provision of paid employment for a reasonable percentage of core dance professionals within the proposed massed community dance troupe. The interpretation of a "reasonable percentage" is a negotiation the MEAA is willing to enter into with the AFL in good faith.

The MEAA looks forward to AFL's positive consideration of these or similar initiatives that demonstrate the sensitivity of the AFL to the current difficulties being experienced by dancers in the entertainment industry and its intention in the future to value and remunerate the work professional dancers provide to entertain and bring artistic value high profile events such as the AFL Grand Final.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'M. Rae'.

**Michelle Rae**  
**MEAA**