

Darcy Byrne Inner West Mayor



8 December 2025

Dear Minister Harris,

I am writing to request your intervention into the maladministration of the Holman Barnes Group (HBG).

HBG, which oversees Wests Ashfield Leagues Club and holds a controlling share in the Wests Tigers, is a key community institution for the Inner West.

Local people have contacted me to express their outrage about what they see as ongoing and appalling mismanagement of the HBG.

As you know, throughout 2025 Liquor and Gaming NSW have been investigating HBG, following the quite extraordinary removal of 3 of the directors of their Board by the other 4 board members.

This unilateral action included not only the sacking of these board members but also their long-term suspension as members of the organisation.

Subsequently, the remaining directors have expended enormous amounts of members' funds in the legal defence of this power play. It has been reported that this amounts to millions of dollars in legal costs. I request you investigate and clarify this.

The long-term CEO of HBG has also since departed the organisation.

Subsequently, the remaining directors also voted out and then suspended the membership of the Chair of their own Board, Julie Romero, for a period of 8 years.

This week the remaining directors of HBG unilaterally removed 4 independent directors of Wests Tigers, including Chair Barry O'Farrell.

This means that in the space of 12 months, this tiny group who control the HBG Board have overseen the removal of 8 directors, 2 chairpersons and 1 CEO.

At the time of writing, HBG is also publicly foreshadowing the departure of the Wests Tigers CEO Shane Richardson.

As you are aware, HBG is overseen by one of the least democratic governance structures of any registered club in NSW.

Under a constitution written in the 1950's a miniscule number of "debenture" holders (up to 20 people) hold complete control of the organisation. These people hold their positions in perpetuity and a majority of directors of HBG are directly appointed by them.

It is important to note that the 2 directors who had been directly elected by members of the organisation were removed last year leaving the remaining directors in total control.

The HBG's reported 27 000 financial members have, in practice, zero control of the organisation and no avenue to hold the board to account or to contest an election for the board.

This is possibly the clearest example of a gerrymander of a registered club in NSW.

Given these circumstances, I request that the Office of Liquor and Gaming continue their investigation into the maladministration of this organisation.

In light of the appalling actions of HBG this week and throughout the past 12 months, failure to take action by the agency would be a serious mistake.

It is obvious to the public, especially members of HBG and fans of Wests Tigers, that this prolonged, systemic mismanagement and undemocratic governance of HBG must be addressed.

I propose that the NSW Government temporarily appoint an administrator to oversee HBG in order to clean up this mess.

The administrator could be appointed for a short period (6 or 12 months) and delegated with responsibility for enacting a new, democratic constitution, in line with the standards and practices of the modern clubs industry across NSW.

An election should then be conducted, in which HBG members finally have a proper democratic say, and the after which control of the entity could be handed back to a new and accountable board.

Given the chronic dysfunction and totally unaccountable administration of HBG, it would be a dereliction of duty for the NSW Government to ignore these problems and fail to carry out its responsibilities to clean this up.

There are tens of thousands of HGB members and hundreds of thousands of Wests Tigers fans who are depending on the Government to take action and uphold proper governance standards at HBG.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Clr Darcy Byrne
Inner West Mayor