

# **Establishing a Protection Plan for Australian Football Stadiums Based on the International Association of Assembly Managers' Recommendations: A Delphi Study**

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Keywords: security, football, stadiums, Australia

## **Abstract**

Football Federation Australia (FFA) and its Chief Executive Officer have confirmed their interest in bidding for and hosting the 2018 Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup competition.

Hosting the FIFA World Cup requires considerable human, financial, material and technological resources in order to establish a solid infrastructure, upgrade and build football stadiums, provide reliable transportation, and provide thorough and effective security.

The security measures used within football stadiums must protect against organized-political terror (e.g., bomb threats), organized-social terror (e.g., hooliganism) and spontaneous terror (e.g., crowd disorder).

"These buildings, where every week, month and year thousands of people congregate, must fulfill particularly stringent criteria in terms of comfort, safety and security" [1].

However, a case study of 8-Australian stadiums established a lack of knowledge and experience in security management which has produced inconsistencies and vulnerabilities [2].

The study collected both quantitative and qualitative data through observing stadium security operations in addition to interviewing stadium managers.

The results indicated stadium managers utilized a traditional Australian framework of risk management, had a reactive approach to managing the risk, and had only some standard security measures established.

Also "the level of security at Australian sport stadiums was dictated by the operating budget and spectator enjoyment" [3].

But "the safety of all those using a football stadium must take priority over all other considerations in the design and management of the stadium, regardless of the level of funding available" [4].

The need for strategic vision in sport and safety management has been discussed [5].

This process "seeks to match an organizations resources to the world in which it operates and it is made up of the three components of strategic analysis, strategic choice and strategic implementation" [6].

It is important for the FFA to establish "Where are we now?", "Where do we want to be?" and "How do we get there?"

Based on the case study of Australian sport stadiums (i.e., strategic analysis), we know something about where we are now.

Therefore, it was objective of this Delphi study to establish which security measures were applicable and essential (i.e., strategic choice) and develop a multi-tiered protection plan (i.e., strategic implementation).

Through convenient and purposive sampling, a total of 80-stadium managers with FFA affiliation were recruited to participate in the Delphi study not only for their breadth of knowledge regarding crowd management but also because these individuals were responsible for 1) risk management, 2) level of security needed, 3) security measures used, and 4) training venue staff and security personnel.

A total of 48-managers completed and returned all 3-questionnaires – a response rate of 60%.

The first questionnaire (round 1) was designed to determine whether the 38-items on the match day security "best practices" list was comprehensive, understandable and exclusive while the second questionnaire (round 2) was used to review (and confirm) the security measures and rate their level of importance.

To conclude, the third questionnaire (round 3) was used to establish which security measures should be a part of the basic protection plan in addition to developing both an intermediate and advanced protection plan.

The first round of the study identified a list of 49-security measures in the following checklist format: Pre-Match Operations (i.e., 2-hours to 1-year before event), During the Match Operations (i.e., 2-hours before to 2-hours after event) and Post-Match Operations (i.e., 2-hours to 5-days after event).

The second round produced importance ratings between 3.08 (.28) and 5.00 (.00) for 26-security measures of the Pre-Match Operations, 20-security measures of the Match Operations and 3-security measures of the Post-Match Operations. The researcher set an elimination level at three or below, thus, all 49-security measures were preserved. The results of the third round developed a 31-item basic protection plan (BPP), 38-item intermediate protection plan (IPP) and 49-item advanced protection plan (APP) for matches requiring protective (guarded), restrictive (elevated) and government controlled (high) security measures, respectively.

Recommendations for Australian stadium managers and the FFA will be further discussed.

## References

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