

OPINION

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EDITORIAL

State funeral for Farmer and a statue are fitting tributes

There have been many wonderful and meaningful tributes to football great Graham "Polly" Farmer since his death last week. And that is entirely as it should be, for he was one of a kind.

Among those paying tribute was this newspaper.

The *West Australian* joined the football community across the nation in acknowledging the life of a champion who played at the highest level, changed the game for ever in the way he played, and was a trailblazer for indigenous Australians.

As revealed in the newspaper on Saturday, Farmer will be honoured at a State funeral at Optus Stadium on August 26.

The funeral will be at the start of the AFL's annual bye week, allowing the national football fraternity to converge on Perth to pay their respects.

There has also been strong support for the idea of a statue of the champion at Optus Stadium.

Premier Mark McGowan said last week that a permanent tribute would be fitting for a "genuine football legend and a remarkable Western Australian".

"The State Government has been developing an overall statue strategy for the Optus Stadium precinct and I am confident honouring Mr Farmer will form part of that work," he said.

"He would meet the criteria that is established."

Mr McGowan's view was backed by Sport and Recreation Minister Mick Murray and Opposition Leader Liza Harvey, while the WA Football Commission said it would "wholeheartedly" support the proposal.

The WA Football League Council of Presidents also added its weight to the push for a statue.

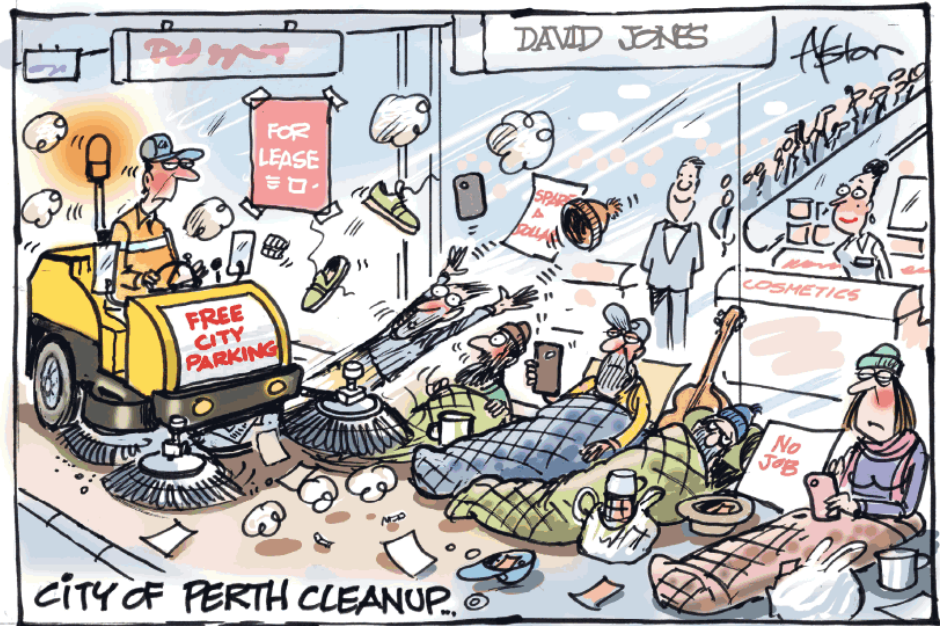
"A statue of Polly Farmer would be a magnificent tribute to his lasting legacy and terrific way to recognise a key figure in the WAFL's history at Optus Stadium," council chairman Ric Gloede said.

And, importantly, the idea was also backed by Farmer's family.

Farmer's grandson Cole Baxter said a statue erected alongside the Swan River, an important waterway known to Noongar people as the Derbarl Yerrigan, would be a perfect place to honour his proud Aboriginal grandfather to join the Nicky Winmar tribute unveiled at the venue last month.

The two statues would be a great way to set standards for the years to come when champions of the future may also deserve to be immortalised at the stadium.

And one thing is for certain — those future champions will need to demonstrate high standards to prove themselves similarly worthy of such tributes.



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Hover parents are invading the office



GARY MARTIN

A surprise threat is challenging the airspace above an increasing number of workplaces around the country, leaving bosses to shake their heads in collective disbelief.

Different to most workplace challenges, this threat has nothing to do with employee behaviour — but it has everything to do with their parents. Or helicopter parents, to be more precise.

Once restricted to playgroups, schools and sometimes universities, helicopter parents hover over their children and fly in to "rescue" them at the first sign of trouble — wiping out any and every perceived obstacle in their children's pathway to success.

You were a helicopter parent during your children's schooling if you had the principal's mobile phone number on speed dial or if your children's friends did not want come to your place for play dates because they did not want to play with you.

With economic crosswinds making the job market tight and competitive, helicopter parents are making their descent into Australian workplaces.

With the imaginary chopper blades whirring overhead, examples of helicopter parents landing in workplaces to clear obstacles for their children — even though they are now adults — are spilling out from our workplaces faster than an aggressive wind shear. Experts believe about one

in three companies has experienced intervention from employees' parents. Take the parent who writes and submits a job application for her son — without the child's knowledge or consent — or the case of the parent attending an employment interview with his daughter, or the parent who makes a phone call to a recruitment manager to negotiate her child's entry-level salary and benefits.

It does not end there. Strong headwinds or barriers in some workplaces require more intrusive and often more aggressive rescue missions.

So consider the parent who meets his child's manager to complain about the son's poor treatment by a colleague, the unfortunate incident involving a parent who radios ahead to abuse the HR manager because her daughter was passed over for a promotional position, or the sensitive situation involving a parent emailing a chief executive to request his son's positive drug test be struck from company records.

This parental hovering is supported by real-time communications tools such as text, Facetime and Viber, allowing an instant emergency chopper to land in the workplace

should it be required. It is clear helicopter parents are motivated by an overwhelming desire to see their child succeed. Many parents refuse to "cut the umbilical" cord until they have witnessed their child's success. Yet they fail to see their role is to prepare their child for the journey ahead, not to prepare the journey for the child.

The reality is that the more parents crash-land in the workplace, the more they are robbing a child of their adulthood and damaging their child's chance of a fulfilling working life. After all, most employers are looking for workers who can navigate the workplace independently — not those who require constant propping up.

But in a remarkable twist to this emerging challenge, some companies have opted to embrace their employees' stifling relationships with their parents by launching "take your parents to work" days — a bit like the old parent-teacher nights.

The other option — and one far more palatable for most employers — is to ban parents outright from our workplaces, or at least make sure they have a very limited presence. After all, too many parents in the workplace would be awfully distracting, right?

Regardless of which airspace your employer chooses to occupy, do not be surprised when a colleague's parents lands on your workplace helipad to assist their child with a special project — a bit like a parent used to front up to primary school to lend a hand.

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